

CHRISTIAN STEWARDSHIP & THE CURRENT CULTURE

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LUTHERAN CHURCHES IN DECLINE

The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod has been experiencing a loss in membership for decades. Some congregations are merging. Some, without a resident pastor, have become “preaching stations”. Others have closed. Over the years Sunday worship attendance has been declining. For the most part, the elderly with a few middle-aged attend services. Where are the young adults? The teenagers? The children?

Some pastors, depressed, blame themselves to the point of burn-out. Church members, frustrated, blame themselves and others. Some of the blame, however, should be redirected. A significant cause for decline can be found elsewhere - **in our current culture**. There many are pursuing and being pursued in a rat-race of “isms” neither Biblical nor church oriented.

SOME “ISMS” IN OUR CURRENT CULTURE

Postmodernism . . . Rejects all forms of authoritative truth including the absolute authority of the Holy Scriptures. Espouses tolerance without Biblical moral appraisal

Humanistic-Secularism . . . Morality based on the well-being of an individual and mankind and not on a religious system.

Pragmatism . . . Without an absolute authoritative moral compass to gauge direction, “Does it work?” has replaced “Is it right?”

Individualism . . . A psychological turn inward expressed in independence and a freedom from commitment and responsibility to others - an “I owe it to myself” mindset.



Pursuit” - Painting by T. Soltis

Pluralism . . . A tolerance for a multiple world-view espousing multiple religions and multiple ways to achieve spiritual and temporal gain.

Relativism . . . What is deemed important and acceptable is relative to one’s personal point of view or current circumstances.

Materialism . . . An all-consuming pursuit of money, possessions and power. Time, energy and resources are often quickly swallowed up leaving people harried, dissatisfied and unfulfilled - sometimes living from day to day.

Hedonism . . . Seeks fulfillment or escape from disappointment in a whirlwind of “Eat, drink and be merry for tomorrow we die.”

**All these “isms” could be summarized as “Me-ism”
”Meet my needs on my timetable by my standards”**

ANTIDOTE FOR THE CURRENT CULTURE

Self-centeredness, the common denominator of our current culture, is as old as sin. Its antidote is a life of Christian stewardship which emphasizes living for God rather than self. Defined, “**Christian stewardship is the free and joyous activity of the child of God and God’s family, the Church, in managing all of life and life’s resources for God’s purposes.**” Christian stewardship is a lifestyle, not a random event. Its promotion should be a priority for every pastor, congregation and individual Christian to offset the “me-ism” of our current culture.

APPLYING THE ANTIDOTE



Conversion to Christ will enable a person to turn from a worldly cultural lifestyle to one of God-glorifying stewardship. Conversion is the goal of the current synodical effort “**Ablaze & Fan into Flame**”. The motto of the SELC District is “**Show Everyone Life in Christ**”! Individual Christians are encouraged to personally witness Christ. A rededication to

“**Search the Word - Share the Faith - Fund the Mission**” is imperative. Culture should not shape the Church. The Church should shape culture for a life of Christian stewardship. When that happens, pews will be filled to overflowing and missions/ministries will thrive in all parts of the world.