

When Here Our Pathways Part:

An Account of the Dissolution of Fellowship

between

Saint James Lutheran Church
of
West St. Paul, MN

and

the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod

by

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Introduction

The last four decades of the 20th century were a unique period in the history of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS). For the first time in many decades, the synod found itself as the largest church body within its confessional fellowship. The cessation of fellowship with the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod in 1961 brought a number of profound changes to the synod. The WELS aggressively sought to expand into new mission fields both in this country and abroad. A number of new districts were added to the synod, and the WELS made a number of changes in the number and location of its worker training schools.

All of these matters received extensive attention at synod conventions from 1961 to 2000 and sparked lively debate within the synod. But in the area of *doctrinal* controversy, the one issue that received the greatest attention during that time span was the discussion of the Bible's teachings regarding the distinct roles of men and women. Several synod conventions, every district of the synod, and a number of special boards and committees gave several years of attention to this matter. The two most visible results of these discussions are the publication of several doctrinal statements which were commended or adopted by the WELS in convention, and the suspension from synodical membership of one sizable congregation--Saint James Lutheran of West St. Paul, MN.¹

This paper seeks to preserve the story behind this break in fellowship--the doctrines under discussion, the reasons why a division occurred and the events which led to the final break. An attempt was made to represent the views of both sides of the controversy accurately. To fully

¹ Saint James congregation prefers the use of the full title "Saint" rather than the abbreviation "St." in references to the official name of the congregation.

elaborate on all the points of debate, however, would require a more extensive exegetical study than the scope of this paper permits.

Part I: Doctrines under Discussion

The fact that the roles of men and women came under discussion at this time is hardly surprising when one considers that American society had witnessed major changes in this area. Society's assumption of earlier decades that "a woman's place is in the home" had changed and the women's rights movement became more visible than it had since the suffrage movement of the early 1900s. It is certainly appropriate that Christians began to examine God's Word closely at this time to distinguish between revelation and tradition in the area of gender roles.

In the Wisconsin Synod the immediate cause of this extensive study were questions that arose at the synod's worker training schools. The book of Reports and Memorials (hereafter BORAM) to the 1977 synod convention contains the following paragraph within the report of the Commission on Higher Education (CHE):

Also under study is the role of women as instructors at our synodical schools. Several special meetings of the commission have been held for this study. We are now awaiting the preparation of a position statement on the role of women with emphasis upon the scriptural principles involved.²

The "position statement" mentioned above was completed in April of 1978, with Professor Carl Lawrenz as one of its primary authors. Entitled "The Role of Man and Woman According to Holy Scripture," it appeared in the 1979 BORAM in its entirety.³ This CHE study, as the committee had promised in 1977, did far more than address specific issues at the synod's

²BORAM 1977, 3. See also BORAM 1981 (p.17) which provides a more detailed account of the history behind the writing of the theses.

³BORAM 1979, 5-16.

schools; it examined key Old and New Testament passages to discover the underlying principles involved, summarized them in a series of theses, and discussed their application to marriage and human society at large as well as in the life of the church.

The 1979 synod convention, faced with the task of evaluating this 12-page theological essay, declared, "The subject matter of the theses is too weighty to be studied in depth by this convention." Instead, it resolved "that the theses be thoroughly studied by congregations and conferences of our districts" and "that the 1980 district conventions officially study the theses and submit summary reports to the Commission on Higher Education."⁴ The synod wisely chose to take a step back and discuss the work of the committee rather than reach a hasty conclusion.

The Minnesota District, like the rest of the synod, soon undertook the assignment of evaluating the CHE theses. It quickly became evident that not all of the district members supported the stance the CHE had taken. One of the most outspoken opponents of the theses was Pastor Iver Johnson of Saint James Lutheran Church in West St. Paul. Pastor Johnson had come to Saint James in 1968 after leaving a position as high school principal and choir director at Bethany Lutheran High School and College in Mankato. He had attended seminary at both Concordia-St. Louis and Bethany before entering the ministry in 1948.

Johnson provided a fairly thorough summary of his views in an essay entitled "Some Views on the Role of Man and Woman in the World and Church."⁵ He left no doubt about his stance when he stated in the first paragraph of his essay:

Because he disagreed with the position which was stated [in the CHE paper], the writer [i.e., Johnson himself] addressed a memorial to the Synod protesting the adoption of this position paper at that time. He believes that this paper does not clearly represent what the

⁴1979 WELS convention proceedings, 87.

⁵The essay is undated, but its contents indicate it was written in or very close to 1980.

Bible says, that it derives certain doctrines which are not justified, and that it does not fairly state the position of everyone in the Wisconsin Synod.⁶

A number of the disagreements Johnson laid out in his paper are worth noting, because they contain issues which were central to the entire Saint James controversy:

The writer believes that statements which apply to husbands and wives have been improperly applied to male-female relationships.⁷

He believes that whatever "subordination" exists between humans in marriage, family, government, etc., came about because of sin and was not existent before the fall.⁸

To say that the "Order of Creation" teaches a "subordination of female to male makes every female a "help" to every male. This is not warranted.⁹

How Jesus treated women ought to be more important an example and more directive than anything else in the Bible! ...Jesus never prescribed a Domestic Code for his disciples to follow.¹⁰

Johnson spent considerable time on each of these points in his paper, as well as providing brief exegeses of key passages and lamenting the unfair conditions which women in congregations were often forced to endure.

Clearly by 1980 the role of women was a topic which Johnson had already studied intensely (he even refers to his "lecture notes" on the subject). Of special interest are his thoughts on how his views had originated and how they compared with others within the Wisconsin Synod:

Some of the things that are said about women, wives, and "woman's role" are not found in the Bible. Some things have been prescribed and dogmatized when they ought to have been left in the province of Christian liberty...Because it is difficult to conclude that one's teachers could be wrong on any given subject, it took several years for him [i.e., Johnson]

⁶Johnson, "Some Views on the Role of Man and Woman in the World and Church", 1.

⁷ibid. 2.

⁸ibid. 2.

⁹ibid. 7.

¹⁰ibid. 12.

to stop parroting what he had been taught. Now...he has reached contrary conclusions for himself."¹¹

According to his later colleagues, Johnson's views had been shaped by personal study of the Word and his own personal experiences at Bethany and at Saint James.¹² Johnson himself was well aware that "his views on women in ministry are different than what some care to hear at this time."¹³

One pastor who found general agreement with Johnson was his associate at Saint James, Pastor Richard Stadler, who had served at Saint James since 1975. Stadler recalls that the role of men and women was "not an issue" during his seminary training days and that his views had been shaped over a period of years as he dealt with youth groups throughout the synod in his capacity as chairman of the WELS Committee on Youth.

The 1980 Minnesota District convention refrained from endorsing the CHE theses, following the recommendation of floor committee 23 (the committee on which Johnson served). The committee did not specifically fault the theses, but felt that because of their limited scope they "could well be the source of confusion within the life of the church" and that there was "no pressing need to endorse or adopt a statement which obviously requires considerable additional study."¹⁴

More wrestling with the issues continued in 1981. That year's issues of *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly* were largely devoted to exegetical briefs on the key passages under

¹¹ibid. 3.

¹²Richard Stadler and Michael Albrecht, interview by author, West St. Paul, Minn., 22 February 2002.

¹³Johnson, op. cit., 1.

¹⁴Minnesota District Convention Proceedings (1980), 80. The Minnesota District was certainly not alone in its refusal to endorse the document. Only four districts did endorse it, while one raised definite objections to the theses (cf the 1981 BORAM, p. 16 for a summary of the districts' responses).

discussion in the area of gender roles. Although attributed to individual professors, these essays were the result of input from the entire faculty. They demonstrate the unanimity of the synod's key theologians on the Scriptural interpretations being stated. The content of these articles was largely consistent with the CHE document but differed significantly from the exegetical treatments of the same passages by Johnson.

In February of that year, the Southwest Pastors Conference of the Michigan District met to discuss these same questions. Surprisingly, one of the exegetical papers at this conference, a study of Genesis 2:18-24, was authored by two men vicaring in the conference that year-- Michael Albrecht, who later served at Saint James in West St. Paul, and Thomas Nass. Albrecht recalled a visit the two vicars made to Prof. Lawrenz at the Seminary in preparation for their writing the paper:

We wanted to make sure we understood the CHE document before we reviewed it, and so we carefully studied it line by line and then met with Prof. Lawrenz to make sure we understood it. After listening to us explain how we had understood the document, he said, "No, that's not what the committee meant." It was then I began to see the need for a better doctrinal statement than what the synod had produced to this point.¹⁵

Since the districts had not wholeheartedly endorsed the CHE theses, and since almost all of them were engaging in and calling for further study, the 1981 synod convention resolved that the Conference of Presidents "appoint an appropriate committee for further extensive study" which would report to the 1982 district conventions. The results of the study were eventually to be offered to the entire synod in the form of a pamphlet in "readily understood language."¹⁶

¹⁵Stadler/Albrecht interview. The paper that Albrecht and Nass wrote concluded that while the idea of an "order of creation" can not be derived solely from a study of Genesis 1 and 2, it was valid to speak of such an order because of Paul's use of these verses in the New Testament (cf. Albrecht & Nass, "An Exegesis of Genesis 2:18-24 in Light of the Current Discussion on the Role of Man and Woman")

¹⁶*Man and Woman in God's World*, 5-6.

The district presidents appointed a committee of 10 pastors (one from each district of the synod) to produce the requested study document. By the summer of 1982, this committee of ten, chaired by Pastor Wayne Mueller, had produced an essay entitled "Man and Woman in God's World" for presentation to the districts. The need for additional editing, however, pushed back the publication of the document from its original schedule. Northwestern Publishing House did not publish the final edition of *Man and Woman in God's World* until 1985. Because the committee of ten thought that more of its research would benefit those who wished to study the issue more intensively, a longer companion volume entitled *Man and Woman in God's World: an Expanded Study* was published in 1987.

Part II: Documents under Debate

Although *Man and Woman in God's World* was written by a different group of men than the original CHE document and followed a different form and structure, the teachings it contained were clearly in agreement with the older work. Compare the following quotations:

CHE document (1978)

Every injunction of St. Paul that he voices in reference to the order of creation must also be led back to the moral law and be understood as in some way expressing a demand that is imbedded in the moral law. (p. 14)¹⁷

The terms "woman" and "man" are general, generic. The burden of proof would rest upon anyone who contends that "man and woman" here mean "husband and wife."...this proof cannot be produced. (p. 9)

In the work and worship life of the church

Man and Woman in God's World (1985)

Paul's exhortation is not rooted in a changing custom of the day. It is based on the headship principle which God established at the time of creation and which therefore applies to all times. (p. 17)

The first man and first woman whom God created represent in their lives what the Lord wants in the lives of all people. What applies specifically to that man and that woman we know as Adam and Eve applies to all men and women generally. (p. 9)

The second area in which the New Testament

¹⁷Page numbers in the CHE document are from its printing in the 1979 BORAM.

God therefore wants this immutable holy will, including also his order of creation as it pertains to the distinctive roles of men and women, to be reflected. (p. 14)

applies the principle of the headship of the man is the church...We do not assume that this description of the Gospel now sets aside the principles of the law. Restored men and women use the precepts of the law to direct them (p. 16-17).

In 1 Timothy 2:12-15, St. Paul touches upon the very heart and essence of a woman's subordinate role...What the apostle forbids is an exercise of authority over man by a woman (p. 8)

In 1 Timothy 2 Paul again emphasizes the headship of the man as he discusses the public ministry of the church...A woman who has "authority over a man" violates the principle of the headship of man. (p. 17)

In applying the broad moral principles that woman is not to exercise authority over men to her activities in public life outside the home, Scripture leaves a great deal to our conscientious Christian judgment (p. 13).

The Bible, however, does not make direct application of the headship principle in society...The principle is clear and unchanging, but for the application of the principle in a society Scripture leaves a great deal to our conscientious Christian judgment (p. 20-21)

The years of study had been beneficial to the synod because they had allowed more pastors to dig into the Word of God. But it had not resulted in new innovations in doctrine, nor did the committee of ten accept the arguments that Iver Johnson had put forward challenging its view of gender roles.

The 1989 synod convention received two memorials in regard to "Man and Woman in God's World." One, from the Minnesota District's Mankato conference, urged the synod to adopt the doctrinal content of the pamphlet; the other, from the Pacific Northwest District's Cascades conference, urged the synod not to adopt it, not because it disagreed with the contents of the pamphlet but because "it should not be the business of the synod to adopt its doctrine by synod resolution."¹⁸ After considerable discussion the convention voted to receive the document as "a

¹⁸WELS convention proceedings (1989), 51.

correct exposition of the Scriptural teachings in this matter."¹⁹ However, since "Man and Woman in God's World" had not been intended to serve as a formal doctrinal statement, the convention also urged the Conference of Presidents to produce a shorter doctrinal statement for consideration by the 1991 convention.

A number of pastors in the Minnesota District were troubled by the action of the 1989 convention and expressed their concerns in a memorial to the district. They were concerned that "many of the delegates who voted on that resolution [to accept "Man and Woman in God's World"] had not thoroughly studied that document prior to voting." They felt that adopting a "study document" would place it "on a par with Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions", and that "it should not be the business of the Synod to adopt its doctrine by synod resolution."²⁰ They requested that the synod rescind its 1989 approval and refrain from adopting any proposed doctrinal statement in 1991. Sixteen Minnesota pastors signed the resolution, including district vice-president David Ponath and Richard Stadler of Saint James in West St. Paul.

Not all the pastors signed this memorial for the same reason. Some had no quarrel with the contents of "Man and Woman in God's World" but were unhappy with the process with which it had been written and approved. But for Pastor Stadler of Saint James the issue was the document itself. He felt that both "Man and Woman" and its longer companion study showed serious gaps in the exegeses of key passages and were basically unclear.²¹ This was especially disappointing to the Saint James men because Pastor Johnson had personally met with the committee of ten prior to the writing of the document.

¹⁹Doctrinal Statements of the WELS, 62.

²⁰Their memorial is printed in the 1990 Minnesota District Convention proceedings, 97-98.

²¹Stadler/Albrecht interview.

Since the pastors' memorial had not addressed specific concerns with the contents of "Man and Woman in God's World", the 1990 Minnesota District convention decided not to take any action on the memorial. Instead, it directed the pastors to share their concerns with the new committee of five men selected to compose the brief doctrinal statement the synod had requested.²²

This new statement, entitled "Scriptural Principles of Man and Woman Roles" (hereafter simply referred to as "Scriptural Principles") made its first appearance in the March 1, 1991 issue of the *Northwestern Lutheran*. It consisted of 20 theses and 16 antitheses intended to summarize the content of the earlier study. Readers were invited to send comments on these statements to the Conference of Presidents. Already by April 24 a revised version of "Scriptural Principles" had been prepared. This was the version viewed by the 1991 synod convention.

The 1991 convention received at least six additional memorials with suggestions for improvements in wording to "Scriptural Principles." In light of these suggestions, the convention voted to officially adopt "Scriptural Principles" but to allow time for further refinements in wording. It also requested that Bible study materials be produced so that congregations would be able to study these principles. This request was fulfilled by Prof. John Brug's "Bible Study on Man and Woman in God's World" which was published in 1992.

The reaction of the Saint James pastors (who by this time also included Michael Albrecht, who had accepted a call to the congregation in 1990) to "Scriptural Principles" was decidedly negative. They felt that the new theses were harsher and even less accurate than the previous studies had been. They felt that not only had their concerns been rejected, but that many of the

²²Minnesota District Proceedings (1990), 91-92.

theses were specifically directed against things they had said and written.²³ Their belief is actually substantiated by the introduction to "Scriptural Principles":

This statement was not intended to be a comprehensive statement about scriptural roles for men and women. It is a brief doctrinal statement which addresses, both in a positive and negative way, specific issues which were points of controversy at the time the statement was composed.²⁴

Some of the "points of controversy" were no doubt statements which Pastors Johnson, Stadler, and Albrecht themselves had raised.

The pastors of Saint James reacted to "Scriptural Principles" by composing a statement of their own. In December of 1991, after no less than 21 revisions, these pastors completed a document which they called "Heirs Together of the Gracious Gift of Life" (hereafter referred to as "Heirs Together"). It consisted of 31 theses and 9 antitheses with supporting Scripture references. But while its format was similar to that of "Scriptural Principles", a number of its statements were at odds with the synodically approved document:

"Scriptural Principles"

Thesis 18. In church assemblies the headship principle means that only men will cast votes when such votes exercise authority over men. Only men will do work that involves authority over men (1 Co 11:3-10; 14:33-35; 1 Ti 2:11,12)

Antithesis 6. We reject the opinion that male headship and female submission apply only to marriage or only to marriage and the church (1 Co 11:3; 1 Ti 2:12).

"Heirs Together"

Thesis 26. If Christians choose to organize themselves democratically, they should realize that the New Testament neither defines what voting is nor prescribes who should be allowed to vote. Since the New Testament does not prohibit women from participating in the decision making process of the church, it is not automatically sinful for women to express their opinions or to cast votes in a gathering in which men are also participating.

Antithesis 3. We do not believe that 1 Corinthians 11:3 prescribes a general headship of men over women. This is one of the passages where we believe the scriptural

²³Stadler/Albrecht interview.

²⁴*Doctrinal Statements of the WELS*, 63.

context indicates the words *aner* and *gune* are to be translated "husband and wife"...²⁵

Antithesis 10. We reject the opinion that the mutual submission encouraged by Scripture for all believers (Eph 5:21; Mt 20:25-28) negates the exercise of male headship

Thesis 16. The basic meaning of the Greek verb *hypotassomai*, which is usually translated "submit" is "to arrange oneself under" another person. Such submissiveness is urged upon all Christians, not just wives (Ephesians 5:21; 1 Peter 5:5; 1 Corinthians 16:16).

Thesis 10. Scripture teaches that headship includes authority (1 Co 11:3, 10; Col 1:18; 2:10; Eph 1:22; 1 Ti 2:11,12) Authority should not be used to dominate but to serve others (Mt 20:25-28)

Thesis 9. ...Sometimes the New Testament uses the word *kephale* as a metaphor to stress the authority the "head" exercises. (Ephesians 1:22 Colossians 2:10) But more often in the New Testament the context stresses the head's connection with the body or its loving responsibility for the body. (Ephesians 4:15 5:23 Colossians 1:18 2:19)

Antithesis 11. We reject the opinion that the word "head" as applied to Christ and man in the New Testament does not include authority.

Antithesis 7. We do not believe that the word "head", when used as a metaphor for the husband in the New Testament, primarily stresses the exercise of authority.

Many of the theses and antitheses of the two documents were in complete agreement.

However, the main points of disagreement that had appeared more than a decade earlier still remained--the scope of Paul's directives, the significance of the words denoting "authority" and "submission", and their application in the church and in society.

The appearance of "Heirs Together" was a visible dissent from the statement adopted by the synod in 1991. However, it could not have come as a surprise. In fact, the ongoing debate on the issue of gender roles within the Minnesota District's St. Croix Conference was already well known by this time. Michael Albrecht recalls that while still serving in Texas in the 1980's he had heard rumors about this "troubled conference."²⁶ The diversity of views within the

²⁵Antithesis 4 of "Heirs Together" contains a similar argument concerning the interpretation of *gune* in 1 Timothy 2.

²⁶Stadler/Albrecht interview.

conference was well known in the Minnesota District, and the Saint James pastors were known to be among the most vocal protesters of the synodical stance.²⁷

To this day the writing of "Heirs Together" remains a point of contention between the Saint James pastors and the Minnesota District Presidium. The Saint James men insist that they wrote their document merely as a response to the synod's own resolution inviting refinements of wording to "Scriptural Principles"; that it was written only at the request of members of their own congregation; and that it was distributed to others only at their specific request or, on one occasion, the request of the presidium itself.²⁸ But the district officials feel that the writing and distribution of "Heirs Together" were inappropriate attempts to win other pastors over to the Saint James position.

Both "Scriptural Principles" and "Heirs" were examined and discussed a number of times in the early months of 1992. A letter from WELS president Carl Mischke clarifying "Scriptural Principles" appeared in the January 1, 1992 edition of the *Northwestern Lutheran*. On February 21 of that year a special meeting was held at Bloomington Lutheran Church in Bloomington, MN and attended by the synod and district praesidia, several seminary professors and a number of area pastors.²⁹ Ten essays related to the controversy were presented--two essays each on five key passages. By this point views on the subject had polarized to the extent that the pairs of essays functioned largely in a point-counterpoint format.³⁰

A few weeks later, on March 15, a special meeting was held at Saint James which was also attended by President Birkholz of the Minnesota District and several synodical officials.

²⁷Pastor Charles Degner, interview by the author, St. Peter, Minn., 21 February 2002.

²⁸Stadler/Albrecht interview.

²⁹Minnesota District Convention Proceedings (1992), 53.

³⁰Stadler/Albrecht interview.

After much discussion the congregation was urged to study the issues in Prof. Brug's Bible study, which was still awaiting publication at that time.³¹ This seems to have been the first formal involvement of Saint James congregation itself in the controversy, not just its pastors. But the issue was hardly unknown to the congregation. According to the Saint James pastors, Rev. Johnson had often studied the issues with his members in Bible class and prominently posted synodical declarations as well as his own correspondence with the synod on the issue.³² In their later visits and classes at Saint James the district and synod officials found the congregation very familiar with the issues under discussion.

The congregation did not sit idle. On April 21 a motion was passed at a congregational meeting to prepare a memorial to the district "requesting that the Synod rescind the adoption of the statement 'Scriptural Principles of Man and Woman Roles' until such a time that all congregations have had sufficient time to study the document."³³ This memorial was approved on May 26 and sent to the district in time for its upcoming convention.

III. Disagreement and Division

The 1992 Minnesota District Convention, held in New Ulm from June 23-25, can be considered a turning point in the history of the controversy. Two significant decisions of the convention had considerable impact on the Saint James case. First, the convention did not follow Saint James' request to memorialize the synod. Instead, it followed the recommendation of the floor committee that "withdrawing the SPMWR has potential to cause great confusion within our synod regarding Scripture's teaching in this area and our commitment to it."³⁴ Instead, the

³¹Minnesota District Convention Proceedings (1992), 53.

³²Stadler/Albrecht interview.

³³Minnesota District Convention Proceedings (1992), 125.

³⁴ibid. 95.

convention urged continued study of the document, asked the Conference of Presidents to produce a "clear summary" of the theses, and invited Saint James congregation to memorialize the synod itself. Unable to gain the support of its district, Saint James would have to attempt to influence the synod on its own.

The other major decision of the convention involved the election of officers. District President Gerhard Birkholz had announced that he would not seek another term as president. Sitting first vice-president David Ponath was on the ballot to replace President Birkholz. But instead the delegates narrowly elected Pastor Larry Cross of Rochester as the new district president. Pastor Albrecht of Saint James later recalled, "You could have heard a pin drop in the DMLC gym when the election results were announced."³⁵ Cross had publicly supported the synodical statements on men and women, while Ponath had signed the 1990 memorial asking the synod not to adopt "Man and Woman in God's World." The election of President Cross seems to indicate a desire for a more aggressive approach to the Saint James controversy than the previous presidium had followed.

Following his defeat, Rev. Ponath declined to be nominated for the position of first vice-president. In his place the district chose Pastor Ronald Uhlhorn of New Ulm. When Charles Degner of St. Peter was elected second vice-president, it meant that a nearly complete turnover of the district presidium had taken place.³⁶ These new officials had the challenge of beginning their positions in a period of considerable turbulence in the district.

³⁵Stadler/Albrecht interview.

³⁶ The only member of the previous presidium to continue in office was the district secretary, Pastor J.D. Liggett of North Mankato.

The new presidium wisely chose to familiarize itself with the scriptural teachings under discussion. In September of 1992 the four of them traveled to Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary in Mequon for three days of intensive study of the relevant passages. The following month the presidium began a series of face-to-face meetings with the three Saint James pastors. The group thoroughly examined and discussed each verse of the debated passages. Yet the disagreements were not resolved. One presidium member admits that he never felt that the meetings were making progress in bringing the two groups together.³⁷ As time went on the groups slowly became less optimistic of reaching agreement.

Meanwhile Saint James followed the suggestion of the district and prepared a memorial to the 1993 synod convention. This memorial appeared in the 1993 BORAM. Unlike its 1992 district memorial, which contained no specific criticism of "Scriptural Principles", the 1993 memorial pointedly charged the document, and the synod itself, with error:

WHEREAS 3) SPMWR claims too much when it says that "God made man the head of woman and made woman to be submissive to man" (Thesis 4) and extends this "beyond the marriage relationship" (Thesis 5) although this relationship exists only between husbands and wives...

WHEREAS 4) SPMWR cites 1 Corinthians 11:3, "the head of the woman is the man", and 1 Timothy 2:12, "I suffer not a woman to teach nor to usurp authority over the man" to support the claim that male headship and female submission apply beyond marriage (Antithesis 7) even though the Greek words used to translate "man" and "woman" could also legitimately be translated "husband" and "wife" in both passages...

WHEREAS 5) SPMWR erroneously cites 1 Corinthians 14:34 to support the claim that "God...made woman to be submissive to man" (Thesis 4) yet the next verse, 35, clearly indicates Paul is speaking about husbands and wives ("ask their husbands at home") There is no Bible passage anywhere that declares "God made woman to be submissive to man"...

WHEREAS 6) SPMWR burdens the consciences of Christians unnecessarily by implying they are sinning against moral law (which binds all people of all time) when it claims that

³⁷Degner interview.

the role relationship of men and women is part of "God's unchanging will" [Thesis 2] and when it insists that "to refuse [these roles] hurts our relationship with God and with each other" [Thesis 6]...

Resolved a) That WELS will not make new laws where the Scriptures have not required them...

Resolved d) That WELS not burden consciences by creating a new category of relationships between men and women...³⁸

Saint James had publicly taken a stand against the interpretation of Scripture that the synod had espoused. It had accused the WELS of unnecessarily burdening consciences and creating new laws in areas where God had not spoken. These serious accusations could not be ignored by the 1993 convention.

In 1993 the synod convention once again approved a revised version of "Scriptural Principles of Man and Woman Roles." However, it was reluctant to let these theses be the last word on the subject of gender roles. The convention requested yet another document be written, this one a "brief, practical statement marked by a positive tone."³⁹

By approving "Scriptural Principles" the convention had rejected the central points of the Saint James memorial. The synod's direct response to this memorial was resolution No. 13, which rejected Saint James' interpretation of 1 Corinthians 11 and 14 and requested that Saint James, under the oversight of the district officers, restudy these and other pertinent passages. That the convention wanted to avoid antagonizing or alienating Saint James is clear from its rejection of the following amendment to its resolution:

WHEREAS 5) Memorial 93-5 [sent by Saint James] contains inaccurate and unbiblical statements regarding the Role of Man and Woman and the WELS Confessional statement SPMWR; and

³⁸The entire memorial is printed in the 1993 BORAM, 421-423.

³⁹ WELS convention proceedings (1993), 55.

WHEREAS 6) Memorial 93-5 calls on the WELS in convention to make false and unbiblical statements regarding the Role of Man and Woman; therefore, be it Resolved, a) That the Synod in convention communicate to Saint James Lutheran Church, through the Minnesota District Praesidium, clearly identifying these inaccurate and unbiblical statements...⁴⁰

The presidium itself chose to conduct the Bible classes requested by the convention.

Pastor Degner recalled that the presidium was always "treated graciously" and "was never shown disrespect" by the members of Saint James; yet the classes were still conducted in a "difficult atmosphere" because of the knowledge of the doctrinal divisions that lay between the presidium and the pastors of Saint James.⁴¹

Much of the class time was spent discussing specific applications of the headship principle to life in society, often in the workplace. Frustration was expressed when the presidium refused to give specific answers to every question that was raised. The Saint James members were repeatedly urged to "know the principle, apply the principle" rather than to use Scripture legalistically as a rule book for every situation. As "Man and Woman in God's World" and "Scriptural Principles" both had stated, a great deal was left to Christian judgment in this area. However, this well-intentioned advice was sometimes interpreted as confusion or indecision. The members wanted to know "Can I take this job, or can't I?" and expected a simple yes or no answer. Instead, the presidium's written responses to questions submitted by the congregation took up more than 30 pages.⁴² The Saint James pastors recalled instances when answers given by the presidium seemed to contradict statements made to the congregation by synodical officials at other gatherings.⁴³ For their part, the presidium felt that at times some of the questions raised by

⁴⁰ibid. 56.

⁴¹Degner interview.

⁴²Minnesota District convention proceedings (1994), 51.

⁴³Stadler/Albrecht interview.

the congregation were attempts to challenge or trap the presenters instead of being motivated by a genuine desire to learn.⁴⁴ Following these Bible classes the presidium met with the Vestry (Church council) of Saint James and shared with them a critique of "Heirs Together" and a number of related concerns.⁴⁵

The level of frustration was also increasing in the private meetings between the Saint James pastors and the presidium. The presidium felt that differences in the approach to the method of Biblical interpretation were keeping the groups from reaching agreement on the meaning of debated words and passages. The Saint James pastors felt that the hearings were becoming "evidentiary"—seeking to pin them down on a charge of false doctrine.

On November 29, 1993, the presidium addressed the Saint James pastors in writing with two specific doctrinal questions and asked them to withdraw their document "Heirs Together of the Gracious Gift of Life." The presidium felt it needed to ask these questions "to determine whether or not you are still in fellowship with us."⁴⁶

More than four months later the presidium received lengthy letters in reply from each of the three pastors at Saint James. Each of the pastors in ^{his} ~~their~~ own way expressed the sentiment that there ought to be no break in fellowship between themselves and the Wisconsin Synod. They each agreed to withdraw "Heirs Together" from discussion since it had not served the purpose that they had planned and hoped for. However, each of them also objected to the stand the synod had taken in "Scriptural Principles." Each of the letters also expressed optimism that

⁴⁴Degner interview.

⁴⁵Minnesota District Convention Proceedings (1994), 51.

⁴⁶Minnesota District Presidium, letter to the Saint James pastors, 29 November 1993.

the "companion document" proposed by the 1993 synod convention would prove helpful in settling the differences which existed.⁴⁷

The answers of the Saint James men were not fully satisfactory to President Cross and the presidium.⁴⁸ They began to meet with the pastors on an individual basis to give them the fullest opportunity to express their views. Unfortunately, these meetings did not result in any new agreement. By February 20, 1995 the presidium addressed another official letter to the pastors with the following conclusion:

Sadly, we have come to the conclusion that you are not in agreement with our Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod in the teachings set forth in "Scriptural Principles of Man and Woman Roles." It seems evident to us that you have not taught and are not now teaching what our synod believes that the Bible teaches in this matter.... We do not believe that these matters can be treated as open questions.⁴⁹

The letter contained a specific list of the areas of disagreement:

A. In our studies of 1 Corinthians 11 and 1 Timothy 2 you say that the verses speak primarily about husband and wife. You disagree with the interpretation of "Scriptural Principles of Man and Woman Roles" when it applies these passages to men and women beyond the husband and wife relationship.

B. You believe that the headship of man and the submission of woman is not taught in the Bible except in the context of marriage. You believe that there is headship of man over woman in the church only as it applies to marriage. You do not believe that that headship principle applies in any way to society.

C. You do disagree with "Scriptural Principles of Man and Woman Roles" that the role of man and woman is moral law. For this reason you do not believe that these principles can be applied to society.⁵⁰

⁴⁷This document appeared as an essay by Pastor Walter Beckmann entitled "Male and Female He Created Them: the Spirit in which we Apply the Scriptural Roles of Man and Woman" which appeared on July 18, 1994. However, it was never published by Northwestern Publishing House and it does not seem to have had much effect on subsequent discussions between Saint James and synod officials.

⁴⁸Minnesota District Convention Proceedings (1994), 51

⁴⁹Minnesota District Presidium, letter to Pastor Michael Albrecht, 20 February 1995.

⁵⁰ibid.

The presidium asked for a prompt response to their charges. Each of the Saint James pastors responded with another lengthy letter dated April 4, 1995.

These letters, as well as the letters of April 1994, show the Saint James pastors not only disagreed with the synod's position, but they also disagreed with each other to some extent. The presidium had already come to the conclusion during earlier interviews that not all three pastors were holding to the same doctrinal errors. In particular it was the presidium's hope that Pastor Albrecht could still be kept in fellowship even if the other two pastors persisted in error.⁵¹ The Saint James pastors agreed that their viewpoints on the roles of women were not completely identical, but resented what they felt was an effort to "drive a wedge" between them, or to separate them from their congregation.⁵²

A new development in 1995 hastened the actions of the district presidium. A letter drawn up by the Elders of Saint James congregation was sent to the presidium asking them to either declare their pastors out of fellowship or stop interrogating them. While this letter probably did not alter the final outcome of the discussions with the pastors or the congregation, the district officials acknowledge that it did affect the timetable in which they were working.⁵³

After the receipt of this letter, events moved very quickly. On May 1 the presidium faxed letters to each of the three pastors responding to their past letter and asking them to respond to an additional question about permitting women to serve in congregational offices. The pastors again responded by letter. Pastor Stadler's reply shows his considerable vexation:

⁵¹This difference is still apparent in the final letter of suspension eventually sent to Pastor Albrecht, which stated "We do not believe that you agree with them [your colleagues] entirely in their position, but by taking a stand with them, you have chosen to stand against what our synod teaches." (p. 1 of May 12, 1995 suspension letter)

⁵²Albrecht/Stadler interview.

⁵³Degner interview.

We have invited you to show us from Scripture that our understanding is wrong. You have not done that. You have simply repeated that you don't agree with our interpretations...You haven't offered us one Scriptural reason why our letters were inadequate...Is this the way confessional Lutherans engage a brother who cares enough to show his understanding with you? We try to interact with you, to reason with you brother to brother, and you change the subject? What's going on? If you are going to suspend us from your fellowship, do it, but do it on the basis of the fundamental issues, not some question of application.⁵⁴

Stadler even supplied a list of five of these "fundamental issues" upon which the two sides had been unable to agree.

The pastors' persistence in adhering to their positions compelled the presidium to make the final move. On May 12, 1995, after "much prayer"⁵⁵ and "with heavy hearts",⁵⁶ the presidium informed Pastors Johnson, Stadler and Albrecht that they had been declared out of fellowship with the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod. The reasons for this declaration, as announced to the pastors of the Minnesota District, were that

1. The pastors of Saint James do not agree with us in the interpretation of 1 Corinthians 11:3-16 and 1 Timothy 2:11-15 as it pertains to the role of men and women. The difference in interpretation is such that it leads to a different doctrine than what the Wisconsin Ev. Lutheran Synod has adopted.
2. The pastors of Saint James have publicly stated that they disagree in principle with what the Wisconsin Synod teaches in regard to the role of man and woman. In accusing our synod of saying more than what the Scripture says, they have accused our synod of false doctrine.⁵⁷

The three pastors were given notice of their right to appeal this decision according to the constitutional provisions of the Minnesota District.

⁵⁴Richard Stadler, letter to the Minnesota District presidium, 6 May 1995.

⁵⁵Minnesota District Presidium, letter to the pastors of the Minnesota District, 12 May 1995.

⁵⁶Idem, letter to pastor Richard Stadler, dated 12 May 1995 (the same phrase can be found in the letters to Iver Johnson and Michael Albrecht).

⁵⁷Idem, letter to the pastors of the Minnesota District, 12 May 1995.

The question remained: with whom would the members of Saint James side, their pastors or their synod? This question was answered at a congregational meeting held on June 4, 1995.⁵⁸ President Cross addressed the congregation personally, and each of the three pastors was also given an opportunity to speak. The Vestry (Church Council) of Saint James recommended that the pastors be retained, although realizing that such a vote would result in termination of membership in the synod. The voters of Saint James agreed with their leaders by choosing to keep its pastors by a vote of 118 to 3 with 2 abstentions.⁵⁹ Following the announcement of the balloting, President Cross confirmed the implications of the vote, which ended Saint James' 67-year membership in the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod.

IV. Appeal and Aftermath

In the spring of 1996, the Saint James pastors chose to exercise their right to appeal their suspension to the Minnesota District, following section 7.30 of the district constitution.⁶⁰ The 1996 district convention elected a review commission of five pastors, chaired by Professor Arnold Koelpin of Martin Luther College, to judge the appeal.

The review commission undertook its investigation in considerable detail. Interviews were conducted with each of the Saint James pastors and with each member of the district presidium. The commission also "thoroughly read and discussed the documented writings and

⁵⁸A copy of the official minutes of this meeting appears in Appendix I.

⁵⁹This official vote total, which consists only of male voters, was preceded by an opinion poll of all confirmed adults in the congregation (see Appendix I for details).

⁶⁰Saint James also had the option of appealing as a congregation, but chose to let the appeal of its pastors determine its course of action.

actions" of both sides.⁶¹ This process lasted more than a year before the commission released its final report on September 2, 1997.

The report of the review commission contained not only a verdict on the suspension, but a detailed analysis of the process which resulted in the pastors' suspension. In fact, the commission even composed its own set of 30 theses summarizing the truths of Genesis 1-3 and their relation to the roles of men and women. The commission did uphold the presidium's suspension of the three pastors: "The commission finds that the Presidium acted in good faith. Given the document the Synod adopted...and the stand the Saint James pastors took, the Presidium felt constrained to act because of an impasse."⁶² The basic error of the Saint James men was that "[they] hold that the role relationship as defined in Genesis applies and is exercised solely in marriage."⁶³ This misunderstanding is what lay behind the inability to come to an agreement on the proper roles of women and men in church and human society.

However, the commission found that a misunderstanding of definitions and of "Scriptural Principles" led the sides to often talk past each other.⁶⁴ This was especially the case when the sides debated the question "Is the order of creation moral law?" The Saint James men felt that "Scriptural Principles" established this connection even though such a statement does not appear directly in the theses. The presidium, on the other hand, maintained that the order of creation had "moral implications" but was not to be equated with moral law.⁶⁵

⁶¹Report of the Review Commission, 1.

⁶²ibid. 2.

⁶³ibid. 8.

⁶⁴ibid. 2-3.

⁶⁵ibid. 2-3.

The commission felt that "Scriptural Principles" did not speak as clearly on this matter as it could have, partly because of its compact theses-antitheses format. Because the Saint James pastors' actions had taken place in an attempt to contest what the commission judged to be an unclear document, it recommended that the suspension be upheld for a one-year period in which the Saint James pastors could communicate their concerns to the Conference of Presidents. At the end of that year the COP was to render a final decision on the case.⁶⁶

It does not appear that such a detailed further review of the case ever took place. The Saint James pastors decided that a further appeal to the synod, although constitutionally possible, would be an exercise in futility.⁶⁷

Moreover, by this time Saint James was increasingly becoming adjusted to its new status as an independent Lutheran congregation. In keeping with its position, the congregation deleted the word "male" from the suffrage requirements in the church constitution. As a result, women are now eligible to hold any congregational office other than the position of pastor. A \$1.8 million building expansion completed in 1998 added classrooms and parking space to the church facility. In April of 2000, following Pastor Johnson's departure, the congregation called Pastor Ralph Rokke, a member of the LCMS clergy roster, and also added a youth director the following year. Today the congregation annually supports 10 world missions of a variety of church bodies chosen by a congregational panel. It continues to support the budget of nearby St. Croix Lutheran High School. As of the writing of this paper, there are no current discussions taking place attempting to reestablish fellowship between Saint James and the Wisconsin Synod.

⁶⁶ibid. 8-9.

⁶⁷Stadler/Albrecht interview.

V. Perspectives and Postscript

As the review committee pointed out, the crux of the debate (although by no means the only point of disagreement) was the scope of Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 11 and 1 Timothy 2, and therefore also the implications of the creation account. How can Lutherans with similar backgrounds and training come to such radically different conclusions when studying the same words in the original?

The answer lies in the area of hermeneutics. Both members of the presidium whom the author interviewed identified this as the real root of the controversy. President Cross stated, "The difference lies in the approach to Scripture. Too often a proposed historical background to Paul's letters took precedence in the minds of the Saint James pastors over what the text actually said. It was a 'grammatical-historical' approach to Scripture in which the 'historical' far outweighed the 'grammatical'."⁶⁸ Pastor Degner agreed: "Too often the question to them was not 'What is the clear meaning?' but 'What can we possibly get out of this?'"⁶⁹

Led by this speculative method of exegesis, the Saint James men artificially narrowed the scope of *aner* and *gune*--particularly in 1 Corinthians 11--from the naturally wide scope of meaning demanded by the context. This method limited the significance of the creation of Eve to the role of a wife for Adam rather than the creation of the female gender as a helper for the male. It limited the scope of *kephale* in certain passages rather than allowing it its full range of meaning in the context. A combination of these exegetical problems added up to a difference in doctrine. A related issue that occasionally comes up in the discussions is the use of descriptive

⁶⁸Cross interview.

⁶⁹Degner interview.

passages (such as Old Testament stories of female roles or the actions of Jesus toward women) rather than prescriptive passages to establish doctrinal points.

After nearly two decades of controversy, one point that no one involved in the controversy could deny is that there were real doctrinal differences between the synod and the pastors of Saint James. The Saint James pastors themselves admitted as much. However, in their view, these differences ought not to be divisive. Pastor Stadler stated this in a letter to the presidium:

Although I have disagreed with you and your understanding of Scripture, I still regard you as brothers in Christ. Healthy families do allow brothers to disagree with each other. If your view of fellowship does not allow you to tolerate us in the Wisconsin Synod because of the questions we raise, that is your prerogative.⁷⁰

The same was true for the differences between Pastor Albrecht and his colleagues. As he recalled, "We would openly disagree with each other in our meetings with the presidium. By this we hoped to demonstrate to them that we could still have a healthy working relationship despite our differences."⁷¹ This constitutes a repudiation of the "unit concept" view of fellowship held by the Wisconsin Synod.⁷²

Moreover, the insistence of at least one Saint James pastor that women were not permitted to serve as pastors would seem to be a logical inconsistency with his church's position unless there were other factors at work: "Women may not serve as pastors. There is much more at stake here, however, than the roles of men and women; this is an issue that will eventually force us to restudy what Scripture teaches about Church and Ministry."⁷³ This issue was never

⁷⁰Richard Stadler, letter to the Minnesota District Presidium, 4 April 1995. p. 9.

⁷¹Stadler/Albrecht interview.

⁷²Stadler made the same point when he asked rhetorically in the author's interview, "Isn't 98 percent enough [agreement for fellowship]?"

⁷³Michael Albrecht, letter to the Minnesota District presidium, 7 April 1994.

fully explored in the presidium's discussions, but it implies, at the very least, that some at Saint James felt there was a weakness in the synod's understanding of another key doctrine.

The fact is that many significant issues, not just one, were separating the pastors of Saint James from the biblical position of the Wisconsin Synod. Even if a division had not occurred on the role of women, from a human standpoint it seems likely that a clash on some other issue was inevitable--particularly in view of the hermeneutical differences mentioned above.

Another frequent claim of the Saint James pastors is that they were not alone in their views. They felt that many of the neighboring WELS pastors of the St. Croix conference had similar reservations about the synod's teaching, but that Saint James was being singled out as an example. This is why Pastor Stadler wrote in one of his letters:

If the Minnesota District Presidium is going to require that the three pastors of Saint James promise in writing "to teach in accordance with...SPMWR", isn't it also obligated to get a similar commitment in writing from all the pastors and teachers in our District?⁷⁴

The three pastors of Saint James are not the only members of our Synod who have reservations about what SPMWR teaches...many are not expressing themselves because of a fear that action will be taken against them if they honestly admit their dissent.⁷⁵

While the views of the other men in the conference are known only to themselves, the fact is that Saint James and its pastors singled themselves out by their vocal reaction to the synod's position. No other pastors signed "Heirs Together" or released a similar document in clear opposition to the synod's statements. No other congregation sent a memorial to the synod demanding a retraction of its position. From the viewpoint of the presidium, it was not necessary to demand subscription to "Scriptural Principles" from every pastor in the conference because their continued membership in the synod without protest constituted an unwritten acceptance of the

⁷⁴Richard Stadler, letter to the Minnesota District presidium, 4 Apr 1994. p. 1

⁷⁵ibid. 1.

synod's position. While Saint James and its pastors were quite possibly not alone in their views, they were alone in their publicly stated response.

In retrospect one might conclude that the two year "cycle" of agreeing with a doctrinal statement while asking for amendments or additional statements, a pattern which can be seen frequently from 1979 to 1993, led to confusion. However, it should be remembered that the various statements were complementary, not contradictory. The process of developing doctrinal statements may have seemed tedious, but it did allow more persons to suggest improvements in wording and helped make the statements a truly synodical confession rather than the work of an isolated few.

What effect has the controversy had on the Wisconsin Synod? The clarification of Scripture's position has actually helped to expand the roles women typically hold in many of our congregations. Activities once felt to be out of place for women due mainly to tradition have been shown to be permissible as long as they do not involve the exercise of authority over men. No doubt the thorough biblical studies of men's roles, when considered with the Gospel motivation to carry out those roles, have moved many men to carry out their role as "head" in active expressions of Christlike love.⁷⁶

As for Saint James and its pastors, their confession has led them down a different path. Yet although this has made it impossible for us to walk together in visible church fellowship, we remain hopeful and confident that we remain united in the invisible fellowship of faith. When Pastor Degner needed to leave that fateful congregational meeting of June 4, 1995 before its

⁷⁶The Saint James men, not surprisingly, feel otherwise. Pastor Stadler stated that he felt that the handling of the controversy had created a "climate of fear" within the synod. "I believe that the WELS has lost much of its former vitality." (Stadler/Albrecht interview)

conclusion, he was heard to remark to the Saint James pastors as he left the room: "I'll see you in heaven."⁷⁷ This remains our prayer for the pastors and members of Saint James Lutheran Church--that the Holy Spirit would preserve them in faith in spite of error until we reach perfect unity in our heavenly home.

⁷⁷Stadler/Albrecht interview.

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**SAINT JAMES LUTHERAN CHURCH
UNAPPROVED MINUTES - SPECIAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING
June 4, 1995**

The meeting was opened at 10:47 a.m. by President Leo Rickertsen.

President Rickertsen opened the meeting with prayer.

Attendance Registers were distributed and signed. There were three hundred ninety-nine (399) members and twenty-four (24) non members registered.

President Rickertsen presented the agenda (on file) and explained that (everyone) would have twenty minutes for their presentation. He stated that the meeting would be recorded on audio tape. He introduced the District Presidium and stated that Circuit Pastor, Mark Henke would be arriving shortly.

The District Presidium - Rev. Larry Cross, Rev. Charles Degner and Rev. Ronald Uhlhorn - were the first to speak. Pastor Cross read the prepared text entitled "An Encouragement to Saint James Lutheran Church" (on file) which had been distributed to the congregation. He also read the printed folder entitled "The Spirit in Which We Apply the Scriptural Roles of Men and Woman" (on file.)

A brief recess was taken.

The Pastors of Saint James - Rev. Michael Albrecht, Rev. Iver Johnson and Rev. Richard Stadler - were each given time to speak to the congregation.

Pastor Cross was then given additional time to speak because the Saint James' Pastors went over their time limit by five minutes.

Another brief recess was taken.

The meeting was turned over to discussion. Those who wished to ask questions or present a point were given the opportunity to do so. Twelve persons requested the opportunity to speak and President Rickertsen read several comment cards from members.

Pastor Degner excused himself, due to the fact that he had to return to St. Peter to conduct a funeral.

The vestry recommendation to the congregation was presented as the following motion:

M/S

ARTICLE II OF THE CONSTITUTION OF SAINT JAMES LUTHERAN CHURCH OF WEST SAINT PAUL STATES THAT NO DOCTRINE SHALL BE TAUGHT OR TOLERATED WHICH IS TO ANY DEGREE AT VARIANCE WITH THE CANONICAL BOOKS OF THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS OR WITH THE SYMBOLICAL BOOKS CONTAINED IN THE BOOK OF CONCORD OF 1580.

WE, THE VESTRY OF THE CONGREGATION, HAVE OBSERVED AND EXPERIENCED THE MINISTRY OF PASTORS JOHNSON, STADLER AND ALBRECHT AMONG US:

.WE HAVE HEARD THEM PREACH AND TEACH
.WE HAVE RECEIVED THE HOLY SACRAMENTS FROM THEM
ARTICLE X OF OUR CONSTITUTION STATES THAT PERSISTENT ADHERENCE TO FALSE
DOCTRINE IS SUFFICIENT AND URGENT CAUSE FOR REMOVING A PASTOR.

THE DISTRICT PRESIDUM HAS DECLARED OUR PASTORS OUT OF FELLOWSHIP
BECAUSE OUR PASTORS HAVE NOT AGREED WITH THE WISCONSIN EVANGELICAL
LUTHERAN SYNOD INTERPRETATION OF I CORINTHIANS 11:3-16 AND I TIMOTHY 2:11-
15.

WE HAVE STUDIED THE HOLY SCRIPTURES REGARDING WHAT THEY HAVE TO SAY
AND NOT SAY REGARDING THE ROLES OF MEN AND WOMEN.

WE HAVE STUDIED THE WRITINGS OF OUR PASTORS AND OUR SYNOD REGARDING
THE ROLES OF MEN AND WOMEN AND THE DISCUSSIONS THEY HAVE HAD ON THIS
MATTER THROUGH THEIR CORRESPONDENCES.

AFTER PRAYERFUL CONSIDERATION THE VESTRY CONCLUDED AT ITS MAY 16, 1995
MEETING THAT PASTORS JOHNSON, STADLER AND ALBRECHT ARE NOT
PERSISTENTLY ADHERING TO FALSE DOCTRINE RELATIVE TO THE ROLES OF MEN AND
WOMEN.

THEREFORE THE VESTRY RECOMMENDS THAT SAINT JAMES LUTHERAN CHURCH
CONCUR WITH THIS JUDGMENT AND KEEP PASTORS JOHNSON, STADLER AND
ALBRECHT, REALIZING THAT THIS WILL RESULT IN HAVING THE CONGREGATION
DECLARED OUT OF FELLOWSHIP WITH THE WISCONSIN EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN
SYNOD.

The member opinion survey was called for. Cards for members to give their opinion on the
motion were distributed. Before the cards were marked, President Rickertsen led the
congregation in the Collect for the Day. The opinion poll cards were marked. They were
then collected and counted.

The opinion poll of those members present indicated the following:

3 - Abstentions

5 - Pastors Johnson, Stadler and Albrecht should be terminated as pastors at
Saint James

343 - Pastors Johnson, Stadler and Albrecht should be kept as Pastors at
Saint James Lutheran Church.

The opinion poll of members indicated the majority favored the motion.

The vote of members was called. Voter's cards were distributed, marked and then
counted.

The vote of voters indicated the following:

2 - Abstentions

3 - Pastors Johnson, Stadler and Albrecht should be terminated as pastors at
Saint James.

118 - Pastors Johnson, Stadler and Albrecht should be kept as pastors at
Saint James Lutheran Church.

The vote of voters indicated the majority favored the motion.

THE MOTION PASSED.

Presidium members were given the opportunity to speak to the congregation.

- Pastor Cross thanked the congregation for inviting them and for the spirit in which they were received. He explained that the vote means that the congregation would be out of fellowship with the WELS.
- Pastor Uhlhorn thanked the congregation for the spirit which they were received and granting their request to be here. He stated he was saddened by the outcome.

Pastors Johnson, Albrecht and Stadler each thanked the members of the congregation for their continued support.

President Rickertsen then informed the congregation that the next Worship Service will be held next Sunday, June 11 at 9:00 a.m.

M/S/C TO ADJOURN.

The meeting closed with the singing of Hymn #332 - "Go, My Children with My Blessing".

The meeting adjourned at 12:59 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Marlene Schindeldecker