

Lutheran Mission Matters



Volume XXVII, No. 1 (Issue 54) May 2019

The Antioch Model for Faithful Participation in Christ's Mission

Will Sohns

Abstract: In addressing faithful participation in Christ's mission, do we know, understand, and believe the essence of Christ's mission? Are we faithfully participating in and executing Christ's mission? Are the mission practices faithfully based on and aligned with God's mission disposition and principles? As helpful and necessary as they may be, the answers to these questions do not come from sociological, cultural, and demographic studies. In the face of experiencing decline and loss in the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (baptized membership in 1981: 2,721,883; 2017: 1,968,641¹) and a post-Christian world, the answer lies in God's Word. It is missional. It is theological. It is spiritual.

Beginning in 2001, the "Ablaze movement" was a laudatory effort to engage the Synod's members to be faithful in carrying out the reason for the Synod's existence, as expressed in the Preamble of its Constitution, "The example of the *apostolic church*, Acts 15:1–31." It sought to execute an objective of the Synod (Constitution Article III.2): "Strengthen congregations and their members *in giving bold witness* by word and deed to the love and work of God, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and *extend that Gospel witness into all the world.*" (emphases added)

In an 1879 essay, C. F. W. Walther addressed faithfulness in mission with a quote of Luther:

A Christian and also a congregation are plants that have grown from the seed sown by other Christians and congregations. Therefore, this congregation and every individual Christian is to be a seed from which new Christians and congregations can ever again grow. That is why the apostle says so emphatically, 'The church is the mother of us all' (Gal. 4:26). Just



Rev. Dr. Will Sohns is a retired (age 85 +) parish pastor, church planter, and evangelist. He also served the synod formerly as a pastoral advisor of the Lutheran Laymen's League (Lutheran Hour), member and chairman of the Board for Missions (LCMS), district president (Wyoming) and most recently member and chairman of the Commission on Constitutional Matters (LCMS). He was also a co-founder of Jesus Is Lord Mission Society and has produced many ecclesiastical and missiological studies. sohnswill@gmail.com

Copyright 2019 Lutheran Society for Missiology. Used by permission.

View Lutheran Mission Matters 27, no. 1 (2019) at <https://lsfm.global/>.

Membership in LSFM is available at <https://lsfm.global/joinlsfm.html>.

E-mail lsfmissiology@gmail.com to purchase a print copy of a single issue.

as surely as we are now members of the church, so surely we should also be fruitful mothers; and if we are unfruitful mothers, i.e., if we do not produce spiritual children or fail to do those things whereby such children can be produced, then we are not obeying our calling, and God will not say, ‘*You pious and faithful servant,*’ [Matthew 25:21, 23²] but rather, ‘*You unfaithful servant!*’ God grant that we never need to hear Him say those words to us!³ (emphases added)

With Luther’s calling our attention to Christ’s mission of building HIS Church⁴ and the urgency of being faithful in Christ’s mission, the Synod must recognize that “*a pious and faithful servant*” is to be faithful in mission principles, purpose, and practices. It is essential if the Synod’s assemblies of believers and its individual believers are to participate faithfully in the mission of Christ.

With Luther’s calling our attention to Christ’s mission of building HIS Church and the urgency of being faithful in Christ’s mission, the Synod must recognize that “*a pious and faithful servant*” is to be faithful in mission principles, purpose, and practices. It is essential if the Synod’s assemblies of believers and its individual believers are to participate faithfully in the mission of Christ.

Introduction

Assessing the faithful stewardship of the church’s mission can be facilitated by using the scriptural Antioch Model (Acts 13–15) of an apostolic church. Faithfulness must be measured by *reviewing God’s mission and His design, creation, description, and purpose of the “church” for the sake of congregations that exist or are to be planted with the purpose of being and planting His church.*

In his sermon/address at the first meeting of the Synodical Conference in 1872, C. F. W. Walther reviewed and evaluated the purpose of the church: “For what would happen if we really would make the saving of souls the ultimate purpose, the end and aim of our joint work?” He went on to say, “Whatever will win the most souls for Christ, that would decide between us...”⁵

In a description of God’s design of “church,” Dr. Jeffrey Gibbs’s statement is revealing and helpful: “The New Testament itself uses the term ‘church’ . . . as the Apostles’ Creed, the Nicene Creed, and the Augsburg Confession all teach us, ‘*one holy Christian and apostolic church.*’”⁶ (emphasis added)

The Antioch Model for Evaluating Faithful Participation in Christ's Mission

The “Antioch Model” of mission, which reflects the Christ-created “*one holy, catholic and apostolic Church*” in the Book of Acts, is helpful in assessing faithful participation in Christ’s mission. It is a description and prescription for congregations at any time and in any place in the world. The “Antioch Model” prescribes the necessary missional disposition and purpose of “*Church,*” which puts into practice cognitive consonance⁷ in accord with the essential biblical nature, purpose and mission of the “*Church*” as confessed in the Nicene Creed: “*one holy, catholic and apostolic Church.*”

In an article, “Released and Sent: Verbs and Their Subjects in Acts 13,” Rev. Dr. Jeffrey A. Oswald wrote: “The sending of Barnabas and Saul (Acts 13:1–4) is rightly regarded as a crucial text for understanding the Church’s role in God’s mission to save His world.”⁸

The “Antioch Model” leads us to understand and practice faithfully *missional principles* of Scripture. For example, see Acts 13:1–4:

Now there were in the *church* at Antioch prophets and teachers, Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen a lifelong friend of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. While they were *worshiping* the Lord and fasting, the *Holy Spirit* said, “*Set apart* (ἀφορίζω—separate, set apart, appoint, mark off) for me Barnabas and Saul [Paul] for *the work* (ἔργον) to which I have *called* (προσκαλέω—summon, call to oneself) them.” Then after fasting and praying they *laid their hands* (ἐπιτίθημι χεῖρ—placed hand) on them and *sent them off* (ἀπολύω—release, set free, let go, loose from, dismiss [sent away]). So, being *sent out* (ἐκπέμπω—send out, send away) by the *Holy Spirit*, they went down to Seleucia, and from there they sailed to Cyprus. (emphases added, including parenthetical explanations)

The Church in Antioch lived and breathed “*sentness*” and “*one holy, catholic and apostolic Church*” in their *participation* and *partnership* with Christ and the Holy Spirit. The “Antioch Model” is a useful tool in *evaluating* the faithfulness of and in *executing* faithfully the design, creation, execution, and best practices⁹ of the church engaged in Christ’s mission.

Using the “Antioch Model” under the outline of “*one holy catholic and Apostolic Church*” beginning with “*Church,*” let’s evaluate: *Are we (the church) “pious and faithful servant[s]” participating in Christ’s mission and in need of repentance?*

“Church” (Congregation)

Acts 13:1–4 refers to “church,” “Now there were in the *church* (ἐκκλησίαν—assembly, a calling out, congregation, community) *at Antioch*” (v. 1; emphasis and parenthetical explanation added). As Christocentric church and sent-ones by Christ, the *assembly* of believers were *gathered* around Christ’s Word. And as church, they were a *sent Church*, a *sending Church*, and *sent* ones into the world with the Word of salvation through Jesus alone.

Under the power of the Holy Spirit, the participation of the assembly of God’s people in Christ’s mission demonstrates a foundational missional disposition and principle. The “Antioch Model,” which includes individual believers, the assembly of individual believers, called leaders and other congregations, all alongside with one another, shows forth faithfully engaged participants in Christ’s mission and Church.

“One”—The “*Una Sancta*”

With Acts 15:11 saying, “But *we* believe that we will be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just *as they* will,” the Gentile church in Antioch consisted of believers who were one, one Spirit, one Lord, one Baptism, one God and Father of all, and *one in Jesus Christ* with *all* believers, Jew or Gentile. Even after having been scattered, the oneness was in “*believing* [people] *turned to the Lord*” (Acts 11: 21). (emphases added)

As a “body” consisting of many and different parts and functions, yet not fragmented, and as members of one another, the church is a community of “*people brought to the same Lord*” (Acts 11:24), an assembly together not with distinctions as Jews or Gentiles, males or females, rich or poor, but of “we” “brothers,” “Christians,” and “disciples” of Jesus Christ.

The Antioch believers practiced and pursued the God-granted *unity with Christ and unity with one another*, including the believers in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, Africa, in the provinces of Asia, in “Councils,” and gatherings. Unity with Christ is a missional disposition, principle, and practice!

Unity with Christ is
a missional disposition,
principle, and practice!

“Holy”—The “Una Sancta”

Conversion is described in Acts 15:3: “So, being sent on their way by the church, they passed through both Phoenicia and Samaria, describing in detail the conversion of the Gentiles, and brought great joy to all the brothers.” Cleansing is described in Acts 15:9: “having *cleansed* their hearts by faith.” The Church in Antioch comprised believers granted “*repentance unto life*” (Acts 11:18), the holy righteousness of Christ.

The believers were converted and made holy not by “circumcision,” councils, institutions, polity, church arrangements, observance of certain ceremonies, traditions, programs, or human works and piety, but by the holy blood of Jesus and the sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit.

A central missional purpose (focus) is the conversion and transformation of *people* who are being established in a *holy saving faith relationship with Jesus*. “We believe it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus that we are saved” (Acts 15:11). It is all about Jesus’ seeking and saving the lost whether Jew or Gentile, male or female. The church is *all about the conversion mission* of transmitting or conferring the *holiness in Jesus* to a wicked, pagan world. It is the sending of a holy forgiveness (Jn 20:23) of the unfaithfulness, worldliness, hypocrisy, absorption in self, pride, prejudice, indifference, immorality, idolatry, imperfection, and all the rubbish of the world.

For the sake of the “holy” mission of Christ, the church then and now is to focus on being sent to the lost, on declaring the lost “holy” by Christ with a focus on a community of saving faith and mission!

The believers were converted and made holy not by “circumcision,” councils, institutions, polity, church arrangements, observance of certain ceremonies, traditions, programs, or human works and piety, but by the holy blood of Jesus and the sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit.

... For the sake of the “holy” mission of Christ, the church then and now is to focus on being sent to the lost, on declaring the lost “holy” by Christ with a focus on a community of saving faith and mission!

“Catholic”

The “catholic” (universal) nature of the “church” is shown in Acts 11:19–20, 25–26:

Now those who were scattered because of the persecution that arose over Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch, speaking the word to no one except Jews. But there were some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who on coming to Antioch spoke to the Hellenists also, preaching the Lord Jesus. . . . So Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul, and when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. For a whole year they met with the church and taught a great many people. And in Antioch the disciples were first called Christians.

Whether living in Antioch, Tarsus, Cyprus, Phoenicia, Samaria, Cyrene, Jerusalem, or among the dispersed around the world, the church consisted of believers who possessed the universal Christian faith, which is centered in a personal relationship with Christ. It is not centered in a denominational, religious, trade, or cultural center, continent, urban area, rural area, or capital city. The Church in Antioch was “catholic.”

Since the Gospel of Christ is “catholic,” there are no distinctions between Jew and Gentile, no geographical distinctions, no prejudice, no denominationalism, no individualism, no racial barriers. It is not provincial, parochial, or institutional, but living stones of a spiritual house of all times and places. It is “*catholic, amid all the complexities of human relationships, racial, national, social, denominational, and individual.*”¹⁰ (emphasis added)

Not fragmented, the universality of the Church exists wherever the Gospel is proclaimed. This quality and disposition of mind and heart is a fundamental mission principle to be practiced, fundamental to the life and witness of every *sent church*, *sent called Leader*, and *sending church*.

“Apostolic”

In Acts 13:3–4, the “apostolic church” is described: “Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and *sent them off*.”

⁴ So, *being sent out* by the Holy Spirit, *they went* down to Seleucia, and from there they sailed to Cyprus.” (emphases added)

The Church in Antioch comprised believers who were *sent* believers, a *sent* church with *sent* called Leaders, and a *sending* church.

The Church in Antioch comprised believers who were *sent* believers, a *sent* church with *sent* called Leaders, and a *sending* church.

The Antioch assembly sent its believers with Christ’s authority to the people of Antioch and the world. The Gentile missionary congregation partnered with the Holy Spirit in sending missionaries, who returned and were sent back again. And as

“apostolic” (*sent*) bearers of the truth, the church was devoted to the teaching of the Apostles (Acts 2:42) and built on the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets (Eph 2:20).

Being apostolic meant the *continuity* of Christ’s and the Church’s *sending*. The assembly were sent participants representing Christ with the apostolic Word of Christ to save the people of the whole world. The church was not sent to save human institutions,¹¹ property, buildings, church signs, Lutheran traditions, ceremonies and rituals, a Lutheran ethos or “arrangements,”¹² but *people*—and not just a select few, at that.

The Apostles were sent, the Church was sent, *and they went*—APOSTOLIC!

“Christians today are not Apostles, but the ‘*sentness*’ aspect of apostleship is incumbent on every Christian—hence the apostolic character of the New Testament church.”¹³

This *missio Dei* disposition, principle, and practices are to be faithfully evaluated and executed! The community is to be both a community of faith *and* mission, and thus truly apostolic. It is the essence of “apostolic Church” to have the quality and nature of a living saving faith and be both sent and sending!

Selective Review of the Antioch Model in Acts 11–15 for a Faithful Church (not exhaustive)

A review and evaluation of *faithfulness in Christ’s mission* using the “Antioch Model” in the context of “I believe *one holy, catholic and apostolic church*”:

- Being a sent church composed primarily of sent dispersed Jewish believers from Jerusalem, of sent believers from Cyprus (island in the Mediterranean)¹⁴ and Cyrene,¹⁵ and of sent Greeks/Gentiles living in Antioch¹⁶ (Acts 11:19–26; Cf. John 17:18 and John 20:21–23)
- Being focused on proclaiming the Good News of Jesus Christ to both Jews (at first) and Greeks living there (Acts 11:18–26)
- Being composed of the “uncircumcised,” of pagan origin, of believers “sent” to Antioch by God’s providence, and a “great number” of converts living in Antioch, all of whom became “brothers” or “disciples,” a predominately Gentile congregation (Acts 11:18–26)
- Experiencing a *multiplication* of God’s *Word* and *workers* (sent leaders, prophets, teachers, and “apostles” (Acts 11:22–26; 12:24–25; 13:1–5; cf. Eph 4:11)
- Being set apart (2 of the 5 leaders), prayed for, “commissioned,” (as apostles—authorized representatives) and “released,” (Acts 13:1–4) Apostles Barnabas and Saul (Paul, Acts 13:9) were sent out (“*apostled*”) by the Holy Spirit to establish and give birth to the sent believers and

Copyright 2019 Lutheran Society for Missiology. Used by permission.

View Lutheran Mission Matters 27, no. 1 (2019) at <https://lsfm.global/>.

Membership in LSFM is available at <https://lsfm.global/joinlsfm.html>.

E-mail lsfmissiology@gmail.com to purchase a print copy of a single issue.

congregations (churches) under the power of the Holy Spirit, with the Word of God being spread throughout the whole region (Acts 13:49)

- Participating and partnering in the “great number of Jews and Gentiles” coming to “believing” (faith), winning “a large number of disciples,” in “strengthening the disciples and encouraging them to remain true to the faith,” and appointing (seeing to the appointing) elders (pastors) in the context of praying and laying on of hands (Acts 13:2–4, 49; 14:1, 21–23)
- Committing Paul and Barnabas “to the grace of God for the work (the mission) they had now completed,” welcoming them back home (the sending Church) and gathering together to receive the report of “all that God had done through them and how He had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles” (Acts 14:26–28)
- Recognizing the Church at large, such as believers in Phoenicia, Samaria, and Jerusalem and respecting the ecclesiastical leaders, the apostles, and elders, in the Jerusalem Church (Acts 15:2–4)
- Sending Apostles Paul and Barnabas and congregation members to have a “meeting” and participating with the fellow believers in Jerusalem, especially with the apostles and elders there, including Peter and James, to consider and discuss the matter of salvation (Acts 15:2–19)
- Participating in the judgment that “We believe it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus that we are saved” based on the Word of God as revealed by Apostle Peter (the vision, Cornelius), experienced by Apostles Paul and Barnabas in their mission to the Gentiles, and revealed by Elder James (the Chairman) (Acts 10; Acts 15:7–18; Amos 9:11–12)
- Participating in sending and receiving “visitors-leaders” and a letter of encouragement from the Jerusalem Council (Apostles, Elders, *whole church*) concerning the matter (Acts 15:22–35)
- Continuing to support the release of Apostles Paul and Barnabas to return and visit the new believers and congregations to whom they were sent in order to “see how they were doing” and to “strengthen the churches” in the faith in Jesus (Acts 15:36–41)

Acts gives very little or no mention to arrangements such as “place,” “property,” “grounds,” “buildings,” “architecture,” “space,” “technological, musical, and sound instruments,” or even “language” and “time,” except an occasional reference to public places for the proclamation and teaching such as “synagogue,” “beside the river,” “place of prayer,” “house,” “Mars Hill,” “market place,” “prison,” “theater,” and, of course, the particular city/country. Acts demonstrates *the focus* on *Christ* and His Word, *proclamation*, and the *people* receiving the *Gospel message* of *oneness in the Christ*, who died and rose again for the appropriation of *Christ’s holiness* for *salvation*. It was and is all about the mission of converting and transforming souls for eternity with Christ (John 17). It is all about HIS MISSION, HIS CHURCH!

Copyright 2019 Lutheran Society for Missiology. Used by permission.

View Lutheran Mission Matters 27, no. 1 (2019) at <https://lsfm.global/>.

Membership in LSFM is available at <https://lsfm.global/joinlsfm.html>.

E-mail lsfmissiology@gmail.com to purchase a print copy of a single issue.

Summary

A faithful planting of the church (*ἐκκλησίαν*), which is described as the *one holy, catholic, and apostolic Church* (Antioch congregation model), is faithful to Christ and His mission, is armed with a Christ-mission disposition and practices as a community or assembly of believers. It is a divinely established congregation, which has originally been given the “sending-mission keys.” It is faithfully *apostolic*, simultaneously gathered around the apostolic Word of Christ and being a “sent,” “sender,” and “sending” one, just like the sent-sender-sending Jesus (Jn 17:18¹⁷ and Jn 20:21–23¹⁸) with His missional heart, disposition, and practice [*“habitus,”* “DNA”] (Lk 4:18–19¹⁹).

This faithful “Church” is *Christ-centered* with a focus on saving faith and a relationship with Jesus; is *congregation-engaged* (the priesthood of believers) with God and fellow believers; and is *sent-sending-absorbed* (*apostolic*) with authority to reach the lost, the unclaimed, de-churched, and the Jesus-disconnected under the power of the Holy Spirit.

This faithful “Church” is led by called *apostolic leaders*; is *apostolic Scripture-based* under the power of the Holy Spirit; *executes Christ-modeled leadership*;²⁰ *carries out mission practices* which are based on and reflect Christ’s missional disposition and principles (“cognitive consonance”); and is *one (unity) with Christ* and with one another in Christ (Christ-fellowship).

This faithful “Church” is being God’s Church with the *multiplication*²¹ of the (1) Word, of (2) converts (people coming to faith), and of (3) sending, sent ones, of sent leaders, sent churches and sending churches!

Synopsis and Conclusion

With Holy Spirit-sent, called, and released leaders, the faithful *one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church* of Antioch (a largely Gentile congregation), set off a mission fire-storm of the unleashed Gospel power (Rom 1:16–17) of God from Antioch to Rome (maybe to Spain), to Phoenicia, Samaria, Jerusalem, and to “the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

The Church was sent under the sending authority of the apostolic Word of Christ and the God-sent Jesus as His personal representatives (Jn 17:18; 20:21–23; cf. Acts 9:15) for the conversion to Christ of an untold number of people for their salvation and for the creation of a great number of believers—assemblies all over the world. The sending was for the continuation of the *one holy, catholic, and apostolic Church* “*in fidelity to the apostolic Word and way, the apostolic message, and the apostolic mission.*”²²

Thus the Antioch Model of a Faithful One, Holy, Catholic, Apostolic Church!

SO! Do we know, understand, and believe the essence of Christ's mission? Do we understand mission as demonstrated in the "*one holy Christian and Apostolic Church*" and reflected in Antioch? Are we faithfully participating in Christ's mission? Are mission practices faithfully based on and aligned with God's mission character and principles? Are mission principles faithfully applied in all the practices of the congregations (and the Synod)?

May we come to hear God say: "*You pious and faithful servant[s]*" participating in Christ's mission!

Endnotes

¹ LCMS Rosters, Statistics, and Research Services (as published in The Lutheran Annual).

² Matthew 25:21, 23; "His master said to him, 'Well done, good [ἀγαθός – good] and faithful [πιστέ, – reliable, believing] servant. You have been faithful [πιστός – reliable, believing] over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master...'" ²³ "His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.'" (emphasis added)

³ C. F. W. Walther, "Duties of an Evangelical Lutheran Synod," (1879), Thesis VI, *Essays for the Church* Vol. II (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1992).

⁴ Matthew 16:18–19: "And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock *I will build my church* (ἐκκλησίαν), and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. *I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven*, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (emphasis added).

⁵ C. F. W. Walther, "Our Common Task: the Saving of Souls," Opening of the first meeting of the Synodical Conference, July 10–16, 1872, Milwaukee, WI.

⁶ Jeffrey A. Gibbs, "Church Fellowship in the New Testament," in Convention Proceedings 2001, 61st Regular Convention of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, St. Louis, Missouri, July 14–20, 2001.

⁷ Dale Meyer used the term "cognitive consonance" in reference to its use by Rachel MacNair (writing about the pro-life cause) to describe that our behavior [practice] must fit together or match with (consonance) our thinking and thoughts [mind set] (cognition) and not be contradictory or dissonant. The Meyer Minute (January 18, 2019), <https://themeyerminute.typepad.com/meyerminute/2019/01/the-meyer-minute-for-january-18-2019.html>.

⁸ Jeffrey A. Oswald, "Released and Sent: Verbs and Their Subjects in Acts 13," *Lutheran Mission Matters* 26, no. 2 (Nov. 2018): 209.

⁹ A practical study guide document entitled "Best Practices for Church Planting," setting forth best practices for "church planting" aligned to missional disposition and principles, is available from Dr. Stephen Sohns stephensohns@gmail.com.

¹⁰ Oswald C. Hoffmann, "The Doctrinal Essay: I Believe One Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church," in Convention Proceedings 1967, 47th Regular Convention of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, New York, New York, July 7–14, 1967, p. 67.

¹¹ “The well-being and growth of the District/Synod [institution] is not to be our primary goal. Our primary goal should be to spread God's glory, to rescue souls and bring them salvation.” Walther, “Duties of an Evangelical Lutheran Synod.”

¹² “*Arrangements* are not means of grace but simple, *outward means of assistance* so that the means of grace can be utilized and can be put into operation” (H. Schwann, convention presidential address, 1896 Convention Proceedings). (emphases added)

¹³ Rev. Dr. Robert J. Scudieri, *The Apostolic Church—One, Holy, Catholic and Missionary* (Naples, FL: Mission Nations Publishing, 2016), 13.

¹⁴ Deacon Stephen (Cf. Acts 6) was “sent” by God to Cyprus, where many Jews lived and which was the home of Barnabas, to proclaim the Good News of Jesus (Acts 11:19–20).

¹⁵ Cyrene was a Greek colonial city in what is now Libya, Africa.

¹⁶ A city in Syria, founded in 300 BC with a reputation for immorality and superstition.

¹⁷ John 17:18: “As you *sent* me into the world, so I have *sent* them into the world.” (emphasis added)

¹⁸ John 20:21–23: “Jesus said to them again, ‘Peace be with you. As the Father has *sent* me, even so I am *sending* you.’ And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld.’” (emphasis added)

¹⁹ Luke 4:18–19: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has *sent* me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor” (cf. Matthew 28:18–20 and Matthew 9:30–10:23). (emphasis added)

²⁰ Pastoral Leadership Institute (PLI) offers training in leadership essentials

²¹ Cf. Acts 1:8; 2:47; 4:4; 5:14, 42; 6:1,7; 8:1, 4, 40; 9:15, 31; 12:24–25; 13:49; 14:1, 21, 27; 16:5; 19:20; 28:31.

²² Hoffmann, “The Doctrinal Essay,” 73.