

LCWE's Goals for the Future

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I learned an important truth about goals many years ago. My goals are good goals. Your goals are bad goals. If I set goals for myself, I own them, I value them, and they are important to me. If you set goals for me and I have nothing to do with determining what they are or deciding whether I shall adopt them, I have no sense of ownership and my motivation to accomplish them is very low.

I will succeed as International Director of Lausanne if my goals are your goals, but not only for that reason. LCWE is very small. We will have a small staff of eight to ten people with a small budget to match. We can actually do very little. Yet, we are trying to change the whole church and the whole world for Jesus' sake. For that reason, my goals *must* be your goals. You are Lausanne, and the goals that all of you together adopt will determine how effective Lausanne will be. Our job will be to serve you in reaching these goals.

But there is one goal that I believe we all share already. It is that we stay together. We have had tensions in these last ten days but we have survived them: we are surviving them, and we will continue to survive them. This is the nature of the body of Christ.

I learned about creative tension from Stephen Neill in the early sixties. Christians are skillful in polarizing. I don't know why, but we are, and I used to be quite good at it. I was a separatist as a young pastor. Where there were two poles, I wanted to destroy or exclude the other pole. Then I realized God worked with magnetic poles, the North and the South, and they created a field of tension within which things could be done. There is no way you can remove a pole—it is not in the nature of things. So now I am a Baptist—a British Baptist—but I am *glad* the Anglicans are there. I shudder to think what my country or even city would be without them.

David Bosch helped me understand further in South Africa in 1979, with this truth: There are six saving acts of God in Jesus Christ.

The first is the Incarnation. The Word became a human being and lived among us. This is the controlling truth for Anglicans and Roman Catholics. They concentrate on the presence of Christ and emphasize continuity in the life of the people of God.

The second saving act is the Cross, the Atonement. He who knew no sin, God made to be sin that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. The Lutherans and the Evangelicals center on the Atonement. They concentrate on the pardon of Christ and emphasize the discontinuity of conversion.

The third saving act of God is the Resurrection. Christ rose from the dead. This is the paramount truth for the Orthodox churches. I am told their Easter services are deeply moving. Their theology centers on the risen Christ; they emphasize new life in Christ.

The fourth saving act is the Ascension. Christ ascended on high and led captivity captive. Christ is King. This is the great truth for Presbyterians and the Reformed churches, and that is why Presbyterians seem to be permanently dissatisfied with the status quo.

The fifth saving act is Pentecost, the sending of the Spirit. This is the central truth for Pentecostals and charismatics. They emphasize the power of the Holy Spirit.

The sixth saving act is yet to come. It is the Advent, the Second Coming of Christ. This is the theme of the Seventh-day and other Adventists. They present Christ coming again as the hope of glory after this vale of tears. They sometimes spend a great deal of effort in understanding the signs of the times and working out when Christ might come.

All these churches believe in all six saving acts, but they emphasize one and seem to attract people whose need is met by that one. Ideally we should all emphasize all, but no one group is large enough to do that, so it takes all of these to present the whole gospel. And there are tensions between them. Those who emphasize the leadership of the reigning Christ over all things want to see things changed now. The Adventist sees life as a lost and hopeless case that will need to wait for Christ to come to put it right. These views clash regarding social concern.

The Incarnation supporters emphasize the gradual growth of the Christian life beginning in baptism, often in infancy. Those who preach the Cross become impatient with that and pursue the discontinuity of dramatic conversion.

But both views are necessary. God gives us each a torch to carry, but it is one procession. We do not need to apologize for our torch. We need to carry it high, but let us not imagine it is the whole truth. Let us affirm the whole procession and the others in it. Let us maintain our commitment to show to the world the people of God as one—both women and men, poor and rich, young and old, lay and clergy, weak and strong, white and black, yellow and brown, non-reading and reading. Let us be a force for fusion and not send out sparks that ignite inflammatory division. Let us make it our determined goal to stay together under the banner of the Word of God as reflected in the Lausanne Covenant and show the world the fullness of saving acts of God in Christ.