

SERVING THE RENEWAL
OR
THE ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT?

An Analysis of the
Theology and Practice of
"Lutheran Charismatic Renewal Services"
1972 Until the Present

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Introduction

A New Force in Ecumenism

It has often been stated by students of the history of the Christian church that the New Testament era can be divided into major periods of time, each characterized by and concerned with a particular threat to orthodox Christian faith. The post-apostolic age struggled to preserve the biblical teaching about the person and authority of Christ. The Reformation was needed because the Church in Rome lost the true meaning of justification. The issue confronting the church today is the battle to preserve the teaching of the authority of Scripture. A related issue for the Lutheran Church in the latter half of the 20th century is the statement and practice of scriptural principles of church fellowship. The trend toward unionism or ecumenism has powerful proponents within the Lutheran Church.

It is certainly true that there is a sense in which the holy Christian church is ecumenical. It is a universal church with a universal call. However, today the term "ecumenical" is applied to that movement which endeavors to create a united visible church by uniting the various visible gatherings of individuals who profess to be Christians. Ecumenism promotes a unity in externals which it claims is pleasing to God. But it is a unity which cares little for uniform teaching of the pure doctrine of

Scripture. It is in this current or popular sense that the term "ecumenical" will be used throughout this paper.

While all three of the largest Lutheran denominations have been to some degree involved in the ecumenical movement, there has been another smaller but surprisingly vibrant force behind Lutheran ecumenism since the late 1960's. That force is the charismatic movement or the charismatic renewal among Lutherans. While much has been written on this subject in a general way, this paper will attempt to evaluate one particular organization within the charismatic movement, noting especially its contribution to ecumenism. This organization is known today as Lutheran Charismatic Renewal Services. It is perhaps best known for the International Lutheran Conference on the Holy Spirit which it sponsors each summer in Minneapolis.

In making any kind of evaluation of the men involved in the charismatic renewal among Lutherans, one must be very careful not to judge the hearts of individuals. It must be said from the outset that their writings portray an honest concern for the growth of God's kingdom. In the case of some men, extreme sacrifices have been made to promote what they feel is essential for the spiritual renewal of the Lutheran Church. However, their theology must be measured against God's Word rather than their sincerity.

Lutheran Charismatic Renewal Services (hereafter referred to as LCRS) is, as the name suggests, a service organization aiding Lutherans involved in the charismatic movement. Although LCRS mainly serves Lutherans it is supra-denominational and openly ecumenical in its approach. One prominent LCRS leader boasts, "Seasoned observers of the Ecumenical Movement have singled out

the charismatic renewal as the most vital and significant thing happening in the ecumenical scene today." ¹

While ecumenism is not particularly novel among Lutherans or in the Christian church in general, the charismatic renewal among Lutherans, in which LCRS plays a prominent role, has put a new twist into the theology of the ecumenical movement. It has transported much of the theology of classical Pentecostalism into Lutheran circles. The uniting factor in this charismatic ecumenism is not the Lutheran emphasis on hearing the gospel and believing it. Nor is it the Catholic emphasis on sacramental participation in a historically continuous church. It is rather the reception of and abiding in the Holy Spirit, in charismatic terms, the "baptism in the Holy Spirit."

Because of the hybrid character of their theology, the leaders of LCRS have been doing a balancing act between Lutheranism and Pentecostalism. Or, to put it crudely, they have been trying to be something of each. Throughout their history, LCRS and the congregations closely associated with it have existed by trying to balance a typically Lutheran concern for doctrine with a Pentecostal concept of experiential christianity which chafes at doctrinal barriers. Has LCRS succeeded to provide this balance? Usually it has not. And where it has not succeeded it has gravitated in the Pentecostal direction. Where the balancing act has apparently succeeded it has done so only by diluting important biblical doctrines or by neglecting to present a uniform statement of its doctrinal position.

The LCRS organization grew out of the committee which sponsored the first International ^{Lutheran} Conference on the Holy Spirit (here-

after referred to as ILCOHS). Therefore our study of the history of LCRS includes a look at the ILCOHS. In examining these organizations we will follow this outline:

- I. An overview of the events in the founding and function of ILCOHS and LCRS.
- II. A brief look at the personal history of the leaders.
- III. An examination and evaluation of the principles employed to make LCRS a tool for the ecumenical movement.

The purpose of this paper is not to present a detailed refutation of the principles of ecumenism. It will be understood that the God-pleasing unity which the Lutheran Church must strive for will never be achieved by overlooking unbiblical teachings which threaten the body of Christ. Nor is our purpose to give a detailed analysis of the theology of "baptism in the Holy Spirit" or charismatic gifts. It will be understood that the Bible nowhere urges a second baptism which is necessary if a person is to fully receive the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Rather we want to identify LCRS and its leaders as a relatively new force in the ecumenical movement. We want to see how these Lutheran charismatics have succeeded in making Pentecostal beliefs and practices palatable to Lutherans. We also want to point out the problems in doctrine and practice caused by LCRS which show that it is not a valid tool in any renewal the Lutheran Church is in need of.

I. An Overview of the history of ILCOHS and LCRS.

The 1st and 2nd "Waves of the Spirit."

The Pentecostal movement, which some have called the fastest growing church in the hemisphere, made its entrance on the American religious scene at the turn of the century. Charles F. Parham

is recognized as the American pioneer, while Agnes Ozman is remembered for introducing the practice of speaking in tongues. For almost 60 years the Pentecostal Church grew phenomenally but drew only skepticism from the traditional church bodies. However, in the 1960's Pentecostalism broke the barrier. Neo-Pentecostalism, or the "charismatic movement" as it is referred to in the traditional churches, is described by former LCRS leader Rodney Lensch as "the second wave of the Holy Spirit." 2

A patriarch of the charismatic movement among Lutherans was a former Wisconsin Synod pastor, Adelbert Dornfeld. Dornfeld graduated from Lutheran Theological Seminary at Thiensville in 1930. In 1956 he received his "baptism in the Holy Spirit." From this time on he has been instrumental in leading others, notably Rev. Donald Pfotenbauer (formerly in the LC-MS) and Ted Jungkuntz (Prof. of Theology at Valparaiso Univ.), into the charismatic movement. Presently Dornfeld is an itinerant preacher for the Assemblies of God Churches.

In terms of wider Synodical involvement the charismatic phenomenon hit the American Lutheran Church first. In the so-called "Montana outpouring" of 1961 many ALC pastors received the "baptism in the Holy Spirit." The next Synod affected was Missouri, around 1964. In the early 1970's the movement found its way into the LCA.

The charismatic renewal among Lutherans has been a grass-roots movement from the start. Until the late 1960's and early 1970's it lacked organization. Larry Christenson, an ALC pastor who plays a major role in LCRS today makes this interesting comment about the early days of the movement,

That was back in 1970, when Lutheran charismatics were just beginning to find each other. At a prayer meeting or a conference you'd [sic] hear the name of another Lutheran who had "gone charismatic." You'd jot it down on the back of a gum wrapper, and later on call the person or drop him a line-- just to hear how things were going. The charismatic renewal among Lutherans was an underground criss-cross of personal contacts. Nobody knew how extensive it was. 3

Revival in Minneapolis

The man who initially gave the Lutheran charismatics a chance for exposure was an ALC pastor from Cedar Rapids, Iowa, Norris L. Wogen. Wogen received his "baptism in the Holy Spirit" in 1971. He had attended Catholic charismatic conferences at Notre Dame for two or three years and decided that similar conferences could be sponsored by and for Lutherans. Wogen was also at the time engaged in fellowship with the Roman Catholic clergy in Iowa. He traveled to Minneapolis where he met with another ALC pastor, Morris Vaagenes. They rented the Minneapolis Auditorium for the conference in August of 1972.

The history of the ILCOHS is important because the committee which organized it and served it during its first few years eventually became the committee of LCERS. Initially, Wogen's steering committee was composed of pastors and laymen from the three largest Lutheran Synods, the LCA, the ALC and the LC-MS. Listed in the Articles of Incorporation of the ILCOHS, filed with the state of Minnesota, are incorporators Dick Denny and Morris Vaagenes. The first board of directors included Rodney Lensch, Donald Pfothenhauer and Delbert Rossin. All of these men have also played significant roles in LCERS and still work in the Lutheran charismatic renewal today.

The ILCOHS did much to give the charismatic renewal among

Lutherans an identity. Rodney Lensch says of this annual conference,

That was the beginning of a real visibility with the Lutheran renewal. And from my perspective I would say that this conference over the years ... is the most significant event in giving visibility, credibility, and growth to the Lutheran charismatic renewal.⁴

From the outset, it was evident that this "Lutheran Conference on the Holy Spirit," which drew between nine and ten thousand people, was not going to be particularly Lutheran at all. It was, however, very ecumenical and in that way it set the pattern for the nine conferences which have followed. (each held in Minneapolis in August).. In describing the purpose of the ILCOHS the Articles of Incorporation refer to Ephesians 4:12,13 saying, "...for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God."⁵ (See Bylaws of the Articles of Incorporation in Appendix, I.) Wogen himself stated one year after this historic first conference,

One aim was to expose people to the broad scope of the charismatic movement. Another aim was to appeal to all charismatics to share with us the phenomena of this experience as it has touched all of the so-called "main-line" churches of the world.⁶

The agenda of speakers for the first ILCOHS in 1972 shows how willing these Lutheran charismatics were to be taught by almost any religious leader, regardless of beliefs, who could claim this common experience of "baptism in the Holy Spirit." Dennis Bennett, the Episcopalian rector who is well known as one of the first Protestant charismatics to come out into the open spoke on "Renewal or Revival." Edward O'Connor, associate professor at Notre Dame and author of The Pentecostal Movement in the Catholic Church spoke on "God's Love For His People." Kenneth Pagard, a

Baptist pastor talked about the "Fellowship of the Holy Spirit."

Finally, David Du Plessis, an internationally acclaimed Pentecostal who has probably done much to influence the Vatican, the World Council of Churches and every major Protestant denomination spoke on the "Holy Spirit In The Ecumenical Movement." His message implied that the charismatic movement was actually in opposition to the traditional church bodies. He said,

What I see in the World Council, what I see in the Vatican Council, what I see everywhere, is [that] the Spirit is moving, and the dead~~est~~, driest old skeletons, are coming alive. God is now making an army out of history. The historic churches become the skeletons on which He's building a new army. 6

Wogen also points out that hundreds of persons experienced miracles of healing. Visions were spoken and interpreted. Prophecies were given and demons exorcised. Within the period of a few days, the Lutheran charismatic leaders had probably done more to expose the Lutheran Church to classical Pentecostal practices, and through them to a radical ecumenism than had ever been done prior to this time.

The trend of ecumenism and Pentecostal theology in the charismatic renewal among Lutherans has continued to be represented at the annual ILCOHS. At the second conference in 1973, the attendance jumped to 15,000. Major addresses were delivered by David Du Plessis, Father George de Prizio, Larry Christenson and David Wilkerson (another popular independent Pentecostal preacher)? The fifth ILCOHS drew special notice among the leaders of LCRS. This 1976 conference attracted a total of over 25,000 people. The featured guest was Leon Joseph Cardinal Suenens of Belgium, the best known member among the Roman Catholic charismatic community. The five

conferences held since 1976 have, at times, drawn fewer people,, but continue to follow the pattern established in the first conference. The tenth ILCOHS in August, 1981, was prefaced by a sentiment which, by this time, was quite familiar, "Spiritual renewal among Lutherans and unity in the whole body of Christ are two major concerns of this conference. Thus it is both Lutheran and ecumenical." 8

Lutheran Charismatic Renewal Services

The service organization, LCRS, grew out of the committee which sponsored the first ILCOHS. In fact, Lutheran Charismatic Renewal Services was simply a new name for roughly the same group of men which now added many other services to its sponsorship of the ILCOHS. Since, however, some of the eventual leaders of LCRS became involved in the charismatic movement before Wogen's first ILCOHS, we will back up to 1968. In that year a leader's conference was held in St. Louis among Missouri Synod pastors. At that meeting Rodney Lensch became acquainted with Donald Pfotenhauer and other charismatics in the LC-MS.

In 1973, at the invitation of the Roman Catholics, a summit meeting of Lutheran charismatic pastors was held in Ann Arbor, Michigan. The Catholic Word Of God Community hosted this meeting since it felt that it was in the best position to give coordination to the charismatic renewal in other denominations. The original plan of the Catholics was to use their magazine, New Covenant, as a vehicle through which Lutheran and Protestant charismatics could express themselves and keep in touch with their people. Roughly 70 Lutherans were present at the meeting. Larry Christenson, who was not an original member of the ILCOHS committee convened the

meeting. Rodney Lensch comments about this meeting, "That was kind of the beginning of what we might call some organized effort to bring the renewal to the churches in a responsible way." 9

In February of 1974 and February of 1975 more conferences were held in Ann Arbor which served to further rally the charismatic laymen and pastors from around the country around their common cause. Many Lutheran laymen and pastors received their "baptism in the Holy Spirit" at one of these two conferences. This is an important fact for it illustrates that the fellowship practiced at these conferences was not merely organizational, it claimed to be on the level of worship as well. Rodney Lensch feels that these meetings hosted by the Catholics provided not only the stimulus but also the birth place for LCRS:

In the early 70's the Catholic men were espousing the idea of every denominational charismatic grouping establishing a national leadership organization that could (1) relate to the movement within each denomination and (2) relate to the hierarchies of each denomination and (3) relate to the Catholics and to one another as Protestants. Thus the first meetings to organize LCRS were held in Ann Arbor at the request of the Catholics and with their assistance. 10

While the organizational structure of LCRS was being worked out in Ann Arbor, measures were taken to convert the steering committee of the ILCCHS into the committee to lead LCRS. In an amendment to the Articles of Incorporation of the ILCCHS dated January 15, 1975, the corporate name was officially changed to "Lutheran Charismatic Renewal Service." The resolution approving this change had been ratified by the board of directors on November 11, 1974.

Other than Larry Christenson, who served as chairman of LCRS from 1974 to 1978, the core of the leadership was the same for LCRS as for the ILCCHS committee. Rodney Lensch, Donald

Pfotenhauer, Morris Vaagenes, Delbert Rossin and Dick Denny all became part of LCRS. Dick Denny, the only layman in the group, has functioned as executive secretary since 1975 and the offices are in his own home. From 1976 to 1979 Rodney Lensch served as a field representative for the group. Since then, he has resigned to carry on an independent ministry. Since 1979 Delbert Rossin, an LC-MS pastor in Geneva, Illinois, has served as chairman. It is rather obvious that, although the organization allows for changes in leadership, the core of leaders behind the ILCCHS and LCRS has changed very little. In addition to the six men listed above, the LCRS committee at the time of the 10th ILCCHS in August, 1981, had two additional men, Dr. Theodore Jungkuntz (Professor of Theology at Valparaiso Univ.) and Rev. Herbert Mirly (LC-MS) of Charlotte, North Carolina. All of these men are expected to devote a portion of their time serving as points of contact and offering whatever they can to encourage and strengthen the charismatic renewal among Lutherans.

Before leaving this section of our study we should take a brief look at the LCRS "Statement of Purpose". This document is taken verbatim from Larry Christenson's book, The Charismatic Renewal Among Lutherans. It has also been reprinted in the Lutheran Charismatic Renewal Newsletter. According to the "Statement," the first function of LCRS is to serve as a shepherd for Lutheran charismatics. "It seeks to provide help and resources for those involved in the renewal,..." Secondly, LCRS tries to serve as a point of contact with church officials. It seeks to promote good relations and provide communication between officials and those in the renewal. Thirdly, LCRS tries to maintain a relation with

individuals or groups who have been forced out of the Lutheran Church because of charismatic practices. LCRS still recognizes such people as an important part of the Lutheran charismatic movement. (See "LCRS Statement of Purpose" in Appendix, II.) 11

II. A brief look at the men of LCRS

In order to understand the ecumenical thrust of LCRS, the way in which it relates to the charismatic movement in general and its feelings toward the established Lutheran Church, it will be helpful to examine briefly the background of the most important leaders.

Larry Christenson

When he was asked which one person has best represented the theology of the Lutheran charismatics, present chairman of LCRS, Delbert Rossin responded very definitely, "Larry Christenson." 12 Indeed, Christenson is one of the most well known and most widely read leaders of the charismatic movement in the United States. Frederick Dale Brunner, in his study, A Theology Of The Holy Spirit, says that Christenson's book, Speaking in Tongues and Its Significance for the Church, "is the primary doctrinal and apologetical explanation of Neo-Pentecostalism, by a Lutheran pastor." 13

Larry Christenson graduated from Luther Seminary in 1959. After studying for a few years in Germany he accepted a call into the American Lutheran Church to serve Trinity congregation in San Pedro, California in 1960. He continues to serve the same congregation today. Shortly after arriving at San Pedro, Larry

felt that something was missing in his own Christian experience. He began to attend a number of healing missions at local Episcopal Churches. (Dennis Bennett of the Episcopal Church in Van Nuys, California made his historic testimony earlier this same year.) In December 1960 Larry attended a clinic for pastoral care where his interest in tongue speaking was aroused. As he himself describes it, he asked God about the possession of such a gift and God answered. ¹⁴

Larry was invited to a revival by a member of the Four-Square Gospel Church in San Pedro. At this revival he heard evangelist Mary Westberg speak on the gifts of the Spirit according to I Corinthians 12. Afterward, Larry thanked Mrs. Westberg and asked her for her prayers. When she asked him whether he had been "baptized in the Holy Spirit," Larry said he did not know. Then, together with this Pentecostal evangelist and her husband, Larry prayed for the gift of tongues. Larry says, "That night, sometime after midnight, I woke from a light sleep, sat bolt-upright in bed, and found an 'unknown tongue' hovering on my lips." ¹⁵ That gift, Larry says, was a part of his prayer life ever since.

Since that eventful year, Larry Christenson has not only led his own congregation into the charismatic movement, but has also been very instrumental in speaking and writing and, in other ways, leading many other Lutherans in the same direction. He has had, for instance, a great influence on the other leaders of LCRS. He served as the first chairman and the LCRS "Statement of Purpose" is taken verbatim from his writing.

Two additional facts concerning Larry Christenson are quite significant when considering the roots of the charismatic or Neo-

Pentecostal movement among Lutherans. Of the Lutheran charismatic pastors who responded to a small survey, approximately 50% named Larry Christenson specifically as being especially influential, either in their personal charismatic experience or in understanding the theology of the Lutheran charismatic renewal. Now when Larry Christenson himself was asked who was especially influential in his charismatic experience, one of the people he listed was the Pentecostal, David du Plessis. ¹⁶

Rodney Lensch

Rodney Lensch ~~Lensch~~ is easily one of the most controversial figures to have served on LCRS. He is perhaps best known for his personal speaking engagements. His book, My Personal Pentecost, is his own testimony of his encounter with the charismatic experience. Lensch likes to emphasize the sacrifice and commitment needed by a Lutheran charismatic.

Rodney Lensch graduated from Concordia Seminary in 1959, ranking 3rd in his class scholastically. It was while serving his second congregation in Thousand Oaks, California that Lensch began to have some problems. Rodney expressed, as did Larry Christenson, the feeling that something was lacking in his spiritual life. He says, "I knew I lacked the secret to an abundant, overcoming Christian life." ¹⁷ Rodney claims that he found the secret through the Pentecostals. He says that the persons most influential in own charismatic experience were Ray Bringham, (a Pentecostal minister of the Church of God), and his Inter-Church Team Ministry. On the evening of December 14, 1966, Rodney attended a seminar on the Holy Spirit conducted by Bringham. Following the seminar he

received the "baptism in the Holy Spirit" as Bringham laid his hands on him. 18

When his congregation discovered his involvement, Rodney Lensch was immediately under investigation. A series of meetings with LC-MS officials culminated in an appearance before the Commission on Theology and Church Relations. However, no immediate decision on his future was made. Since it became clear that the Missouri Synod was not anxious to stand behind him and since his own congregation no longer supported him, Lensch resigned from the LC-MS in January of 1969. At this time he had already been accepting speaking engagements with Full Gospel groups (Full Gospel Business Men's Fellowship International, FGBMFI). For the next six years he worked somewhat independently, teaching, preaching and fellowshiping with Pentecostals and with Episcopal, Roman Catholic and Lutheran charismatics. He identifies a high point in these years as a Pentecost Sunday evening in 1969 at Maryknoll Junior Seminary in St. Louis. He explains how Pentecostals and Catholics together "...sang, testified and ministered to one another in the love of the Spirit....What ecumenicity in the Spirit!" 19

In 1975, Lensch's former resentment toward the established Lutheran Church gave way to a realization that the free fellowships, independent of denominations were not very effective forms of ministry. He again began to appreciate the stability of the Lutheran Church as well as its needs. When he was called to serve with the LCMS in 1976 as a field representative, Lensch moved his family to St. Paul, Minnesota. Though his involvement with Lutherans through LCMS was still "supra-denominational," Lensch says he was now able "to find my place in the Lutheran scene." 20

In 1979, Lensch evidently felt sure enough of himself to work independently again. In that year he resigned his position with LCMS to assume a full time independent evangelistic ministry. He maintains his connection with LCMS leaders through his position as a contributing editor for a magazine edited by Morris Vaagenes, Lutheran Renewal International. Rodney Lensch has certainly been influential to the growth of the charismatic movement among Lutherans. Theologically, however, He manifests a split personality. He defends the viability of being a Lutheran and a charismatic. But, in 1980, he said concerning his reception of the Holy Spirit, "I tend to be more Pentecostal in my orientation because that's how I was taught and that's how I experienced the Baptism of the Holy Spirit." 21

Don Pfothenhauer

Don Pfothenhauer has also been a somewhat controversial figure. Don was ordained into the LC-MS in 1955. While serving Way Of The Cross Lutheran Church in Blaine, Minnesota, Don came into contact with the writings and ministry of David Wilkerson. Don also met Rev. A.C.Dornfeld, who at this time was most likely a minister with the Assemblies of God Churches. It was through this man, Dornfeld, that Don Pfothenhauer claims he and his wife received the "baptism in the Holy Spirit" in 1964. Soon the congregation was split over the involvement of their pastor and several members of the ⁿ congregation in the charismatic movement. When district officials of the Minnesota South District objected to his charismatic practices, Pfothenhauer appealed to the District Board but finally was suspended from the LC-MS. A portion of the

former congregation chose to continue with pastor Pfothenauer, and Way Of The Cross, half its former size, moved to new quarters. After 1972, the congregation, now independent, dropped the Lutheran label.

Don Pfothenauer served on the original committee of both the ILCOHS and LCRS. He is still a member of the LCRS committee.

Dr. Theodore Jungkuntz

Next to Larry Christenson, Ted Jungkuntz has probably done the most to provide the charismatic movement among Lutherans with any theological credibility it enjoys in the larger Lutheran denominations. Jungkuntz, a professor of theology at Valparaiso University, is described by his charismatic colleagues as one who operates with a proper balance of doctrinal soundness and a living experience of the working of the Holy Spirit.

Jungkuntz graduated from Luther Theological Seminary in Mequon in 1953. Thereafter he studied for his doctorate at Erlangen in Nurnberg, Germany. In 1963 he was ordained into the LC-MS. After serving a year and a half in the parish ministry and three years as an instructor at St. Paul's College, Concordia, Missouri, he went to Valparaiso. In 1968, at the invitation of fellow faculty member Dr. Andrew Schulze, he began to attend evangelistic meetings held by A.G. Dornfeld at the local Assembly of God Church. Later, Dornfeld was invited to pray for the healing of another faculty member who had bone cancer. Dornfeld accepted that invitation. At the same gathering, Dornfeld laid his hands on Jungkuntz and Jungkuntz received his "baptism in the Holy Spirit." Ted Jungkuntz has been involved in the charismatic movement among Lutherans ever

since. He has contributed much in the way of writing for the defense of the theology of the charismatic movement. His writing appears on a popular level (an example is his booklet, A Lutheran Charismatic Catechism) as well as in the theological journals. Jungkuntz has been writing for the LCRS newsletter since 1975. It is not quite certain just when he began to serve on the LCRS committee, but ^{he} was serving on the committee in 1978. As of August, 1981, he was still on the committee.

Morris Vaagenes

Morris Vaagenes represents a minority of Lutheran charismatic pastors who have had much success and little difficulty from Synod officials or members of their congregations in leading their congregations into the charismatic movement. Vaagenes is pastor of North Heights Lutheran Church (ALC) in Roseville, Minnesota. Vaagenes has been involved in the charismatic movement since 1962 when he and his wife received the "baptism in the Holy Spirit."

Vaagenes has been involved from the start with the ILCOHS and LCRS. His congregation has been something of a gathering place for Lutheran charismatics. Over the years, many of the leaders of the movement, such as Rod Lensch, have been affiliated with North Heights congregation.

Vaagenes is also chairman of a somewhat newer organization, the International Lutheran Center For Church Renewal. This organization began in 1980. Vaagenes is chief editor of its magazine, Lutheran Renewal International. As has been mentioned, it is not unusual to find other men who have been associated with LCRS contributing to this periodical.

Delbert Rossin

Delbert Rossin, pastor of Faith Lutheran Church, Geneva, Illinois (LC-MS), is also considered to be one of the pastors who have been most successful at integrating the charismatic practices and beliefs into a Lutheran church. Rossin experienced his "baptism in the Holy Spirit" through personal prayer and without a "crisis experience." He also has been involved in ILCOHS and LCRS from their inception. Rossin prides himself on the fact that his congregation is, as he puts it, "distinctively Lutheran." He says "We have tried to retain an identity which is specifically Lutheran in doctrine and liturgically..." and he adds, "...not that we are bound to it." ²² Pastor Rossin has been serving as chairman of LCRS since 1979.

From this brief look at the most influential leaders of LCRS, two significant facts become apparent. The first is that the impetus behind the charismatic experience of most of these men came from outside Lutheran circles. It came in most cases from ~~people with~~ people with Pentecostal theology, in practice if not in name. The second fact is that most of these men were willing to engage in worship or prayer fellowship with people who were not in doctrinal agreement with the Lutheran Church. They engaged in such fellowship without thorough investigation and ^a confident conclusion that these people were of one faith, agreeing with them in the whole gospel of Jesus Christ. It seems that most of these men were searching for something new, something beyond their Christian experience, something which their study of Scripture did not uncover.

Unfortunately, the ecumenical ideas and practices of these individuals has become the pattern for the charismatic movement, or renewal, in the Lutheran Church today. This unionistic approach to the church has been solidified by LCRS. LCRS has become a powerful tool for the ecumenical movement in general. In the final portion of this paper we would like to examine the ecumenical stance which LCRS has propounded through its publications and services as well as through the individual efforts of its leaders. in the past decade.

III. An examination and evaluation of the principles employed to make LCRS a tool for the ecumenical movement.

It is obvious even to the casual observer that LCRS has been able to achieved a certain unity among Lutherans. It has done so with the intention of "renewing" the church. However, we will see that the principles employed to reach this goal are thoroughly ecumenical (in the modern sense of the word). As a result, the unity they achieved among charismatic Lutherans from different denominations is not a Spirit-worked unity of one faith, based on the pure doctrine of Jesus Christ. In the name of "renewal," LCRS has also incorporated a hybrid theology which tries, without real success, to harmonize two conflicting interpretations of God's word. The principles followed by LCRS over the past decade clearly conflict with the Scriptural principles concerning the true unity of the church. As a result it has created division and insoluble problems. LCRS is a tool for the ecumenical movement

but not for a spiritual renewal of the Lutheran Church.

A unity in form

While ILCOHS and LCRS came into being basically to serve Lutherans, in actual practice their service is not limited to them. LCRS leaders seem to have felt a need for ~~more~~ than the invisible tie which binds true Christians in one Lutheran denomination to true Christians in any other denomination, Lutheran or otherwise. LCRS claims to support a renewal with a unity which transcends denominational boundaries. Larry Christenson says in the LCRS "Statement of Purpose,"

From the beginning, the charismatic renewal has had a strong ecumenical thrust....Denominational differences have not been wiped away, but a deep felt sense of unity--... has continued to hover over the renewal. 23

The question remains then, whether this unity is one of faith or form. LCRS has certainly promoted an outward form of unity, for charismatics. Some of the services they provide are as follows:

- 1) The Lutheran Charismatic Newsletter. Begun in 1974 this monthly letter contains theological and practical advice on leading a congregation into the charismatic renewal, announcements of regional charismatic conferences, book reviews and inspirational information on the progress of the movement. Its writers include LCRS committee members and many other charismatic Lutheran pastors and professors.
- 2) Sponsoring the annual ILCOHS
- 3) Assisting charismatic pastors in finding congregations and congregations in finding charismatic pastors.
- 4) Co-sponsoring charismatic regional mini-conferences. A kit is advertised for pastors interested in putting on such a confer-

ence. LCRS also helps by providing speakers for such conferences. (See Appendix, III)

5) Interaction with Synod officials. (See point 3 of "Statement of Purpose.")

6) Prayer support.

7) A cassette tape library which offers a wide variety of messages concerning the charismatic renewal delivered by leaders (Lutherans and others) at various conferences.

These various services help Lutheran charismatics identify with each other and with charismatics of other denominations. They provide a sense of unity in outward form. It is difficult to gauge how many congregations LCRS has been directly involved in. Yet, it is safe to say that it has established communication and interaction in a extensive network of congregations. From its headquarters in the Twin Cities, LCRS has extended its influence as far east as Albany, New York, as far south as San Antonio, Texas, and as far west as Phoenix Arizona and San Pedro, California. LCRS has provided its services to congregations of the LCA, the ALC and the LC-MS, but not, to our knowledge, to any in the WELS.

A unity in faith?

Is the unity created by the charismatic movement which LCRS represents more than a unity in outward form? Larry Christenson says in the LCRS "Statement of Purpose,"

The ecumenical involvement has not been organizational, neither has it been superficial. It has been at the level of a common experience of the reality of the Spirit, and the acknowledgement of the reality of the Lordship of Christ.

This "common experience" is evidently what allows LCRS to promote

a sense of unity in its work with the members of various Lutheran denominations as well as others. In the "Statement," Christenson says the purpose of LCRS is "...to share fully in the great renewing work which the Holy Spirit is doing throughout the whole church." 24

The "common experience" Larry Christenson refers to is the "baptism in the Holy Spirit." This unscriptural doctrine which says that all true Christians are to receive a "baptism" or "special release" of the Holy Spirit in addition to the Sacrament of Baptism is taught by LCRS. Christenson implies that this "baptism in the Holy Spirit" is the common experience which creates the unity of the kind necessary for ecumenical fellowship. In their writings, LCRS leaders have made clear their feeling that "baptism in the Holy Spirit" is normative and necessary for all Christians.

In 1972, when Rodney Lensch wrote about the "baptism in the Holy Spirit" and its gifts, he made clear his feeling that to deny this experience was to place a human limitation on the Holy Spirit. He felt that any congregation which did so denied itself God's full blessing. He wrote, "I believe that the Lord will withhold his full blessing from any congregation which limits the activity of the Holy Spirit according to past patterns and human definitions." 25

Vaāgenēs wrote about the necessity of the "baptism (outpouring) in the Holy Spirit" for those serving the church:

He [Jesus] did not begin his ministry until he was anointed of the Holy Spirit. In a similar manner, though He had given the Holy Spirit to his disciples an Easet [sic] evening (John 20:22), yet He told His disciples not to enter into their ministry until they were clothed with the power of

the Holy Spirit (Lk. 24:49). In the same way we need to be empowered with the fulness of the Holy Spirit if we are to do effective service. 26

Ted Jungkuntz shows in a recent article that LCRS has not budged in its view of the need for the "baptism in the Holy Spirit." He even takes it one step further in speaking of the gifts of the Spirit which follow. He says,

Or are the gifts of the Spirit optional- something we are free to pray for or to disregard if we are so inclined?...In no way does Paul suggest that they are optional extras for an elite cadre of Christians only. 27

These statements, while not official doctrinal pronouncements, are representative of the theology which LCRS has promoted. This teaching concerning the "baptism in the Holy Spirit" is basically a Pentecostal teaching. From an ecumenical perspective, that fact has great significance. Frederick Bruner cites Bishop Leslie Newbigin as producing the "most sustained study of the Pentecostal movement from within Ecumenical circles." In answering the question, "How are we made incorporate into Christ?," Bruner says Newbigin gives three answers:

(1) the hearing of the Gospel with faith; (2) the participation sacramentally in the life of the historically continuous church; and (3) the reception of and abiding in the Holy Spirit. Newbigin calls these answers, broadly, the Protestant, the Catholic, and the Pentecostal. 28

While Newbigin's answers may seem to be an oversimplification of the whole matter, he has managed to point out what is peculiar to the Pentecostal brand of ecumenism, viz., the belief that the "baptism in the Holy Spirit" both makes one a true member of the body of Christ and serves as evidence of a unity in the faith among those who share it. The teachings of LCRS in particular and of the charismatic movement in general certainly

reflect, to some extent, these Pentecostal ideas. Some striking evidence that the charismatic movement has transported Pentecostal teaching into Lutheran circles is the response given to this pointed question: "Do you believe that Holy Spirit Baptism can be a common bond uniting all Christian denominations despite doctrinal differences?" Of ~~seven~~^{six} pastors who have had contact with LCRS, three answered flatly, "Yes." One more answered "to a degree." 29

It is clear that the unity ~~of~~ which LCRS leaders boast of is an outward unity. For example, Larry Christenson boasts of the unity which he feels has emerged from the charismatic movement. In one Newsletter article he quoted an official observer (ALC) at the third ILCOHS in 1974, "The obvious unity among the leaders, and the effect this had upon the participants, was the most noteworthy aspect of the entire conference." Based on the ecumenical nature of the ILCOHS and the LCRS teaching on the "baptism in the Holy Spirit," we feel that the unity produced by LCRS is based only on a Pentecostal experience. LCRS stresses this experience as the basis for outward fellowship rather than the one faith produced by the Holy Spirit through the correct teaching of the word of God.

A valid tool for renewal?

Now that we have seen what type of unity it is which LCRS has established among Lutheran charismatics, we want to evaluate LCRS as a tool for the renewal of the church. The LCRS leaders like to think of their organization as "serving the renewal." While the charismatic methodology seems to be stressed at times, the ultimate aim is spoken of as the renewal of the church. The

question we must now ask is, "Have the ILCOHS and LCRS been legitimate tools for renewing the church?" In answering this question we are not going to redevelop to any great extent the argument which follows sound biblical doctrine to show the fallacy of the teaching of "baptism in the Holy Spirit." Nor is it our purpose to give a detailed analysis of the current expression of the gifts of the Spirit (glossolalia, healing etc.) among the charismatics. Rather we want to view the problems which LCRS in particular confronts or has itself created because of its radical ecumenical thrust. Such problems are sufficient to show that neither LCRS nor the movement it represents have been capable of providing any spiritual renewal for the Lutheran Church. We will look at these problems under the following headings:

- A) "Who are we?"
- B) "What do we believe?"
- C) Unionistic unity
- D) A climate of divisiveness

A) "Who are we?"

"You Lutheran Charismatics are lucky," a new and enthusiastic charismatic once told me. "You have the best of all worlds: you're Catholic enough to enjoy liturgy, Protestant enough to appreciate good preaching, and now you're Pentecostal enough to sing in the Spirit!"

"Maybe that's part of our problem," I laughed.

"We feel so much at home with everyone else that we haven't gotten to know each other." 30

Larry Christenson mentioned that this little dialogue, of which he was a part, took place in the 70's before LCRS was ever around. Yet, the identity problem which is here described in a complimentary and humorous way, has been fostered by the ecumenical stance of the LCRS. The Lutheran charismatic must eventually find himself wondering whether he is truly a Lutheran at all, or whether he is simply a Christian, with Pentecostal theology, who happens to

belong to a Lutheran church. Among themselves, LCRS leaders are not afraid to refer to the "denominational baggage" of the established Lutheran Church to which most of them still belong. On the other hand, they spill a great deal of ink trying to defend the fact that they are Lutheran. One example of the former attitude is the rather satirical view which Mark Hillmer, a charismatic professor at Northwestern Lutheran Theological Seminary, takes of his Lutheranism. Hillmer, who formerly attended Northwestern College in Watertown, states,

I am a Lutheran because, although I believe any group which believes in the triune God and worships the resurrected Christ represents a valid approach to God, I believe the Lutheran approach is as good as any....I am a Christian because God through Jesus Christ has finally broken through my Lutheranism to make me a child of the King. 31

Without wanting to even hint that the Lutheran Church is the only true church, we can say that the view expressed by this charismatic is oblivious or insensitive to very real doctrinal errors which endanger the body of Christ in heterodox churches.

Rodney Lensch, on the other hand, represents an attitude which began to grow over the past ten years among Lutheran charismatics. He felt that they must not lose identity with the Lutheran Church. As early as 1974, at the First Regional Conference on the Holy Spirit in Detroit, Michigan, Lensch urged charismatic Lutherans to be faithful to their church and listed six reasons that "to be Lutheran is to be charismatic." The first reason was, "Because the charismatic renewal is in perfect harmony with the three 'sola's' of the Reformation, sola fide, ...sola gratia, ...sola Scriptura." The confusing factor is ^{that} Lensch presented this to a group consisting of Catholics, Episcopalians, Pentecostals and

others as well as Lutherans. He said of the mixed gathering, "The Lord is pleased....There's a special blessing upon an ecumenical gathering where we come together under the Lordship of Jesus Christ." 32

If Rodney Lensch is honest when he declares that "baptism in the Holy Spirit" is essential if a congregation is to be fully blessed by God, and if he honestly encourages Lutheran charismatics to remain in their respective congregations as voices for the renewal, then why did he state ^{this} in 1972?:

In as much as the baptism in the Holy Spirit as a separate experience after conversion and the gifts of the Holy Spirit are not at present official doctrines of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, I believe they must not be taught as such in the local congregation. 33

We are not suggesting that Rodney Lensch is dishonest. The inconsistencies in his statements simply demonstrate the difficulty of the charismatics in general in trying to make a hybrid theology (Lutheran plus Pentecostal) workable within a Lutheran Church. It is a problem of identity.

Even an outsider detected the difficulty LCRS has had in presenting and maintaining a stable Lutheran identity. Father Kilian Mc Donnell who observed the second ILCOHS in August, 1973, later voiced the criticism that the character of the conference was not Lutheran. In a paper presented to the National Leaders Conference in Ann Arbor the following February, Mc Donnell warned,

It would seem that one of the prime objectives of a Lutheran charismatic conference is the promotion of a renewal which is authentically Lutheran. A renewal which is presented to the Lutheran Churches worked out in categories of another culture, however admirable, can never be integrated into the life of the Lutheran culture. A Lutheran charismatic

renewal which is essentially revivalist and classical Pentecostal in thought and style can exist only on the periphery of the Lutheran Churches. 34

We do not agree with what ~~what~~ Mc Donnell implies, viz., that LCRS with its present theology could produce a charismatic conference which is authentically Lutheran, much less one that is necessary for the spiritual renewal of the Lutheran Church. However, Mc Donnell's statements do support the contention that, from very early on, LCRS (or ILCOHS) failed to present a theology or practice strictly identifiable as Lutheran. Before an organization can claim to be serving the renewal, it needs to be able to identify itself. But even more importantly, it needs a unified position on doctrine. And that leads us to the next problem .

B) "What do we believe?"

From the beginning, the leaders of the ILCOHS and LCRS have claimed that they were striving to combine the rich doctrinal heritage of the Lutheran Church with the experiential aspect of the life of faith, or to put it very simply, the objective with the subjective. However, it is also apparent that from the beginning these leaders of the "renewal" stressed the subjective experience to the detriment of the objective teachings. This is also the error of the Pentecostals, even if done to a lesser degree. The testimony of Rodney Lensch gives us an example. In 1966, as he listened to Ray Bringham's presentation, Lensch evidently felt that the Lutheran doctrine he'd learned at the Seminary was missing something important. Concerning this experience he wrote several years later,

"...I was quite willing to consider anew and afresh any Scripture and if necessary to rearrange my Lutheran doctrine accordingly. I simply wanted to know the whole truth from God's Word.

But Lensch's later statement about his "baptism in the Holy Spirit" shows how he had also rearranged the scriptural teaching that the Holy Spirit works alone through the Means of Grace. He says concerning his "baptism," "There was no need to keep quoting Bible passages. The Holy Spirit was now ministering that love from within my heart and not just through my intellect." 35

Lensch also relates the fact that among LCRS leaders, there has been no common agreement on the exact nature of the doctrine which is so important to their ecumenical perspective and practice, the "baptism in the Holy Spirit." He said in 1980, with no apologies whatsoever,

It's interesting that after nearly twenty years of this renewal there is no theological statement prepared by any group of Lutheran charismatics. And I've been in meetings where we've tried to hammer a document out that would try to define what we mean by the baptism of the Holy Spirit and we can't even agree. (emphasis mine) 36

An examination of the writings of some of the other LCRS leaders bears witness to Lensch's statements. For example, in an LCRS study guide prepared by Morris Vaagenes we read, "The filling of the Holy Spirit, or baptism of the Holy Spirit, or anointing with the Holy Spirit is separated from water baptism, though they may be closely related in time."³⁷ This contradicts what Larry Christenson wrote, "There is only one baptism (Eph. 4:5). Baptism with the Holy Spirit is not separate from Christian baptism, but integrally united it [sic]." 38

The LCRS leaders not only cripple themselves by a lack of uniformity in their teaching about the "baptism in the Holy Spirit," but they also open the door to some very serious errors regarding true baptism, the sacrament. Larry Christenson carefully points out the difference between the "Lutheran" view of the "baptism in the Holy Spirit" as a releasing of the Spirit which has already been given and the Pentecostal view that it is an added endowment of the Spirit. But he then adds, "Both speak of the same essential reality."³⁹ If, however, the Lutheran charismatic idea of the "baptism in the Holy Spirit" is identical with that of classical Pentecostalism, one wonders whether the Lutheran charismatics have a proper understanding of the sacrament of baptism. The Pentecostals have, as Frederick Bruner points out, a contrived ideal of a distinction between the sacrament of baptism where a Christian is "baptized of or by the Spirit..." and a later event where a Christian is "baptized by Christ-as-agent in or with Spirit...." The result of the former is "the new birth." The result of the later is the "endowment with power."⁴⁰

It seems that this false distinction could lead to minimizing the importance of the sacrament of baptism. Evidently it already has. Christenson himself recalls that in the 1960's some Lutheran charismatics, adopting Pentecostal theology on baptism, began to question the validity of their infant baptism and were "rebaptized" by immersion.⁴¹

Because the LCRS has adopted a theology which is primarily Pentecostal, yet claims to be Lutheran, it has never been able and perhaps never tried very hard to present a uniformly consistent doctrinal stand. Neither does it seem to feel that one is necessary.

But since renewal or rebirth, according to the Scripture, is the work of the Holy Spirit, through the pure word of God, a ministry which confuses the teachings of God's word or presents false teachings can only hinder the Holy Spirit's work.

C) Unionistic unity

One does not need to look far into the history of LCRS or far into its publications to see examples of the unionistic practice and teaching which they carry on in the name of renewal. For example, Larry Christenson actually suggested that if there are only a few charismatics in a Lutheran congregation, they might join an ecumenical prayer group with the pastor's approval. "In this kind of a situation," he says, "prayer groups which are identified with the Roman Catholic charismatic renewal will generally prove the most satisfactory."⁴² Three years later, in 1977, Christenson spoke of a high point at the fifth ILCOHS as the point when Donald Pfothenauer embraced Leon Cardinal Suenens and asked his forgiveness for the sins of Lutheran fathers against Roman Catholic brethren. Pfothenauer reportedly said at that time that reconciliation must precede the release of the Spirit of unity.⁴³

In 1976 an article entitled "Church Will Grow By Following Principles" appeared in the LCRS newsletter. Rev. Robert Baker of Miami, Florida, the author, states as principle number 4,

Dynamic Christians feel they cannot do the job alone and so they join with other Christians in total mobilization of the community, Baptists, Pentecostals, Lutherans, Catholics, all working together for a common purpose.⁴⁴

Rev. Baker is a Lutheran pastor.

The LCRS leaders were proud to be a part of the 1977

"Conference on Charismatic Renewal in the Christian Churches" held in Kansas City. They urged Lutherans to attend. At the Conference Baptist, Catholic, Episcopalian, Messianic Jewish, Lutheran, Methodist, Mennonite, Pentecostal and Presbyterian denominations were represented. The following statement is a portion of the advertisement for this conference which appeared in an LCRS newsletter.

3. General Sessions The evenings are given to a gathering of the entire conference in Arrowhead Stadium....There will be worship, singing, testimony, teaching, and preaching from across the broad spectrum of the charismatic renewal. In this part of the conference we will be celebrating our unity in Christ. ⁴⁵
(The underlined portion is italicized in the source.)

These are only a few examples of the type of unionistic practices which LCRS either conducts itself or encourages. If time or space allowed many more such examples could be cited.

D) A climate of divisiveness

In addition to its unionistic practices, its lack of doctrinal agreement, and the problem of identity, there is one more way in which LCRS has demonstrated that it is not a valid tool for a spiritual renewal of the church. While LCRS leaders claim some success in outward unity, a unity fabricated in conferences and on paper, there is evidence to show that even in an outward, visible way, apart from their spiritual misdirection, they have caused great division in the Lutheran Church. This division is evidently what Rodney Lensch referred to when he spoke of the problems caused by the charismatic movement as "tensions." He said, "Whenever God moves there's usually tension....I want to suggest that tensions are meant to be redemptive. They are to have a good

effect." ⁴⁶ Certainly we do not criticize LCRS simply for creating division. Creating division is, in and of itself, not a sign of a tearing down, but, as in the case of Luther and of Christ himself, may be necessary to build up and renew the church. But LCRS has not created division because it was fighting to preserve true Christian faith with the tools of pure biblical doctrine. Rather it has propounded the principles of ecumenism, it has confused biblical doctrine and it has created a hybrid "Luther-costal" theology. With such standards, LCRS has created not a redemptive, but a destructive tension within the Lutheran Church.

The greatest evidence for the destructive and divisive effect of the charismatic movement on the Lutheran Church is the consistently heard plea of LCRS leaders that Charismatics remain within their established church and denomination, to bring the renewal there, rather than to separate. The fact that such a plea has been deemed necessary, that the tendency of Lutheran charismatics to break away has been recognized, shows one more striking parallel between today's charismatic movement and classical Pentecostalism. Frederick Bruner points out that shortly after the beginning of the Pentecostal movement (ca. 1906) in the United States, "...many of Pentecostal conviction were splintering from their former churches and forming assemblies of their own, believing that only in separation from churches they considered apostate could they be thoroughly holy and true to their new persuasion." ⁴⁷

Quite early in the history of the ILCOS the Lutheran leaders found themselves threatened by this same Pentecostal separatist feeling. But it was a situation which they had engineered for themselves by their attempt to bring Pentecostal beliefs into har-

mony with Lutheran theology. At the second ILCOHS in 1973, the noted independent Pentecostal evangelist, Rev. David Wilkerson, prophesied a mass exodus of charismatics from the denominational churches. He said to the assembly,

Many will not believe me, but I see a day when Catholics, Lutherans, and many others of all denominations are going to have to come out from among them. These new Christians will not call themselves Protestants or Catholics, but simply renewed Christians. 48

We must say honestly that this prophecy caused considerable consternation among Lutheran charismatic leaders such as Morris Vaagenes and Larry Christenson. It had never been their intention to bring about a charismatic superchurch. Not long after that prophecy Christenson warned in a Twin Cities television interview that Wilkerson's prophecy would have to be tested by the Spirit. Vaagenes closed the final evening session of the conference with a plea to the Lutherans to remain in their churches. At the following ILCOHS in 1974, obvious efforts were made to reinforce the idea of renewal from within the established church. Various synodical officials on the national and district levels were invited and charismatic Lutherans were encouraged to speak openly in their local congregations while remaining under their pastor's authority.

This plea to remain in the established church has continued to be set forth by LCRS. Yet, within the last five years, one senses that the pleading has been somewhat sobered by the fact that some charismatic Lutherans are still leaving. There seems to be a greater readiness to accept this exodus, as well as synodical skepticism, as inevitable. At least some LCRS leaders have expressed a preference for dealing with each case individually rather than issuing a universal mandate to remain.

In May, 1977, Mark Hillmer, who formerly seemed very critical of the traditional Lutheran Church, also expressed a positive concern. "If the Holy Spirit can renew individuals," he said, "and if institutions are made up of individuals, then the renewal of the institutions follows logically." ⁴⁹ Yet, just over one year later, in August, 1978, Hillmer leaves the question of the charismatic's relation to the traditional church wide open. He wrote,

But whatever one's denominational background, to be involved in the charismatic movement is to sense that denominations, however useful and necessary they may have been in the past, can no longer demand the ultimate allegiance they have for so long enjoyed....There seems to be a wait-and-see attitude all around. Few in the neo-Pentecostal world are openly calling for another denomination. Yet charismatics for various reasons do leave their churches. Parallel support structures are in some cases being set up. Still, the future is by no means fixed. What is certain is that denominationalism will never be the same. ⁵⁰

In November 1977, Larry Christenson felt there was enough of a questioning attitude on the subject of leaving the established Lutheran Church that he asked a symposium of five charismatic leaders to discuss the pro's and con's. This discussion demonstrated that LCRC leaders were forced to deal with this exodus as a reality. ⁵¹

Almost one year later Rodney Lensch expressed the concern that just as the Pentecostal movement began to denominationalize in the early 1900's, so also,

Many today are saying that the institutional church has virtually forced the renewal outside. The only option remaining is to pull charismatic nucleus groups together and form new congregations. ⁵²

Lensch went on to disagree with this separatist attitude and encourage reconciliation with the established Lutheran Church.

Finally, in 1980, the current LCRC chairman, Delbert Rossin, voiced a concern that just as the church is experiencing decline,

so is the charismatic renewal. Rossin evidently feels that a trend toward charismatic denominationalism is a part of the "chaos and decline" in the church and poses a great threat to its renewal. he states,

The Holy Spirit is using many movements today to renew the church. The "Charismatic Renewal" is only ONE. Don't make the charismatic renewal exclusive or charismatic denominationalism will result. result.

Rossin expresses the hope that the renewal movement "will renew the church from within." He encourages, "Get involved now in the ministry of your church." 53

These statements of pastor Rossin as well as those which preceded are important for our evaluation of LCRS as a tool in the renewal of the Lutheran Church. They demonstrate that the divisiveness and destructive tension remains between the charismatic movement and the established church. This tension, which has troubled the Lutheran Church for nearly two decades, remains, at least in part, because of the false ecumenicity of the charismatic movement. It is an ecumenicity which either becomes so obviously shallow that it is discarded, or eventually forces one outside the structure of the established church to find a greater degree of freedom. In the past decade, the leaders of the ILCOHS and LCRS have done little to truly relieve that tension they helped to create. That tension remains an obstacle to any spiritual renewal the Lutheran Church is in need of.

LCRS has failed in another respect as a tool for renewal. Coupled with its false ecumenicity is a dearth of firm doctrinal conviction. Without even evaluating the scriptural validity of the Pentecostal teachings it has imported into Lutheranism, one

can at least see that LCRS has neglected to provide its followers with a consistent interpretation of those Pentecostal teachings. Yet even such an interpretation on their part would fail to solve the more basic inconsistency. In building a "renewal" in which they claim the Holy Spirit as the prime mover, they have sabotaged their own structure by trying to cement together the incompatible materials of orthodox Lutheran doctrine and Pentecostalism. In that respect, this "renewal" cannot claim the Holy Spirit as its teacher.

The future of the Lutheran charismatic renewal

The organized charismatic renewal among Lutherans is young as movements go. But like most new movements in the life of the church, it has begun to show signs of considerable stress. Are these simply growing pains which accompany a maturing and strengthening process, or are they signs of deterioration? It is difficult to give positive answers. Yet one wonders whether a service organization like LCRS can keep charismatics within the Lutheran church. The attitude of the three largest Lutheran Synods in which the majority of charismatic pastors are found is not very supportive. The LC-MS, in fact, has officially adopted a report that openly declares much of what the charismatics teach to be false.

In 1980, Rodney Lensch offered three possible directions the

movement might take: 1) a continued but very gradual decline, 2) a retreat to the Pentecostal Church, 3) a continued process of infiltration with the established Lutheran Church. 54

I believe that eventually the second direction, the retreat, will become more of a reality. One reason is the simple fact that, whether they intend to or not, Lutheran charismatics, even within the church, have set themselves apart from Lutherans who are not charismatic. They have created, with the leadership of groups like LCRS, a fellowship among themselves, the uniting bond being the shared experience of the "baptism in the Holy Spirit." Can such a fellowship ever be open to those who do not have such a "baptism"?

There is another reason the charismatic movement will have trouble staying within the Lutheran Church. The LCRS leaders have encouraged charismatics to remain. But, at the same time, the organizational machinery of the general charismatic movement in the United States is growing and LCRS is doing its best to see that Lutheran charismatics are informed and involved.

One example will help us to see the kind of organization which the charismatics in the United States have planned for the future. In January, 1981, a new national ecumenical organization, the Parish Renewal Council was officially formed. The Council is a confederation of charismatic renewal fellowships of the Episcopal, Lutheran, Presbyterian, United Church of Christ and United Methodist traditions. One of its objectives is to form "a national network of.....~~ecumenical~~ ^{ecumenical} renewal prayer fellowships." The Council will "centralize^{some} charismatic renewal activities." 55

The Council will also sponsor conferences and publish a newsletter.

LCRS evidently supports this new organization and plans to represent Lutheran charismatics on it because Delbert Rossin, the present LCRS chairman has been appointed as a member of the executive committee. The focus of the Parish Renewal Council is stated to be "revitalization of the local parish, congregations, and denominational organizations." ⁵⁶ Yet, one cannot help to realize that if the prophecy made by David Wilkerson in 1972 were to come true in the near future, the structural machinery for a charismatic superchurch would be in place, well oiled and ready to go.

But consider again the situation which prevails among the Lutherans today. LCRS has a great deal of organizational machinery already functioning to serve Lutheran charismatics. And as such machinery becomes more visible and as LCRS provides more and more support for the troubled charismatic in the form of literature, conferences and worship opportunities, it is undermining the function of the individual congregation. In the past decade, LCRS has done more to provide a retreat from problems with the church than to renew the church. Its future seems to promise the same.

If the Lutheran Church is to defend the Christians in its midst from the leaven of ecumenism, particularly in the form of a misleading charismatic movement, it must not simply condemn the charismatics because they threaten Lutheran tradition or because they employ new worship forms or because they search for spiritual life which dead orthodoxism smothers. Lutherans must study their Bibles hard to find the correct answers to meet the charismatic errors head on. Lutherans must study their Bibles ~~to~~ to understand God-pleasing principles of fellowship. Lutherans

must understand that holding the pure doctrine of Scripture is not a substitute for also living the faith it produces. On the other hand we must constantly take care to compromise no teaching of Scripture for the sake of human convenience. The Lutheran Church today is in need of renewal in as much as every sinful human who belongs to it is in constant need of renewal. Therefore let us pray that the Holy Spirit who began his work in us in the Sacrament of Baptism would continue to work mightily in our hearts through the Means of Grace and in that way preserve in us his greatest gift, the gift of faith.

NOTES

1. Christenson, Larry, The Charismatic Renewal Among Lutherans, Lutheran Charismatic Renewal Services, Minneapolis, 1976, p. 140.
2. Lensch, Rodney, "An Historical and Theological Evaluation of the Lutheran Charismatic Renewal," Tape no. 13617 in LCRS Cassette Tape Catalog, 1980.
3. Christenson, Larry, "Lutherans-The 'Man In The Middle'," in Lutheran Charismatic Renewal Newsletter, v.3, no.7, July 1977, p.2.
4. Lensch, Rodney, op. cit.
5. Bylaws of the Articles of Incorporation of the International Lutheran Conference On The Holy Spirit, see Appendix I.
6. Du Plessis^{David}, quoted in Jesus Where Are You Taking Us?, ed., by Norris Wogen, (Du Plessis' article entitled, "Holy Spirit In Ecumenical Movement"), Creation House, Carol Stream, Ill. 1973, p. 249.
7. Jorstad, Erling, Bold In The Spirit, Augsburg, Minneapolis, 1974, p. 31.
8. That I May Know Him, booklet prepared by LCRS for The Tenth International Lutheran Conference On The Holy Spirit, Aug-4-7, 1981, p. 1.
9. Lensch, Rodney, op. cit.
10. Quoted from a personal letter from Rodney Lensch, Feb. 2, 1982.
11. L.C.R.S. Statement of Purpose, in the Lutheran Charismatic Renewal Newsletter, v. 2, no. 9, Sept. 1976.
12. Personal telephone interview with Rev. Delbert Rossin, Jan. 9, 1982.
13. Bruner, Frederick Dale, A Theology of the Holy Spirit, Note, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, Mich. 1970, p. 54.
14. Christenson, Larry, The Charismatic Renewal Among Lutherans, Lutheran Charismatic Renewal Services, Minneapolis, 1976, p. 29.
15. Ibid., p. 30.
16. For the pastors' response see "Survey" in Appendix IV. Christenson's answer came in personal correspondence to the author.
17. Lensch, Rodney, My Personal Pentecost, Impact Books, Kirkwood, Missouri, 1972, p. 12.
18. Ibid., p. 19.
19. Ibid., p. 31.
20. Lensch, Rodney, quoted in Serving The Renewal, by Don Matzat, a Bread of Life Publication, Howard City, Michigan, 1978, p. 34.
21. Lensch, Rodney, "An Historical and Theological Evaluation of the Lutheran Charismatic Renewal," see Note 2.
22. Rossin, Delbert, quoted in Serving The Renewal, by Don Matzat, p.48.
23. L.C.R.S. Statement of Purpose, in the Lutheran Charismatic Renewal Newsletter, v.2, no.9, Sept. 1976.

24. Ibid.
25. Lensch, Rodney, My Personal Pentecost, p. 20.
26. Vaagenes, Morris, from an LCRS study guide entitled, "The Outpouring Of The Holy Spirit," p. 5. Note that Vaagenes states in this study guide that "The terms, the baptism of the Holy Spirit, the filling of the Holy Spirit, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, the anointing with the Holy Spirit, the receiving of the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit coming upon, and God giving the Holy Spirit to all refer to the same experience." (p.4) Vaagenes distinguishes all of these from "water baptism," see note 37.
27. Jungkuntz, Theodore, "A Biblical Look At 'Optional Extras'," in the Lutheran Charismatic Renewal Newsletter, v.6, no.15, March 1981, p.2.
28. Bruner, Fredrick Dale, op. cit. p. 31.
29. See "Survey," Appendix IV.
30. Christenson, Larry, "Lutherans-The 'Man In The Middle'," in the Lutheran Charismatic Renewal Newsletter, p. 2. July 1977.
31. Hillmer, Mark, "On Being A Lutheran Charismatic," in the Lutheran Charismatic Renewal Newsletter, v.2, no.5, May, 1976.
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APPENDIX I

BY-LAWS
OF
INTERNATIONAL LUTHERAN CONFERENCE ON THE HOLY SPIRIT

ARTICLE I. Name and Location

SECTION 1. The name of this corporation shall be INTERNATIONAL LUTHERAN CONFERENCE ON THE HOLY SPIRIT.

SECTION 2. Its principal office shall be located in the City of Minneapolis, Minnesota.

SECTION 3. Other offices for the transaction of business shall be located at such places as the Board of Directors may, from time to time, determine.

ARTICLE II. Purpose

This corporation shall have the following purposes:

SECTION 1. To promote conferences on the Holy Spirit, to do all things and acts necessary or desirable to set up, finance, manage, operate and run said conferences, and to promote religious activity of any sort or nature whatsoever.

SECTION 2. To engage in spiritual work and services based upon scripture found in the Holy Bible, and the Epistle of Ephesians, Chapter 4, verses 12-13, "for the equipment of the saints, for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." To enlist the services of those who are of like minds with us in the promotion of the Gospel through an annual International Lutheran Conference On the Holy Spirit, or wherever such services may be desired and where such services may give comfort and uplift those in such need.

SECTION 3. The foregoing purposes are to be carried out through a conference ministry, encountering believers and non-believers with the promises and claims of Jesus Christ and encouraging and helping Christians to grow in their life of commitment and dedication.

ARTICLE III. Membership

SECTION 1. The membership of this corporation shall consist of any person of the Lutheran faith who evidences in writing a desire to be a member.

L.C.R.S. Statement Of Purpose

Lutheran Charismatic Renewal Services was formed as a non-profit corporation in 1974, as a vehicle to serve and coordinate the various aspects of the charismatic renewal among Lutherans.

The Service Committee consists of leaders, both clergy and laity, who have been drawn together in the work of the renewal, and are able to devote a certain amount of extra time to serving in this way. The structure is open-ended, so people can be added to the Service Committee, or leave it, as needs and situations change.

LCRS came into being in response to a need -- the need for Lutheran charismatics to draw closer together, to gain a deepened sense of their own identity, to present a more effective witness to their own church, and at the same time to share fully in the great renewing work which the Holy Spirit is doing throughout the whole church. It is, as its name implies, a service body. Members of the Service Committee are prepared to serve as "points of contact", each in his own area of the country, offering whatever help they can to encourage and strengthen the charismatic renewal among Lutherans. General inquiry should be made to LCRS headquarters.

LCRS serves a three-fold function. It recognizes, first of all, a shepherding responsibility for Lutheran charismatics. It seeks to provide help and resources for those involved in the renewal, through such things as conferences, tapes, information and literature, assistance to local leaders. Without much clanking of machinery, Lutherans involved in the renewal are being strengthened in a variety of ways for witness and service.

Secondly, LCRS serves as a necessary point-of-contact between church officials and the renewal. It is difficult for the Institutional church to relate to a widespread, unstructured movement. LCRS seeks to maintain communication and good relationships with Lutheran church officials, and to communicate their concerns to those involved in the renewal.

A number of Lutheran charismatics, both clergy and laity, are presently living or serving outside the formal structures of the Lutheran Church. Some have made this choice themselves, some have been forced or frozen out of the Lutheran church because the church would not accept their charismatic experience and witness. A third task of LCRS is to relate to these individuals and groups who are outside the structure, and to represent their concerns to the church. Many of them still maintain a keen sense of their Lutheran identity. In an honest appraisal they must be recognized as an important part of the charismatic renewal among Lutherans. Insofar as some have been dealt with unfairly, or have acted unwisely, and the possibility of reconcilia-

tion remains, they represent unfinished business for the church and for the renewal.

From the beginning, the charismatic renewal has had a strong ecumenical thrust. The ecumenical involvement has not been organizational, neither has it been superficial. It has been at the level of a common experience of the reality of the Spirit, and the acknowledgement of the Lordship of Christ. Denominational differences have not been wiped away, but a deep-felt sense of unity -- one could almost say an obligation of unity -- has continued to hover over the renewal. Seasoned observers of the ecumenical movement have singled out the charismatic renewal as the most vital and significant thing happening in the ecumenical scene today. LCRS maintains close ties with leaders representing other sectors of the charismatic renewal, recognizing that we have a distinctive contribution to make as Lutherans, and also have much to gain from Christians of other traditions and backgrounds.

Greetings in the name of Jesus Christ, from Lutheran Charismatic Renewal Services:

Beloved in the Lord, we are delighted that you would desire to participate in having a conference. The purpose of having a conference is 'for the equipment of the saints, the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ'.

Paul says 'be ye not ignorant', and one of the purposes of a conference is to teach people how to walk in the Spirit; how to be evangelists; how to be that instrument of reconciliation in their own sphere of influence, whether that be at home, in the market place, school or wherever.

In this kit there are some suggested guidelines for a conference on the Holy Spirit. We would suggest that you begin your planning meeting with singing and prayer, and seek the Holy Spirit's guidance as to the individuals you should have as chairman and secretary. After that decision has been made, it might be well to have a general discussion of the whole idea of a conference, go over the papers that are included in the conference kit, and especially note the areas of responsibility that are listed. Then I believe it would be well to elect an executive committee, to be composed of 4-6 people. The purpose of having an executive committee is to expedite solutions of problems without having to call the entire general committee together, since it will be probably composed of 25 persons or so.

The theme of your conference will be something which the Lord will reveal to you as you seek him. We have included some suggestions on the guiding sheet, but your area is unique, the time of your conference different, and each conference should be following what the Lord lays on the hearts of the committee for a theme.

Also we have 'suggested dates for the conference'. There should be at least 3-4 months between your initial meeting and the projected dates for the conference. You should suggest 3-4 possible dates.

The second sheet has an organizational chart, showing the areas of responsibility, and identifying to whom each chairman is responsible. The general committee, which consists of the larger group, is in charge of the entire program. The executive committee is responsible to the general committee, and below them you have the different prayer groups, music, housing, food and books, printing, finances, publicity, ushering and registration. These are each responsible to the executive committee, and also to the general committee. As you go over these different groups you may decide to interchange some of the groups as you desire.

On the third page you discuss possible locations. Usually we begin by seeking the Lord as to how many people we should anticipate His bringing to this particular conference. This will help us to decide on the location -- whether we need seating for 400, 600, 1500 or whatever. Seek the Lord to help you to determine the size of facilities needed.

Next we suggest you pray about main speakers, and when you contact them, have the date, day and time they would speak available. Secondly, select the workshop leaders and topics. As you select them, seek the Lord as to anointings He has placed upon particular persons for the specific workshop titles you choose. For example, there are individuals whom the Lord has given a special anointing to speak on 'The Christian Family'; or one who has been anointed by the Lord to teach upon 'The Walk in the Spirit'; or a particular woman who has been anointed to teach upon 'The Woman's Role'. You need to seek the Lord as to what He wants regarding the speakers and the topics. There are suggested topics on the bottom of the sheet.

APPENDIX III

Now we come to sheet number 4 -- if you plan to have, for example, a Friday for just Pastors and wives, we suggest you start possibly at 8:30 a.m. with registration and coffee. Then continue through the dinner hour with that group, and merging with the entire group at a 7 o'clock prayer meeting at the conference location. The schedule that is included in this conference kit is tentative; you may move it about as you desire. We would suggest, however, if you do not desire to be involved in a Friday meeting with the Pastors and wives, that at least you do begin the conference on a Friday evening and follow the conference schedule for Friday and Saturday, inserting your desired changes, and concluding Saturday evening with a main speaker. In some areas the conference has been carried over into the Sunday morning services, concluding with a 2 o'clock Sunday afternoon rally at the church.

Also in the kit are some music sheets. You may have your own, with the music which you are more familiar with in your particular area. Also in the kit are several brochures from various conferences, which you may use as samples to study in order to decide which you would desire to follow, or to plant new thoughts for your original brochure.

LCRS would be happy to answer any questions you may have, or to provide speakers from various parts of the country, or to provide you with a list of speakers from the various areas. We would suggest you have not just your local people, but that you include some outside people also. The reason for this is that cross-fertilization is healthy in the Christian walk. It is also good, however, to use some local people, so that when the conference is over, there is a nucleus who should be flowing together as a body of Believers. We have found these conferences are self-perpetuating; once you have had one, you will be eager for the next.

As you make LCRS aware of the conference in which you are involved, we will carry it into our prayer life. We pray God's blessings upon you as you step forth in faith to receive the blessings which the Lord has for you. He has said that 'without faith you cannot please Him', and we praise God for people like you who step forth in faith to lift up Jesus. As you lift up Jesus you shall be blessed. "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied."

One more area which concerns us is that of your ministry teams. Rather than just allowing anyone who desires to participate in this very important aspect of your conference, you must have someone who will check into the maturity and capabilities of those you choose for the ministry roles. Too many problems can result in loose organization in this aspect, in particular.

Some conferences provide baby-sitting services; some do not. Seek the Lord's leading for your needs in this area for your conference.

APPENDIX IV

Questionnaire

Six Lutheran charismatic pastors responded to a questionnaire concerning their feelings on LCRS and the charismatic movement in general. Each of these pastors has had assistance from or a connection with LCRS or ILCOHS. Because the number of pastors surveyed was small and the number which responded is smaller yet, the results are not presented here with the intention of drawing sweeping conclusions about all Lutheran charismatic pastors. However, the answers do help us get a feeling for the position of some of the charismatics. None of the six men who responded was mentioned in this paper so far, but some were involved in the early stages of ILCOHS or LCRS. (Included here are only the most important questions)

	Yes	No	Other
3. Have you begun to lead your congregation into the charismatic renewal?	5		1 has no cong.
9. Have your beliefs concerning the ecumenical mov't. and inter-denominational fellowship been changed to any degree through contact with LCRS?	3	1	2 gave no answer
...with the charismatic renewal in general?	5		1 gave no answer
10. Do you believe that Holy Spirit Baptism can be a common bond uniting all Christian denominations, despite doctrinal differences?	3	2	1, "to a degree"
14. Have you attended any of the International Conferences on the Holy Spirit?	6		
15. Did your attendance at any of the conferences involve you in worship fellowship with Christians of other denominations?	6		
16. Would you or have you recommended attendance at these conferences for members of your congregation?	6		
17. Prior to your personal involvement with charismatic renewal, did you have contact with Pentecostals?	1	5	
...with charismatics of other Christian churches?	1	5	
19. Do you presently participate or plan to participate in any of these types of fellowship (altar, pulpit or prayer) with other Lutheran (charismatic)bodies than your own?	6		
...with charismatic Christians of other denominations than Lutheran?	5		1 gave no answer

	Yes	No	Other
20. Do you feel that the Lutheran Charismatic Renewal has something to gain from Charismatic Renewal in other Christian denominations?	5		1 gave no answer
Would you look forward to a program sponsored by LCRS or a similar group to help bring Lutheran Charismatics into closer contact with other Christian charismatics?	5		1 gave no answer

6. Which LCRS leader has, through his writings, helped you the most in understanding the theology behind Lutheran charismatic renewal?

Survey no.

1. Bob Swanger, Martin Luther
2. Larry Christenson, Rod Lensch
3. No answer
4. Larry Christenson
5. Nick Ittzes, Larry Christenson
6. Ted Jungkuntz, Larry Christenson