



**Issues, Etc.**<sup>TM</sup>  
*Christ-Centered Cross-Focused Talk Radio*

## TRANSCRIPT

*Rev. Todd Wilken, Host*

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# "President Gerald Kieschnick's Proposed Restructuring of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, Part 3"

**Guest:**  
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**WILKEN:** The church has a divine side, or a divine element, and it has a human element. Obviously, the church is a divine institution. It is Christ's own body and instituted by himself. It is gathered around His Word and His Sacraments, not only gathered around, but created by and sustained by God's Word and the Sacraments. That's an old definition of the church and that's the divine side, but then there's a human side to the church. It's filled with sinful human beings

and it has to have some kind of structure, it has to have some kind of governing. But do the two, can the two be completely isolated from one another? Are there theological consequences to the human structure of the church or of a church body or denomination? Is how we govern one another—usually the term is called "polity"—neither here nor there, inconsequential, and purely a matter of Christian freedom that we can change or restructure at will for

whatever reason we want to change or restructure?

We'll be answering some of those questions here in the first hour of Issues, Etc. I'm Todd Wilken. Thanks for tuning us in. We're coming to you live this Tuesday afternoon. It's the third of March. We'll start out with Dr. Ken Schurb—an hour-long conversation on President Gerald Kieschnick's "Blue Ribbon Task Force on Synod, Structure and Governance." We'll be talking about that divine side, that human side, and where the two meet in the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. After that hour-long conversation with Dr. Ken Schurb, we'll be talking with Chris Gacek. He is from the Family Research Council based in Washington D.C. We're going to talk about a suit filed today by gay-rights activists seeking to overturn DOMA, the Defense of Marriage Act. A little later in the second hour of the program, Dr. Jennifer Roback Morse will be our guest from the Ruth Institute, talking about three issues: President Obama's nominee for Health and Human Services Secretary, Kansas Governor Sebelius. She is arguably one of the most pro-choice governors in the United States—we'll talk about the rise of teen pregnancies, and they're calling them designer babies and they're promising that you can get the baby you want. And then in the last part of that second hour of Issues, Etc. the Issues, Etc. Comment Line. We'll be listening to some of your comments, questions, criticisms, suggestions and responding accordingly. Our call in number for the next two hours: 1-877-623-6943 – 877-623-MY-IE, and our in-studio email address: [talkback@issuesetc.org](mailto:talkback@issuesetc.org).

Dr. Ken Schurb is pastor of Zion Lutheran Church in Moberly, Missouri. He formerly served as a theology professor at Concordia University in Ann Arbor, Michigan, and as an assistant to the President of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. He's a regular guest. Ken, welcome back.

**SCHURB:** Hi there, Todd, we're just about a week into Lent here. So, happy Lent.

**WILKEN:** And to you as well. Church polity, governance, structure—all of those things that go along with the human side of churches as institutions—is it just adiaphora, neither here nor there, a matter of Christian freedom, and it doesn't really matter how a church governs itself or structures itself?

**SCHURB:** Well, the Lord does want people to be, as you said before, gathered around His Word and the Sacraments, and He wants thereby to grow their faith and nurture their relationship to Him. So the church as it exists at the local level, in local congregations, is not somehow or another an indifferent matter. God wants that to be, even if it's not legally incorporated under the laws of a given state or country. God does want Christians to come together there. God also wants Christians to cooperate with one another across the lines of congregations, to grant recognition of church fellowship where they agree in the teaching of the Gospel in all of its articles and in the administration of the Sacraments, to reach out in mutual concern lending a hand of help wherever possible, joining together to do mission efforts, etc. So while it is true on one level that to have any kind of organization that you can point to beyond the local congregation is not prescribed in Scripture, the kinds of things for example that led the forefathers of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod to form an organization that did span across congregations of which these congregations were the members and the fundamental building blocks, those impulses are definitely biblical. Maybe the answer that I can best give to your question at the moment, Todd, comes by way of a quote. This is from an article in a very recent issue the *Concordia Journal* from Concordia Seminary in St. Louis. I just got my copy a few days ago. This is an article by two

professors who teach there, Eric Herman and David Schmitt. One of the things that they say in this, I think, very interesting and thought-provoking article is: our choices of structure and governance reflect what we believe about the church as the Body of Christ and need to express the theological relationships that God has created in calling the church into existence. Of course, polity is ultimately not the answer, but polity and order, when they arise from our theology, do have the ability to reflect and to encourage the way we ought to live, work, confess and witness together.

**WILKEN:** So when it comes to President Gerald Kieschnick's Blue Ribbon Task Force on the Synodical Structure and Governance, how much change is being proposed? To put it in computer terms, are we just tweaking preferences or are we being asked to rewrite the operating system?

**SCHURB:** Well, there are respects in which these changes could be quite far-reaching. And, of course, we're kind of seeing more and more of the proposals, the actual changes that might be made, as time goes by. The task force has now released what I like to call "version 2.0" of its recommendations. "Version 1.0" was from several months ago, last summer, and now "version 2.0" is kind of the version that the Task Force is taking to various district conventions, 35 of them all over the country, all over the Missouri Synod, to be over the next few months. Most of them will probably be held in the month of June. And the task force is asking for time in these district conventions during which they can conduct a survey and hold discussion with the delegates who are there. I think that the Task Force proposals have the potential to make for, in some ways, a basic change in what the Missouri Synod is, and I think that, you know, you need to face up to that for what it is. Maybe the most profound sense in which I see that kind of change coming in

the Task Force's proposals is that the synod has always conceived of itself, and certainly historically was, a church body that spanned in its early days not the whole nation but several states and congregations as far east over as western New York State, the Niagra Falls area, as far west as the St. Louis area. That's still a pretty big geographical turf to cover. This church body was composed of congregations and their pastors and other professional church workers, and it divided itself up into districts initially for the purpose of convenience and being able to get more help for the president of the synod as he had the responsibility to visit all the various congregations in the synod. So the synod created districts so that it could have, at first, four district presidents who could supplement that kind of visitation and that kind of supervision of doctrine and practice. As time has gone by districts have taken on more and more functions and exist as little bureaucracies of their own to one degree or another, sometimes greater, sometimes less, depending upon the size and the resources of a given district. But the move has been afoot here of late to begin to think of the synod more as a confederation of districts than it is a national church body composed of congregations which has divided itself in to districts.

**WILKEN:** Okay, we've got about thirty seconds before we take a break. Explain how big a change that really is.

**SCHURB:** Well, it is a sea change in how you conceive of the organization. Right now membership is held in the synod as such and then you can get assigned within that to a particular district and to a particular congregation. The kinds of changes that, I guess we're going to have to talk about after the break, that would lead the synod to be more a confederation of districts would tend to suggest that your fundamental arena, as it were, of ecclesiastical operation within the synod is the district and the districts then come together to create something bigger.

**WILKEN:** Interesting. When we come back, we'll talk more about President Gerald Kieschnick's Blue Ribbon Task Force on the Synod, Structure and Governance. Dr. Ken Schurb is our guest. We're coming to you live this Tuesday afternoon, March 3. First hour we're spending on this subject, and then in the second hour of the program Christ Gacek will join us to talk those who are trying to overturn the Defense of Marriage Act. Jennifer Roback Morse will join us to talk about designer babies and we'll do some Issues, Etc. comment line. Stay tuned.

[Break]

**WILKEN:** Welcome back to Issues, Etc. I'm Todd Wilken. Dr. Ken Schurb is our guest. We're talking about synod, structure, governance under the heading of the heading of President Gerald Kieschnick's Blue Ribbon Task Force on the same subject. Our call-in number on this Tuesday afternoon, the third of March, 1-877-623-6943 – 877-623-MY-IE, and our in-studio email address: [talkback@issuesetc.org](mailto:talkback@issuesetc.org).

Before the break you used two phrases and they don't seem completely interchangeable to me. I'm going to ask you to commit yourself to one or the other here, Ken. You said some of the proposed changes from the Blue Ribbon Task Force on Structure and Governance would change the way that the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod conceives of itself and alternately you said it would change what the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod is. Which is it?

**SCHURB:** Well, I suppose it would be more what the Synod is. At any given time, who knows how the Synod, or any other organization, conceives of itself. But the point is when this organization was created it was created, well, without districts. The districts, as I mentioned before the break, came along later to basically enable things to be done better, but things that the national church body, or at least the portion

of the nation that it covered at that time, committed itself to. So, in other words, the forefathers of our synod did conceive the synod to be something and they built it to be that. There are always unintended consequences from intentional actions. So just because you conceive of something in a particular way doesn't mean it's always going to turn out the way you want. And that, by the way, is a question we have to ask also about these proposals for change in the synodical structure. You may have X, Y, and Z as your intentions, but you may end up with other results besides X, Y, and Z. You may end up with A, B, and C, some of which you may not have even thought were very good had you been able to foresee better what was coming down the road.

**WILKEN:** More generally, do the proposed changes as they're currently being presented, because they have changed quite a bit, or appear to be something of a moving target, do these proposed changes continue to vest decision-making power, the power to suggest new ideas, new changes in by-laws and constitution, things like that, more or less in the congregations and the pastors, the laity and the pastors, of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod?

**SCHURB:** Well, remember, I said a moment ago that some of these changes are really much more consonant with the idea of a church body that is a confederation of districts than a national church body consisting of congregations that has divided itself into districts. And you've kind of put your finger there, Todd, on one of the sea changes here. This is already being done informally, but as I understand the Task Force proposal, the proposal would kind of enshrine this understanding in the synod's governing documents. Right now any congregation, regardless of size, can submit an overture, a proposal, an idea, if you will, to not only a district convention of the district where that congregation is, but also

to the national church body. The proposal is that priority would be given at the district convention to overtures that don't come from single congregations, but that rather come from clusterings of congregations at the circuit level at a circuit forum. The national convention overtures that would have priority would be the ones that come through the circuit forums to the district conventions and then from the district conventions to the national convention. That means practically speaking for a congregation, again regardless of size, if you want your idea to be heard, you've got to get your circuit forum to buy into it, then you've got to get your district to buy into it, then that idea will kind of percolate its way to the national convention. This is a real change in the way this whole process is envisioned. Ten years ago the president of the synod said, "I don't care if it's from the smallest congregation in the synod, if it's a good idea, it deserves to be heard, it deserves to be evaluated and perhaps adopted on its own merits." This new system would be a question not only of how good the idea is intrinsically, but how many people you get to kind of sign on to it with you, because you're just a single congregation submitting an overture, that overture will not get very high-priority standing at the convention.

**WILKEN:** Well, those are two different things. I mean, the intrinsic value of an overture and how many people you can get at either the circuit or the district level to get behind it—those two things are not necessarily related to one another, are they? I mean bad ideas do get a lot of support.

**SCHURB:** The other thing, that there's any number of places where this concerns me, Todd, but one of the practical matters here is: if the priority is going to go to overtures to the national convention that come through district conventions and that came to those district conventions through circuit forums,

there are not right now a whole lot of district conventions that spend a lot of time musing over matters of formal theology, nor do they spend a lot of time musing about the synod's higher education system or its foreign mission program or any number of other things that are pretty much taken care of right now at the national level. My question about the unintended consequence of this action is will it go one of two ways, maybe a little bit of both. Will it be that now more and more time is going to be taken up at circuit forums, at district conventions like they just had in Southern Illinois a week or two ago talking about the foreign mission program of the synod. Because if something needs to be addressed on the foreign mission field, the high-priority way to address it is to get it to come if not from Southern Illinois, then from some other district. Or will there be a second track, created by necessity if nothing else, for high-priority ideas to come to the national convention, and that would be from the people who work within the synodical structure, basically the people within the bureaucracy.

**WILKEN:** All right. Another recommendation at the congregational level would give congregations with more than a thousand confirmed members additional voting delegates, either at districts or at the national conventions, I forget which.

**SCHURB:** It's the district conventions.

**WILKEN:** Okay, then, what would be the effect of the, unintended albeit, what would be the effect of this, especially with how the synod conceives of its own congregations, of what congregations are, and how congregations stand with regard to one another? We've got about three minutes before our break.

**SCHURB:** Remember the quote I read you back when we started, from this article in the *Concordia Journal*, "our choices of structure and governance reflect what we

believe about the church as the body of Christ.” I agree with that statement. What we have right now in the representation of congregations at District conventions is an attempt to reflect a theological reality, which is that all congregations have equal dignity, have the same integrity before Christ, no congregation has more or less of Christ, His love, His forgiveness than any other. And the way that’s kind of put into enactment in our polity is that every congregation has two votes. One must be cast by a pastor, and in most cases the congregation only has the one pastor, so it’s pretty obvious who’s going to cast that vote. The other must be cast by a layperson. When you start taking certain congregations, in this case with the proposal before us, those with more than a thousand communicant members, and say, “You’re going to get two more votes at the District convention,” that begins to treat the Synod not as a grouping of churches, but rather as a grouping of various clusters of individuals. And if one of those clusters of individuals is bigger in size, more than a thousand people, then it’s going to get greater representation than the others.

By the way, another point that this article in the *Concordia Journal* made—it just sort of asks the question, “How does a representation that focuses upon the size of a congregation embody and encourage Christian service?” In other words, how are we trying to uphold the immanently true theological point that we’re not in this to grab for power, we’re not in this to try to build our own kingdoms, but we’re in this to serve. If you start representing big congregations with more delegates just because they are bigger, how does that, how does that translate the idea of service, how does it translate the idea of the essential equality of congregations before God? It does have theological implications.

**WILKEN:** Real quickly before we go to this break, let’s talk with Joe in West Bend, Wisconsin, and get a response on the other

side of the break. Hi, Joe. We’ve got about a minute.

**CALLER:** Well, I was just calling as you were talking about when they were talking about resolutions that would have to come from congregations wouldn’t receive as much authority as those from pastoral conferences or District conventions. The problem that comes out of that is if something occurs between the district convention and the synodical convention, there’s no vehicle involved in that that would allow congregations to deal with a major concern or issue that could arise in that one year period of time.

**WILKEN:** That’s a great concern, Joe. We’ll respond to it on the other side of the break, and thanks for listening in Wisconsin. Dr. Ken Schurb is our guest. We’re talking about President Gerald Kieschnick’s Blue Ribbon Task Force on Synod, Structure, and Governance this Tuesday afternoon, March 3. 1-877-623-6943, or [talkback@issuesetc.org](mailto:talkback@issuesetc.org).

[Break]

**WILKEN:** Welcome back to Issues, Etc. I’m Todd Wilken. We’re talking about President Gerald Kieschnick’s Blue Ribbon Task Force on Synod, Structure, and Governance. Some major changes being proposed. Dr. Ken Schurb is our guest.

Joe was on the phone from West Bend before the break and he asked about the proposed changes about how resolutions go to the national convention, will they account for or leave us nimble enough to deal with things that may occur between a district convention and a national convention?

**SCHURB:** Well, it’s a legitimate point, and it’s another, you know, potential unintended consequence of an intentional action, and the intentional action, as I’ve been describing it here, is much more readily understandable if you conceive of this

synod as a confederation of districts. And what Joe was talking about is the particular proposal that the highest priority overtures that would be handled at the national convention would be the ones that come from entire districts. There's another aspect to this, and that is that each district would have national convention delegates apportioned to it and the district would then determine how to select the delegates. Now in version, as I call it, 1.0 of the Task Force's recommendation they were saying that the election would take place at the district convention from among the delegates to the district convention. This latest version really doesn't affirm or reject that prospect. But you see how this is getting set up now. The district becomes, in effect, the voting bloc. It's the district that in some way or another is going to choose the delegates from that district who are going to go to the synodical national convention. And it's only the proposals that come district conventions that are going to get the highest priority to be considered at the national convention. You see how this kind of pushes us in the direction of being, or at least acting as if we are more a confederation of districts than anything else.

This kind of new thinking is not completely without precedent. It tends to conceive of the various conventions of the districts, 35 of them across the church body, as little, sort of microcosms. And when you put all these microcosms together, because you've got at all of those 35 conventions every congregation in the synod is represented, the idea is that now you kind of have the sum total of wisdom regarding the synod because you've put all these various pieces of the puzzle, as it were, together. I've heard this kind of talk about the meetings of the synod's Council of Presidents, which includes the 35 district presidents, for years, and the idea is each of these district presidents knows his district better than anybody else. And I freely grant that premise. But I don't think it follows that just

because each one of these district presidents knows his own district better than anybody else that as soon as you get all 35 of those men in one room together that therefore you've got the best perspective on national level things. What you have is one guy who knows Missouri and another guy who knows Southern Illinois and another guy who knows Central Illinois and another one who knows Northern Illinois, etc. But the knowledge does not osmose from one to the other simply because they happen to be in the same room or because they happen to be dealing with the same subject. To have every one of them address the subject you'd have to have time for 35 little speeches. And it's just not practical to do things that way.

The whole is greater than the sum of its parts. As I suggested before the break there are some significant ministries, really high priority items in the synod's budget, for example, that have been traditionally run at the national level, like higher education, the operation of colleges and seminaries, the maintenance of a mission program all over the world. Those kinds of things are the sort of things that you just would not generally talk about, and certainly historically we have not talked about a lot, at the local level. And I think there's a reason for that. Resources are more readily available and can be brought to bear on some of these really big priority items at the national level far better than sort of district-by-district.

And not only resources though, but objectivity. You can have one region of the country potentially involving one or more districts of the synod that gets caught up in something, some kind of a fad or a kick, and it takes the objectivity that you can get better from across the entire country, across the whole membership of the church body, to respond to that calmly and without being carried away by the various winds of doctrine. Objectivity is much better at the national level than it is at the district level.

The kind of thing that the Task Force is talking about now, I fear that it would make districts and their delegations to the national convention into power blocs and voting blocs, and pretty much on a winner take all basis. Let's say there's a proposal to change the name of the synod, as in fact the Task Force is bringing, and you have 51% of the people in one district who want to change it and 49% who don't want to change it, or 51% who want one name and 49% who want another name. Well, guess what, the 51% is going to elect, effectively speaking, every delegate that will go to the national convention. This will set districts off against one another as districts in, I think, some very, very bad ways.

Another potentially terrible unintended consequence of an intentional action...

**WILKEN:** One of my concerns is that the district presidents in their conventions every three years and the synodical president in the convention, the national convention, every three years possess a considerable amount of power over, through the appointment of floor committees, what the convention actually considers by way of resolutions. What gets considered and, more significantly, what doesn't get considered. A lot of things die in committee or never make it out of floor committees, and the power to appoint those committees lies with the district presidents at their level and with the synodical president at his level. And what's being proposed seems to me to consolidate that power and strengthen it even more. And look, as much as we'd like to think we're angels, we're not. We are sinner-saints, and I think that should be a concern to anybody who's concerned about the centralization of power in any institution let alone the church. What are your thoughts?

**SCHURB:** Well, I think maybe the greatest potential here for centralization is in the proposal on national synod's structure that

includes the suggestion of realigning the national synod ministries into broadly two classifications, one for national ministries and the other for international. And there would be two mission advisory councils, one in each area. And I think it's very important to note that word "advisory." If these councils are going to be strictly advisory, then they don't have authority. They don't have authority, say, over a staff. In fact, the Task Force notes that the executives, the top executives in each of these areas, would be reporting directly to the synod president. That is a change from the way staff currently reports at the national level. Right now each of these staffs works for a board or a commission, and they are responsible to those people. Presumably these advisory councils that the Task Force is proposing, if they are truly advisory, wouldn't even have the authority to appoint staff. So that leaves the question kind of begging, well who would appoint the staff? How would you come on to the staff in the first place? And I don't see a whole lot of alternative than that it's either going to be the president of the synod or the Board of Directors of the synod or somebody in some kind of, you know, national, central place who is going to be in effect authorizing those appointments.

Now this makes for much narrower avenues of accountability than what the synod is used to over its years of history, and it forms a big change and one that concerns me too, Todd. I hearken back to an editorial written by a professor at the seminary in Saint Louis, Theodore Graebner, in the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary year of the synod's history in 1947. He wrote in the *Lutheran Witness* in an editorial that summer that "four generations of Missourians," I'm quoting here, "have been satisfied to lag a bit here and there in efficiency in order that the freedom of the congregations and the responsibility of our official boards to synod *directly* [he italicized that word, directly] may be maintained. And the experience of other

church bodies does not encourage any radical departures from our present set up.” I find it fascinating that, you know, over 60 years ago now Theodore Graebner was emphasizing the fact that we have boards, or did then, do now in the Missouri Synod, that report directly, as it were, to the convention, and that the convention which has representatives from circuits that are formed of congregations all over the country, all over the church body, vote on the membership of these boards, vote on the recommendations that these boards make, etc.

**WILKEN:** All right, when we come back, we’ll talk more with Dr. Ken Schurb. What kind of questions or comments do you have on the restructuring? 1-877-623-6943.

[Break]

**WILKEN:** We’re talking about President Gerald Kieschnick’s Blue Ribbon Task Force on Synod Structure and Governance. Dr. Ken Schurb is our guest. We have some resources posted on this subject on the “On-Demand” page of our website, [issuesetc.org](http://issuesetc.org). Folks, let’s hear from you on President Gerald Kieschnick’s Blue Ribbon Task Force on Synod Structure and Governance. Our email address: [talkback@issuesetc.org](mailto:talkback@issuesetc.org), and our call-in number: 1-877-623-MY-IE, 877-623-6943. Here’s Mike in Ohio. Hi, Mike.

**CALLER:** Hi, Pastor Wilken, Pastor Schurb. I’m going to be a delegate this year to the Ohio District Convention. So I’ve been kind of studying this, you know, in a crash course, and one of the things I observe, looking upon our current governance, our constitution, is that they had the same mentality as our founding fathers of the country. That is, they understood the depravity of mankind, and it seems like there’s all these checks and balances in our current constitution to protect us from each other. Just want to get your thoughts on that.

**WILKEN:** All right, Mike. Thank you very much. And I would add to his question: do those checks and balances, are they greater or lesser under the proposed restructuring? Your thoughts, Ken.

**SCHURB:** Well, there is a sense in which the current governing documents of the Missouri Synod certainly – that’s the church body whose governing documents I’m most familiar with – are indeed an exercise in checks and balances, and that’s the kind of thing you come up with, in some ways, by trial and error. You know, you tweak it over the years. You see that something has kind of gotten out of hand in one place and so you try to account for it structurally wherever you can and you hope that you make wise decisions there. It’s a little bit hard to know where the dust might settle with respect to the proposals made by this Task Force. The one we were talking about right before the break, that is, the one on national synod structure, could be a place where checks and balances could be lost. Certainly I don’t regard it as a step in the right direction to eliminate boards that have real authority and real accountability to the synod in convention. And that’s exactly the kind of thing that Theodore Graebner was talking about in his *Lutheran Witness* editorial of some years ago. But it’s hard to know because the devil, as they say, is in the details.

Our congregation here in Moberly adopted an overture which we have sent to our district convention here in Missouri, and I don’t know what is going to happen to it at the Missouri District Convention, but in any case congregations can, if they like this overture, adopt something similar and send it on to the synod in convention even if your district convention doesn’t adopt it. We basically are pleading that the Task Force show us everything until we approve anything. That is to say, we’re not going to adopt anything simply in principle or adopt anything in broad outline, but rather we

plead with the Task Force to show every word of every proposed constitution change, every word of every proposed by-law change, every word of every enabling resolution that might have to be written to get us from where we are now over perhaps a graduated period of time to where we need to be by steps and increments. The point is, we would be pleading with the synod to insist that the Task Force show us everything. And I think it would be very significant if vast numbers of congregations would adopt that kind of an overture and send it to the synod in convention. If the Task Force does not present every word of every by-law, etc. to cover every one of its proposals then you can point to this stack of overtures potentially and say, "Now, look there's lots of people who want to see everything before they want to vote on anything. And, you know, we need to bear that in mind." Our church's website is [www.moberlylutheran.blogspot.com](http://www.moberlylutheran.blogspot.com), and if you click on the tab for news, you find that overture there on our website.

**WILKEN:** We'll put a link to it at our website – make it easy for our listeners to find it there.

Two quick emails from our listeners. One from Julie in Malmy [?], Ohio. She says, "This new plan seems similar to the governance that's being used already in the ELCA, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America." She says, "I'm a former member of the ELCA and my observation is that this tends to be a top down way to run a synod. That's how homosexuality as an issue has gone so far astray in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America." Your brief thoughts there, Ken.

**SCHURB:** I can be real brief because I'm not that familiar with the workings of the ELCA's governance. So for me to try to draw any real comparison would be just whistling in the dark. You don't want me doing that.

**WILKEN:** All right, this is Don in Junction City, Kansas – a little more to the point: "This is a power grab, and should be voted out. This will destroy the supremacy of the congregation and make the congregation a servant of synod, and synod would have a hierarchical structure. This is a dangerous move." Your thoughts, Ken.

**SCHURB:** Well, I think there is the potential, as we were talking about before with checks and balances, or perhaps the lack thereof. And you only know what the checks and balances are in any meaningful way when you do see all of the wording of all the proposals. That's why our congregation adopted the overture we did. I think that there is the real potential with these proposals to come up with a church body that gives the appearance of thinking things through, but that may not be doing as much thinking through as it looks like it's doing. How much, to return to an earlier point that I made, how much meaningful discussion can you have about missions in Nigeria at the Southern Illinois District Convention? But if that's where the priority overture has to come from that's going to make a difference about that foreign mission program, I just wonder how your going to work with that kind of significant practical disconnect.

**WILKEN:** Finally, then, bottom line: who gains power and who loses power under these recommendations by President Gerald Kieschnick's Blue Ribbon Task Force on Synod, Structure, and Governance, Ken?

**SCHURB:** Again, it's hard to tote it all up until you see everything and the way things are worded and structured. I don't think that this is any great gain for the local congregation. Again, your congregation is going to only be able to get its voice heard in an overture to the synod in any high-priority way if it funnels its overture first to a circuit forum then to a district convention. I think this is going to be, and I know there

are people who disagree with me about this, for a lot of the synod's parochial school teachers and Directors of Christian Education, deaconesses, in other words, those we say are on the commissioned roster, the proposal here is to eliminate basically the whole concept of advisory delegate at district conventions and national synodical conventions...

**WILKEN:** About 30 seconds.

**SCHURB:** I think that the only way a teacher is going to be elected to go to the synod in convention is if you first get elected as a delegate from your congregation to go as a voting delegate from the congregation and then you get elected at the district convention. I think we're going to have fewer teachers, rank and file teachers, at the synod conventions than we do now.

**WILKEN:** Dr. Ken Schurb is pastor of Zion Lutheran Church in Moberly, Missouri. He formerly served as a theology professor at Concordia University in Ann Arbor, Michigan, and as an assistant to the President of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. Ken, thanks for being our guest.

**SCHURB:** I thank you, Todd. I think it's just tremendous to promote discussion of this, because that's the important thing. Unless we have a meaningful discussion about these proposals, we will end up with something and we won't even know how we got it.

**WILKEN:** Thank you. You know, they call it a pig in a poke, where someone will walk up to you in the olden days with a bag and

you'd say, "What's in the bag." They'd say, "A piglet." And they'd want you to buy it sight unseen. That's pig in a poke. "Poke" is a French word for "bag." And when you got home, it wasn't a pig; it was a cat, maybe even a dead cat, which is where we get the phrase, "Letting the cat out of the bag." Well, let's let the cat out of the bag before we buy it. Let's see what's in there. Or, to use another metaphor, let's put all our cards on the table. There's no reason that this should be a poker game, a guessing game as to what kind of changes are being made. If we want to centralize power with the national office and with the president's office or with any other office, let's just say it. No pigs in no pokes. Let's open it up and see what's in the bag, put all our cards on the table, and be completely honest. And if the synod in its wisdom, voting together, decides that they don't want to buy a pig in a poke and they prefer a real pig to a cat, maybe even a dead one, they can make their voices heard.

Tomorrow on Issues, Etc. we'll discuss homosexuality and the Bible. Dr. Robert Gannon of Pittsburgh Theological Seminary will be our guest. When we come back, hour two of Issues, Etc., Chris Gacek will be our guest. We'll talk about a suit filed today by gay rights activists seeking to overturn the Defense of Marriage Act. Jennifer Roback Morse will be our guest. We'll talk with her about designer babies and the rise in teen pregnancy, Obama's pick for Health and Human Services Secretary, and then Issues, Etc. Comment Line will occupy the last segment of Issues, Etc. in hour two. Stay tuned. I'm Todd Wilken.

