



RESPONDING TO 2013 RESOLUTION 3-10A TO LCMS PRESIDENT REV. DR. MATTHEW C. HARRISON

Report of the Task Force



The 65th Regular Convention of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, St. Louis, July 20-25, 2013 considered Resolution 3-10A, *“To Appoint a Task Force to Study the Call Process for Returning Missionary and Military Chaplains and Other Rostered Church Workers without a Call”*. The resolution was adopted as presented, YES: 884; NO: 25. (See Attachment A for complete resolution.)

Task Force Membership: The resolution defines that the task force is to include, but not limited to, representatives from the Council of Presidents, the seminaries and the Concordia University System. Task Force members:

The Rev. Terry Cripe, President, Ohio District, task force chairman
The Rev. John Fale, Executive Director, LCMS Office of International Mission, task force secretary
The Rev. Dr. Dan Gard, President, Concordia University Chicago
The Rev. Dr. Edward Grimenstein, LCMS Office of International Mission
The Rev. Dr. Dan May, President, Indiana District
The Rev. Dr. Joel Okamoto, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis
The Rev. Dr. Brian Saunders, President, Iowa District East
Chaplain (Col.) Jonathan Shaw, United States Army
Chaplain (U.S. Navy Capt. ret.) Dr. John Wohlrabe, LCMS Second Vice-President

Addendum I to Task Force Membership: Dr. Gard accepted a call during the task force process from Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Ind., to Concordia University Chicago. Chaplain Craig Muehler, (U.S. Navy Capt. ret.), director of the LCMS Ministry to the Armed Forces, served as a consultant and participated in three of the four meetings.

Addendum II to Task Force Membership: LCMS first vice-president Rev. Dr. Herbert C. Mueller Jr. communicated to the task force that he received correspondence from a pastor on candidate status who expressed disappointment that someone who is, or has been, on candidate status was not appointed to the task force. Dr. Grimenstein provided clarification that he was on candidate status following his medical retirement from the United States Army as a military chaplain and has a fresh perspective of what it means to be on candidate status.

Prior to the first meeting, Rev. Cripe proposed to the task force that he send a questionnaire to each district president. Additionally, task force members were encouraged to contact workers on candidate and non-candidate status to listen to their concerns and recommendations.

The task force met by telephone conference call on three occasions: Sept. 2, 2014; Nov. 7, 2014; and Jan. 16, 2015.

Summary Observations of the Task Force:

Through solicited and unsolicited communication from church workers without calls, the task force was made aware of the specific concerns outlined by the Synod in convention in Resolution 3-10A, regarding ordained and commissioned ministers who are without calls. The task force recognizes the urgent need to respond to this complex matter with compassion and thoughtfulness. Moreover, the task force shares the concern of Synod that individual workers and their families endure significant hardship in their loss of vocational call, which has financial, emotional, spiritual and physical impacts. While awaiting a call, a worker can hear that he/she is “overqualified” for secular employment and so find it difficult to be hired, especially if the employer knows that the worker could accept a call and leave at any time.

Marriage and family relationships are strained by this economic hardship. Some workers did not know what process they should follow to get their names on call lists. The task force learned that workers on candidate and non-candidate status at times feel abandoned by the very church that they wish to serve, if they have not received communications from their district office. They are bewildered when they read information from Synod offices stating that there are not sufficient graduates to fill placement calls, and they are eager to serve. Yet first calls (placement calls) follow a very different process than calls for those on candidate and non-candidate status as outlined in our bylaws. While there is no easy solution to the dilemma of qualified and willing workers who are eager to serve in our Lord's church yet cannot obtain a call, the church can respond by learning more about what being on candidate and non-candidate status means, listening to them in the midst of their struggles, supporting them in meaningful ways with compassion and care of their souls, and speaking the truth in love to those whose circumstances will make it difficult for them to receive consideration for another call.

A survey of questionnaires returned from District Presidents reveals that there are 179 ordained ministers on candidate status and 198 ordained ministers on non-candidate status, for a total of 377. Of those 377, the following primary reasons were listed for their status with accompanying statistics:

Health matters	36
Age	25
Continuing Education	19
Employed in another field	67
Resigned due to lack of congregational funding	37
Resigned due to congregational problems not of pastor's making	36
Resigned due to congregational problems of the pastor's making	84
Retired	18

Of the 377 total, four were due to a military chaplaincy call that ended and seven were due to a missionary whose position ended.

A survey of questionnaires returned from district presidents reveals that there are 474 commissioned ministers on candidate status and 1161 commissioned ministers on non-candidate status, for a total of 1635. Of those 1635 total, the following primary reasons were listed for their status with accompanying statistics:

Health matters	46
Age	50
Continuing Education	82
Employed in another field	257
Resigned due to lack of funding	153
Resigned due to congregation/school problems not of worker's making	75
Resigned due to congregation/school problems of the worker's making	53
Other – unknown reason	162
Other – care for family	240
Other – moved for spouse's career	89
Other – marital/family difficulties	75
Other – candidate status expired	138

The task force discussed this information at length, listened to proposed solutions that came from individuals on candidate and non-candidate status as well as from task force members, and formulated recommendations. Short of changing Synod's bylaws that will accommodate the placement of candidate status ministers as they do for first call graduates, we must continue to follow the existing call processes. However, there are ways for the church to assist those who will lose or have lost their call in a manner that cares for the minister and his family during their time without call.

Final Recommendations of the Task Force:

- 1. Military and institutional chaplains and returning missionaries should notify their respective district president as soon as possible when leaving their current call. Graduate students on candidate status should notify their district president of their date of availability for pastoral call. The district president will distribute a list of available chaplains, missionaries and graduate students (biannually – quarterly—as requested) among other district presidents and calling agencies where appropriate.*
- 2. District presidents should guide pastoral candidates who are no longer qualified to be placed on call lists to explore another vocation.*
- 3. Recommend a Synod-wide process that utilizes existing resources, such as Concordia Plan Services, Soldiers of the Cross and professional counseling, to assist and support candidates while they are in the midst of vocational discernment.*
- 4. In circumstances where a pastor resigns as a result of conflict between the pastor and members of the congregation, the district president will provide pastoral care to the congregation and urge that issues be resolved prior to submitting a call list for future calls. The district president will ensure that the pastor and his family receive pastoral care.*
- 5. Congregations are encouraged, where appropriate and feasible, to provide the opportunity for pastoral candidates to provide pastoral functions under a supervisor who is approved by the district president.*
- 6. Recommend to the Council of Presidents to discuss and clarify candidate and non-candidate status and time limits of candidate status.*

District presidents are encouraged to provide for the pastoral support of workers while on candidate status and provide periodic information that the candidate's information has been shared with calling agencies (congregations, schools, Recognized Service Organizations).

Respectfully Submitted,

Rev. John A. Fale

Attachment A

To Appoint a Task Force to Study the Call Process for Returning Missionary and Military Chaplains and Other Rostered Church Workers without a Call

RESOLUTION 3-10A

President's Report, Part 2 (TB, p. 20); Overtures 3-24; 7-17 (CW, pp. 155; 255–256); Resolution 7-06 (TB, p. 150)

Rationale

In our life together as The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, there is great concern for professional church workers in candidate and non-candidate status who are without calls, including returning military chaplains and missionaries. Committees 3 (Life Together) and 7 (Structure and Ecclesiastical Matters) have become aware of the urgent need to address this issue with compassion.

However, the situation is not only urgent but also intricate. Any solution needs to be one that upholds the doctrine of the call while taking into account any necessary bylaw changes and their ramifications. Precipitous action without more thoughtful consideration may result in an incomplete solution or unforeseen consequences.

For these reasons, Committee 3 is encouraging immediate action by district presidents and calling on congregations to address the pressing human need of such workers. At the same time, the committee believes that a task force is necessary in order to recommend a comprehensive solution.

WHEREAS, Ordained missionaries and military chaplains have diverse experience and skills in preaching the Gospel to various peoples; and

WHEREAS, Ordained field missionaries and military chaplains serve in a temporary position which eventually comes to a conclusion and are available for and desire pastoral calls; and

WHEREAS, There are other categories of ordained and commissioned professional church workers who are also available for calls and service to the church; and

WHEREAS, It is poor stewardship that these gifts from God are not being fully utilized because a call has not been received in a timely manner; and

WHEREAS, As of January, 2013, 207 ordained and 611 commissioned church workers on candidate status, along with some on non-candidate status, were seeking calls; and

WHEREAS, Soldiers of the Cross exists to serve both active and inactive professional church workers and their families who are in need; therefore be it

Resolved, That each district president be encouraged earnestly to give specific and individual attention to LCMS professional church workers on both candidate and non-candidate status; and be it further

Resolved, That LCMS congregations be encouraged to give prayerful consideration to calling professional church workers who are on candidate or non-candidate status and who desire a call; and be it further

Resolved, That the President of the Synod appoint a task force to address these matters; and be it further

Resolved, That this task force study the need for a placement process for returning military chaplains and missionaries; and be it further

Resolved, That this task force also study the candidate status and non-candidate status of all church workers to aid and encourage congregations and other entities in calling qualified candidates in a timely manner; and be it further

Resolved, That this task force include but not be limited to representatives from the Council of Presidents, the seminaries, and the Concordia University System; and be it further

Resolved, That this task force make a report and recommendations to the Synod no later than one year prior to the 2016 Synod convention; and be it further

Resolved, That the Office of National Mission be encouraged to continue its service through Soldiers of the Cross; and be it finally

Resolved, That Synod congregations and their members be encouraged to give to the Soldiers of the Cross annual fund drive.

Action: Adopted (9)

(When discussion of Res. 3-10A was begun during Session 8, a motion to suspend the Orders of the Day to allow 40 minutes for discussion failed. When discussion resumed during Session 9, a motion to amend the resolution was introduced and then withdrawn. The resolution was adopted as presented [Yes: 884; No: 25].)

Attachment B

District Questionnaires for Ordained and Commissioned Ministers on Candidate and Non-Candidate Status*

	Ordained Candidate		Ordained Non-candidate		Commissioned Candidate		Commissioned Non-candidate	
	Total	Percent	Total	Percent	Total	Percent	Total	Percent
Health Matters	11	6.1	25	12.6	13	2.7	33	2.8
Age	11	6.1	14	7.0	18	3.7	32	2.7
Pursuit of another degree	11	6.1	8	4.0	23	4.8	59	5.0
Employed in another field	15	8.3	52	26.2	60	12.6	197	16.9
Resigned due to lack of congregational funding	21	11.7	16	8.0	78	16.4	75	6.4
Resigned due to congregational problems not of his making	22	12.2	14	7.0	36	7.5	39	3.3
Resigned due to congregational problems of his making	39	21.7	45	22.7	23	4.8	30	2.5
Removed by the congregation for cause	3	1.6	3	1.5	16	3.3	7	0.6
Other—transfer in w/candidate status	4	2.2	1	0.5	8	1.6	12	1.0
Other—military chaplain without a call	2	1.1	2	1.0				
Other—pursue other employment	3	1.6	5	2.5				
Other—position ended (i.e. Missionary, liM)	5	2.7	2	1.0				
Other—unknown	3	1.6	10	5.0	45	9.4	117	10.0
Other—congregation closed	1	0.5	0	0				
Other—not re-elected to Synod position	2	1.1	0	0				
Other—family care (i.e. aging parent, children)	2	1.1	0	0	32	6.7		
Other—moved closer to family	1	0.5	0	0				
Other—moved for spouse's career/education	3	1.6	0	0	29	6.1	60	5.1
Other—marital/family difficulties	2	1.1	1	0.5	5	1.0	70	6.0
Other—burnout	1	0.5	0	0				
Other—retired	18	10.0	0	0	1	0.2	0	0
Other--reinstatement					21	4.4	2	0.1
Other—no LCMS school in the area					6	1.2	7	0.6
Other—became public school/non LCMS teacher					6	1.2	18	1.5
Other—position ended/RIF					22	4.6	2	0.1
Other—congregation/school closed					17	3.5	12	1.0
Other—moved without a call					9	1.8	33	2.8
Other—missionary/return from mission field					3	0.6	1	0
Other—not seeking a call					2	0.4	9	0.7
Other—non candidate status expired; no reason given					1	0.2	137	11.8
Other—returning to LCMS congregation; accepting call							1	0
Other	0	0	0	0				
Total	179		198		474		1161	

* 32 of 35 districts responded