

COMMISSION ON THEOLOGY AND CHURCH RELATIONS



# WE PREACH

## CHRIST CRUCIFIED

1 Cor. 1:18-25

# Commission on Theology and Church Relations

Synod established the Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR) at its 1962 convention in Cleveland so that we might speak with a “unified, single voice” on “matters of doctrine and practice” (1962 Res. 6-03). The Commission’s name indicates its spheres of responsibility — theology and church relations.

## Unity of Doctrine and Practice

In matters of theology, the CTCR assists congregations and called workers by promoting unity of doctrine and practice (**1 COR. 1:10; EPH. 4:3-6**). The CTCR addresses doctrinal and practical questions and topics through published resources, which fall into one of several categories: **1)** major theological reports or study documents, ordinarily more comprehensive and in response to convention overtures; **2)** opinions, ordinarily more narrow responses posed by specific members of Synod or as mandated by Synod by-laws; and **3)** evaluations of new Religious Organizations and Movements (entitled ROMs), which are posted on the Commission’s website. Additionally, the CTCR provides theological advice to the Office of the President and other entities of Synod at their request, participates in task forces, sponsors conferences, and presents its work at meetings throughout Synod.

## Church Relations

Church relations is the second focus for the CTCR. As a church body that is “eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (**EPH. 4:3**), the LCMS seeks to strengthen both its own internal unity and its relationship with other churches. The CTCR fosters relationships with other Christian churches and entities to prevent and avoid schism and division (**ROM. 16:17**).

In the area of church relations, the CTCR is responsible for recommending church fellowship with prospective partner churches to the Synod in Convention. The CTCR is also in ongoing contact and conversation with international Lutheran leaders and organizations such as the International Lutheran Council. Through its staff it engages in ecumenical dialogues and meets with representatives of a number of church bodies, including the Anglican Church in North America, the North American Lutheran Church, the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod, and the Evangelical Lutheran Synod, among others.

## Membership

The membership of the Commission is carefully chosen. Its 20 members include the Synod president and first vice-president together with professors of theology, one district president, and several other called church workers and laypersons. The Commission is currently served by three ordained executive staff members (two full-time, one part-time deployed) and two administrative assistants.

## Functions and Duties

The major functions and duties of the CTCR are stated explicitly in the Handbook of the Synod (3.9.5, 3.9.5.2, 3.9.5.2.1, 3.9.5.2.2, and 3.9.5.4). The Commission seeks to carry out its functions and duties by meeting together four times each year. The sixteen voting members of the Commission are assigned by the plenary commission to one of three standing committees:

- Committee I — Church Relations / Church and Ministry
- Committee II — Theology
- Committee III — Church and Society

## Reports, Documents and Resources

In order to provide leadership in dealing with the Synod’s needs and opportunities in the areas of theology and church relations, the Commission has provided over 140 reports on significant theological issues and regularly monitors the Synod’s ecumenical relationships with other Christians. The CTCR’s reports, along with other theological documents and resources, are available on the CTCR’s website at [lcms.org/ctcr](https://lcms.org/ctcr).

### **Past Triennium (2019–2023) CTCR Documents**

- 2023 *Christian Decision-Making and the End of Life*
- 2022 *A Chaste and Decent Life: An Update to 1981's Human Sexuality*
- 2022 *Order of Creation: Theology, History, Definition*
- 2021 *Marriage Between Church and State: A Report on Clergy Serving as Agents of State*
- 2020 "One Little Word Can Fell Him: Addendum to 'Communion and COVID-19'"
- 2020 "Communion and COVID-19"

### **Other CTCR Documents Pertinent to Contemporary Issues**

- 2018 *Women and Military Service: A Lutheran Perspective*
- 2018 *The Royal Priesthood*
- 2014 *Gender Identity Disorder or Gender Dysphoria in Christian Perspective*
- 1999 *Admission to the Lord's Supper: Basics of Biblical and Confessional Teaching*
- 1996 *Christians & Procreative Choices*
- 1995 *Render unto Caesar...and unto God: A Lutheran View of Church and State*
- 1994 *Racism and the Church*
- 1984 *Abortion in Perspective*
- 1983 *Theology and Practice of the Lord's Supper*
- 1981 *The Ministry: Offices, Procedures, and Nomenclature*

### **CTCR Assignments in Progress**

- Unity in Doctrine and Uniformity and Variety in Practice (2019 Res. 5-12)
- Biblical Six-Day Creation Resources (2019 Res. 5-09A)
- Mission and Ministry Principles in a Post-Christian Context (2023 Res. 1-02A; 2023 Res. 5-12)
- Exegetical, Confessional, and Practical Study of the Third Commandment (2023 Res. 4-06)
- Theology and Philosophy of Lutheran Education (2023 Res. 5-10)
- Online Technology in the Church (jointly with COP) (2023 Res. 5-13A)
- Proper Administration of the Lord's Supper (2023 Res. 5-15)
- Contemporary Racism and Racial Ideologies (2023 Res. 11-02A)
- Abortion after Dobbs: Update to 1984 Abortion in Perspective (2023 Res. 11-04)
- Church and State in a Secular Society: Update to 1995 Render unto Caesar (2023 Res. 11-05)
- New Testament Pastoral Nomenclature (2023 Overture 5-48)
- Guidance regarding Inter-Christian Relationships (Standing Assignment)

For further questions about the CTCR, its current or past work, responsibilities, etc., please email your questions to Rev. Dr. Joel Lehenbauer at [joel.lehenbauer@lcms.org](mailto:joel.lehenbauer@lcms.org) or Rev. Dr. Rick Serina at [rick.serina@lcms.org](mailto:rick.serina@lcms.org).

# Roster

## Commission on Theology and Church Relations

2023-2026 Triennium

Membership consists of 16 voting and 4 advisory members

### College / University Faculty

Paterson, Dr. Mark

### Laypersons

Frerking, Mr. Bill  
Guengerich, Dr. Fred  
Kilcrease, Dr. Jack  
Pitkus, Dr. Andrea

### Ordained Ministers

Preito, Rev. Dr. Ely  
Saunders, Rev. Dr. Brian

### Seminary Faculty

Biermann, Rev. Dr. Joel  
Bode, Rev. Dr. Gerhard  
Masaki, Rev. Dr. Naomichi  
Ziegler, Rev. Dr. Roland

### Parish Pastors

Dargatz, Rev. Robert  
Petersen, Rev. Dr. David

### Teacher (Commissioned Minister)

Gerth, Mr. Joseph

### Additional Members

Alms, Rev. Paul Gregory  
Pless, Rev. Dr. John

### Advisory (Ex Officio)

Egger, Rev. Dr. Thomas  
Harrison, Rev. Dr. Matthew  
Lange, Rev. Peter  
Rast, Rev. Dr. Lawrence

### Executive Staff

Lehenbauer, Rev. Dr. Joel  
Serina, Rev. Dr. Richard  
Vogel, Rev. Dr. Larry

### Elected by Convention (5)

2 parish pastors, 1 parish teacher, 2 laypersons

Dargatz, Rev. Robert  
Gerth, Mr. Joseph  
Kilcrease, Dr. Jack  
Petersen, Rev. Dr. David  
Pitkus, Dr. Andrea

### Current Term Expires

(6-year terms / max. 12 consecutive years)

2026 (2nd of 2 potential 6-year terms)  
2029 (1st of 2 potential 6-year terms)  
2029 (2nd of 2 potential 6-year terms)  
2029 (1st of 2 potential 6-year terms)  
2026 (2nd of 2 potential 6-year terms)

### Elected by Seminary Faculties (4)

2 faculty members from each seminary

St. Louis:  
Biermann, Rev. Dr. Joel  
Bode, Rev. Dr. Gerhard  
  
Fort Wayne:  
Masaki, Rev. Dr. Naomichi  
Ziegler, Rev. Dr. Roland

(3-year terms / max. 9 consecutive years)

2026 (2nd of 3 potential 3-year terms)  
2026 (1st of 3 potential 3-year terms)

2026 (2nd of 3 potential 3-year terms)  
2026 (1st of 3 potential 3-year terms)

### Appointed by President (3)

1 college/university faculty member; 2 others

Alms, Rev. Paul Gregory  
Paterson, Dr. Mark  
Pless, Rev. Dr. John

(3-year terms / max. 9 consecutive years)

2026 (2nd of 3 potential 3-year terms)  
2026 (1st of 3 potential 3-year terms)  
2026 (2nd of 3 potential 3-year terms)

### Elected by COP (4)

2 ordained ministers (one from COP); 2 Laypersons

Frerking, Mr. Bill  
Guengerich, Dr. Fred  
Prieto, Rev. Dr. Ely  
Saunders, Rev. Dr.

(3-year terms / max. 9 consecutive years)

2026 (1st of 3 potential 3-year terms)  
2026 (2nd of 3 potential 3-year terms)  
2026 (2nd of 3 potential 3-year terms)  
2026 (2nd of 3 potential 3-year terms)