

Board for International Mission
November 7, 2024
LCMS International Center
St. Louis, Missouri

Board Members Present: Mr. John Edson, Mr. James Wolf, Rev. James Douthwaite, Rev. James Gier, Rev. Scott Yakimow, Rev. Terrence Chan, Mr. Terence Lung, Rev. Daniel Preus, Rev. Elstner Lewis, and Mr. Michael Hawk.

Board Members Absent: Mr. John Powers.

Staff Members Present: Rev. Kevin Robson, Rev. Roy Askins, Rev. Cory Rajek, Mr. Doug Grove, Mr. Eric Semler, Rev. Charles Ferry; Mr. Blake Warren.

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order by Chairman Edson at 7:58 a.m. (CST) and was opened with a morning devotion by Rev. Dr. Scott Yakimow.

CISH Update From Head of School:

Mr. Doug Grove, Head of School, Hanoi – provided a report to the board regarding CISH’s core values, thematic activities and finances. Mr. Grove also expressed his appreciation for the support provided by Synod and discussed their needs going forward. Additional discussion was had regarding the challenges with government regulations on religion and the options available to deal with those challenges. Finally, Mr. Grove elaborated on the finances of the school and the manner in which the assets are held based upon Vietnamese law.

CISS Update From Head of School:

Mr. Eric Semler, Head of School, Shanghai- provided the board with an update as to his efforts in Shanghai as the Interim Head of School. Mr. Semler also discussed the challenges with operating a religious school within the confines of Chinese law. He discussed CISS’s commitment to the Synod’s mission and the role of LCMS rostered educators in their school. Mr. Semler concluded by reporting on the enrollment statistics and strong financial position of CISS.

Regional Director Report:

Rev. Charles Ferry, (Regional Director - Asia Region) provided an extensive report highlighting various activities advancing the mission and ministry of the Lutheran church within Asia and explained that this region encompasses China, Taiwan, S. Korea, Japan, Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka, Australia, Guam, Papa New Guinea and Southeast Asia. He provided with board with updates as to various church bodies throughout this region and discussed specifically the efforts with regards to the Lutheran Mission Australia and his excitement with the emerging Seminary in Taiwan.

Chapel/Break

President's Report:

Rev. Dr. Matthew Harrison spoke to the Board and discussed the current Mission Priorities and the process for considering and developing new Mission Priorities going forward. He also spoke on various international developments from his observations and/or meetings with regards to Siberia, several Baltic/Nordic countries, Europe, Australia, Germany, Canada and the East Lake Victoria Diocese. Pres. Harrison then reported on the positive working relationship between the OIM and Church Relations. He concluded by informing the board of the current work of the ONM and the support and additional allocation of money provided by the BOD for Mission Advancement.

Missionary Calls:

Mr. Blake Warren reported on one candidate. The Board went into executive session to discuss missionary calls and updates. After returning from executive session the following calls, appointments and acceptances were approved:

- Career Missionary:
 - Mrs. Noel Schaff – First Call, Asia-Taiwan
- Accepted/Declined/Awaiting Appointment-GEO
 - Mr. Aaron Reith – Appointed, Latin America – Dominican Republic, Accepted
- Regional Field Transitions
 - Rev. Jason Steffenson-Africa to Eurasia
- Peaceful Releases--Calls
 - Rev. Gary Schuschke-Career-Eurasia
 - Rev. John Bombaro-Career-Eurasia
- Peaceful Releases—Appointments
 - Ms. Kelly Haynes-GEO-Eurasia
 - Mr. Justin Logston-GEO-Latin America

Approval of Minutes: Chairman Edson presented the September 2024 Minutes for review and approval. The minutes were approved, as amended. Edson then presented the October 2024 Special Meeting Minutes for review and approval. The minutes were approved.

LCA Update: The board went into executive session to discuss concerns with the upcoming LCA meeting.

Lunch

OIM Unit Executive Report:

Rev. Brian Gauthier, Managing Director, introduced himself to the board and the board had an opportunity to welcome him. Rev. Rajek then explained Gauthier's organizational position within the OIM.

Rev. Dr. Cory Rajek, OIM Executive Director, next discussed his report on the work of the Office of International Mission since the last BIM meeting in detail. *See, Report to LCMS Board for International Mission – November 2024; Office of International Mission – Unit Executive Cory Rajek (attached).*

CMO Report:

Rev. Kevin Robson, Chief Mission Officer, presented his report highlighting recent developments in the Office of National Mission, the Office of Pastoral Education, Mission Advancement, Communications and the Office of International Mission, *see, Report to LCMS Board for International Mission – November 2024; Chief Mission Officer, Mission Boards and Supervised Units (ex OIM) (attached).*

Rev. Robson further discussed the extensive efforts made with the Pastoral Formation Committee to provide recommendations to the 2026 Convention. Robson also discussed the great work being performed by the Church Relations Committee and the strong groundwork for working collaboratively going forward. He then concluded by commenting on the exceptional work being performed by Mission Advancement and the Communications department and the OIM Strategic Plan endorsement.

OIM Strategic Plan Endorsement:

Rev. Kevin Robson and Rev. Cory Rajek reviewed the 2024 OIM Strategic Plan with the board to note small updates to further refine the plan for the 2025 plan. The Board discussed the OIM Strategy and the aspirational goals that will be realized: Spread the Gospel, Plant Lutheran Churches, and Show Mercy. Motion to approve 2025 OIM Strategic Plan. Passed unanimously.

Afternoon Break

Communications Report:

Mr. Mike Behr, Executive Director of Communications, reported on the Communications Department's efforts to:

- provide communications support for the recruitment of workers to the mission field as a missionary or as a military chaplain,
- their work to combine Engage, the Lutheran Witness and the Reporter publications,
- an awareness and thank you campaign,
- efforts to put together a sampling of the work performed over the years through international missions with regards to mercy,
- efforts to put together a new missionary deck and orientation materials, and
- the digital transformation for the new website that is underway.

Adjourn: The meeting was adjourned at 4:28 p.m. (CST) and the board attended the Closing Chapel service.

Board for International Mission
November 8, 2024
Hilton Hotel Conference Center
St. Louis, Missouri

Board Members Present: Mr. John Edson, Mr. James Wolf, Rev. James Douthwaite, Rev. James Gier, Rev. Scott Yakimow, Rev. Terrence Chan, Mr. Terence Lung, Rev. Daniel Preus, Rev. Elstner Lewis, and Mr. Michael Hawk.

Board Members Absent: Mr. John Powers.

Staff Members Present: Rev. Kevin Robson, Rev. Cory Rajek, Rev. Craig Muehler, Rev. Steve Hokana; Rev. Roy Askins.

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order by Chairman Edson at 9:01 a.m. (CST) and was opened with a morning prayer by Rev. Dr. Scott Yakimow.

Ministry to the Armed Forces (MAF) Call:

Rev. Craig Muehler requested that the board consider issuing a call to Mr. James Roberts to serve as Director of Religious Education. The board then entered into executive session. Rev. Craig Muehler presented a candidate for consideration. The board had discussion and then exited the executive session. A motion was made and seconded to call: Mr. James Roberts – to serve as Director of Religious Education. The motion was passed unanimously.

International Schools Update:

Rev. Robson asked the Board to enter into executive session to provide updates on all three (3) international schools. The board went into executive session and a discussion was had regarding all three schools. The board then exited executive session. No action was necessary or taken based on the board's discussion.

Convention Resolutions:

- **Resolution 2-03 Subcommittee:**

Rev. Daniel Preus, subcommittee chairman, and Rev. Kevin Robson reported on the subcommittee's progress in addressing the concerns raised in Resolution 2-03. Namely, improving pastoral and spiritual care of the Synod's missionaries working in the foreign mission areas of the Synod and revising current policies, procedures, and practices pertaining to the Synod's ecclesiastical supervision of the Synod's missionaries who are called or appointed and deployed to work in foreign mission areas of the Synod. Further, they have been asked to assess and revise those policies, procedures and practices.

Rev. Preus having received input from his committee and from the Regional Directors believes there is some consensus between those committees to bring both pastoral care and supervision to a more local level and will speak with his committee to continue to try and complete its work.

(Committee: Rev. Daniel Preus, John Powers, Rev. Scott Yakimow, Rev. Arnie Birch, Rev. Richard Snow, Rev. Kevin Robson *advisory*, and Rev. Corey Rajek *advisory*)

- **Resolution 2-06A Subcommittee:**

Rev. Jim Gier, Subcommittee Chairman, reported on the subcommittee's efforts undertaken to date to address the issues raised by Resolution 2-06. Namely, to study the Synod's relationship with independent Lutheran congregations in foreign mission areas

and provide recommendations to the 2026 Synod convention regarding the possibility and advisability of developing a mechanism to receive independent Lutheran congregations in foreign mission areas into membership in the Synod.

The committee has met and has now received input from OIM as to questions they had and will continue their work.

(Committee: Rev. James Gier, Rev. Terrence Chan, Rev. Elstner Lewis, Rev. Terry Forke, Rev. Michael Mohr, Rev. Kevin Robson *advisory*, and Rev. Cory Rajek *advisory*)

JMAC Update/ Report:

Rev. James Douthwaite, subcommittee co-chairman, reported that the JMAC (a subcommittee of members from both the BNM and BIM) has finalized their report, with the assistance of COMs, and those materials have been sent to the Districts in advance of their conventions for their consideration and feedback. The committee will take into consideration the Districts' feedback with regard to Mission and Ministry Emphasis and will report its findings once received. Additionally, the board will review and consider any necessary bylaw revisions necessary to address this process going forward.

Wrap-up / Other Business: Next meeting is January 30, 2025, to be held via Zoom with Rev. Daniel Preus serving as Chaplain.

Adjourn: The meeting was adjourned at 12:35 p.m. (CST) and closed with prayer by Rev. Dr. Scott Yakimow.

Respectfully Submitted



Michael D. Hawk, Secretary

Report To LCMS Board for International Mission—November 2024
Office of International Mission—Unit Executive Cory Rajek

Notable Developments and Actions (since prior meeting)

- India Evangelical Lutheran Church—An LCMS leadership contingent traveled to India for the centenary celebration for Concordia Theological Seminary—Nagercoil, a Pastor's Refresher Course, and high-level leadership talks.
- FORO Expansion Efforts—In accord with 2023 LCMS Convention Resolution 2-07A, OIM continues to educate and establish the foundation for worldwide FORO expansion. Current attention is being given to India. The most likely spot will be the Concordia Theological Seminary—Nagercoil.
- Lutheran Mission Training—OIM STL staff have begun internal training on Lutheran Mission and Church Planting. The first session explored Lutheran ecclesiology from the Lutheran Confessions, Luther, and Walther. The training on various topics pertaining to Planting Lutheran Churches will continue monthly at our staff meetings.
- Continuing Education—OIM recently celebrated the graduation of several St. Louis staff members who have completed Dr. Detlev Schulz's class on mission.
- Brief Regional Updates:
 - Africa—Invitations were given to President Harrison to Africa's region's Continuing Education 2025 event and a regional tour in 2026.

Africa region is also working with Church Relations on holding a conference in Kenya on fellowship and LWF membership.
 - Asia—Asia region leadership is working with OIM leadership on structural changes that will bring it more in line with the other regions. These changes will include the addition of area facilitators, regional chaplain, care coordinator, theological education coordinator, and FORO coordinator.

Regional director Ferry is planning to attend the official launch of the Lutheran Mission—Australia. This comes after the Lutheran Church in Australia, against the advice of its pastors, officially elected to ordain women to the ministry. LCMS OIM, COMMS and Church Relations have been strongly supporting LM—A.
 - Eurasia—After some visa and natural disaster delays, Alliance Missionary Rev. Alison Henn was installed in Spain at the recently concluded Spanish *Asamblea*.

The Persian Project in Germany continues to be a great opportunity for mission. Regional director Preus is working to bring the three mission stations (Leipzig, Hamburg, and Berlin) into alignment after discovery of instances of duplication of resources.
 - Latin America/Caribbean—Rev. Shaver and Rev. Weber were recently installed after completing their four-month orientation. Currently, they are working in their respective parishes and will begin their seminary teaching duties in January.

Due to some current challenges in Sri Lanka, Vicar Josh Wareham will be sent to LAC. OIM staff has been working closely with CSL and the regional leadership to ensure a smooth transition and a successful vicarage for Josh.

- Global Market Entry Plan—Training summit took place 17–20 September with BirchTree Global. The focus of the training centered on visa acquisition, banking and legal requirements to work in foreign countries. Part of the training involved regional business managers addressing current examples from within their respective regions. All participants in the training received a certificate and CEUs.
- OIM SWAT Team—As entry into foreign countries continues to be an obstacle to OIM’s work around the world, discussion on identification and definition of the “SWAT Team” continued after the global market entry training. Ultimately, we hope to provide each region with the tools needed to enter foreign countries safely. We are in a good place and anticipate a rollout in January 2025.

Key Approaching Milestones

- Continued discussions on establishing a time for OIM–Church Relations roles and responsibilities meeting—Spring 2025.
- Address OIM recruitment challenges (i.e., recruitment manager)—Fall 2024.
- Complete internal audits of all OIM regional offices—initial audits recently began (June 2024). Phase Two of the BirchTree Global plan will help us address this milestone (September 2024).
- Develop a comprehensive, documented approach to OIM succession planning, with the assistance of LCMS Human Resources—December 2024. Stan Stigdon (LAC RBM) and Jordan Logston (LAC ARBM) are slated to take over their responsibilities in January 2025.
- OIM SWAT Team—provide sufficient training and officially launch in January 2025.

For Information/Awareness

- Legal Entities—OIM representatives continue to meet with local lawyers on establishing an entity in Latvia (and, potentially, other areas within our strategic plan).
- Mexico Property—LCMS legal counsel, OIM representatives, Mexico synod representatives, and Mexico legal counsel continue to work on developing a plan to address joint ownership of property.

Report To LCMS Board for International Mission—November 2024
Chief Mission Officer, Mission Boards and Supervised Units (ex OIM)

Chief Mission Officer/BIM/BNM

Notable Developments and Actions (since prior meeting)

- CMO schedule and highlight actions since filing of report to prior meeting included, among other items and activities:
 - The hosting of a senior leadership delegation of the Lutheran Church in Korea in St. Louis (August)—including the church body president, secretary seminary president and seminary dean of operations—for a series of discussions including recent developments in LCK’s theology on the ordination of women, the establishment of a new pre-K through 12th grade school in Seoul and the desire for additional missionary support (theological educator) from OIM;
 - A face-to-face meeting in Hong Kong with representatives from the board of Hong Kong International School Association Limited (HKISAL);
 - An eight-day visit—with President Harrison, LCMS Office of International Mission and Church Relations personnel—to India Evangelical Lutheran Church and Concordia Theological Seminary Nagercoil to celebrate the CTSN centenary, hold pastors’ and deaconess’ refresher courses and conduct a three-day comprehensive, extensively detailed “deep dive” dialogue with senior IELC leadership to better understand IELC needs, challenges, operations, finances, church structure and polity, cultural developments and legal entanglements;
 - Extensive conversations and planning in connection with the Pastoral Formation Committee (PFC) and in fulfillment of various assignments pertaining to 2023 Resolution 6-03A, including:
 - A look at unauthorized programs of pastoral formation currently operative within the Synod’s districts and congregations;
 - Advancement of the PFC’s major research project, “Assessing Approaches and Outcomes of Residential and Non-residential Routes to Ordination in the LCMS,” including 22 hour-long structured interviews with individual district presidents (13 interviews remaining as of this writing);
 - Considerations over a revised definition, with improved clarity, of appropriate “context” for the service of Specific Ministry (SMP) pastors, and other features of the SMP program of pastoral formation leading to ordination; and
 - Improvements to in-seminary and ongoing supervision of SMP students, vicars and pastors;
 - Participation, along with other OIM senior executive leadership, in a week-long very well-received International Church Relations Conference 2024 in Wittenberg, arranged and hosted by LCMS Church Relations.

- Provision of thirty-two written reviews of international grant proposals submitted to the LWML National Grant Review Committee in preparation for the LWML National Convention (June 2025);
 - Participation as a board or LCMS staff member in various board meetings — LCMS Foundation, Concordia University System, Board for International Mission, Board for National Mission;
 - A presentation/Bible study to the Ethiopian Mekane Yesus Fellowship of North America Conference at CUC, which includes a number of LCMS-rostered Amharic-speaking Ethiopian pastors, most of whom have come onto the Synod roster through CQ or EIIT; and
 - Extensive work in support of the Synod’s international schools in Asia, particularly HKIS and CISS.
- The Schwan Foundation, under coordination with the CMO, graciously provided a \$70K grant to support a fuller implementation of CUS campus visitation activities than was previously planned/budgeted.
 - BIM and BNM continue on-course with their well-structured annual workplans. BIM next meets 7–8 November; BNM next meets 14–15 November. Key item on both agendas is the final approval of updated strategic plans for both OIM and ONM.
 - At the September BIM and BNM meetings, the “Joint Mission Assessment Committee” (JMAC) shared outcomes and analysis arising from the synodwide survey of LCMS rostered church workers that was completed over April–May. The survey was designed to assess the effectiveness of Synod’s triennial mission emphasis and mission priorities, in fulfillment of the boards’ evaluation and reporting requirements spelled out in Bylaws 3.8.2.2 and 3.8.3.2. A corresponding joint BIM/BNM report to the district conventions was completed, with the assistance of LCMS COMMS, for subsequent distribution.

Key Approaching Milestones

- Identify, hire and onboard new Office Administrator to the CMO — November.
- Rollout of the Synod’s new digital platform/website (COMMS) — February/March (delayed from December/January, see COMMS report below).

For Information/Awareness

- We are continuing the search for a new Office Administrator to the CMO; the “retired” Jeannie Smithson continues to fill a much-need gap in the interim, on a part-time basis.
- CMO to provide overview of recent developments among Synod’s international schools in Asia at the 7–8 November BIM meeting.

Office of National Mission (UE Dan Galchutt)

Notable Developments and Actions (since prior meeting)

- The Church Planting Initiative continues to expand despite the ongoing vacancy in the director role. Currently, LCMS Church Planting is partnering with 20 districts and working with 63 potential new church starts that are in various stages of church planting (from exploration to active plants). A social media advertising campaign is underway to test the use of Facebook/Instagram for identifying opportunities for

planting churches in areas with little or no LCMS congregational presence. The Church Planting Initiative is part of the fulfillment of 2023 Resolution 1-03A.

- Follow up actions for the “Smaller Congregations Summit” that was held in St. Louis on 25–26 June include four districts sharing and piloting resources for smaller congregation. This initiative addresses the challenges and opportunities of congregations with an average weekly worship attendance of 100 or fewer people. Follow up actions will include engaging church workers and lay leaders from smaller congregations in four pilot districts: Eastern, Northern Illinois, Nebraska, and Pacific-Southwest. This effort is being executed in fulfillment of 2023 Resolution 1-02A.
- The transition to expand Black and African Immigrant Ministry into the All Nations Ministry continues. The Manager of All Nations, Ministry Rev. Stephen Heimer, is working with a variety of leaders from around the Synod, including the leadership of the Black Clergy Caucus to help navigate this transition. The first All Nations Council, made up of leaders of ethnic ministries across the LCMS, will convene for the first time in November. The development of the All Nations Ministry is part of the fulfillment of 2023 Resolutions 1-05A and 11-03A.
- Rev. Dr. Heath Trampe has received and accepted the call to serve as the director of ONM Discipleship Ministry. Heath will begin serving in this role on 1 December.
- LCMS Youth Ministry, now fully staffed, attended various church-worker conferences to present on the “7 Healthy Practices of Youth Ministry”. Planning/work continues on the LCMS Youth Gathering for July 2025.
- LCMS School Ministry has begun the work of the “Curriculum Standards Committee,” toward fulfillment of 2023 Resolution 12-01A. The committee convened for the first time in October.
- LCMS Worship was awarded a grant from the Lilly Endowment of \$750,000 for the “Nurturing Children Through Worship and Prayer Initiative.” These funds will be used over the next five years with several new initiatives from LCMS Worship.
- LCMS Disaster Response/Training hosted its annual response conference in St. Louis and continues the work of revising the LERT training and affiliated resources. They led circuit visitor trainings in the Kansas and Iowa West districts. Volunteers were engaged in responses in IA (flooding) and in FL, GA, SC and NC following hurricanes Helene and Milton. The work in the southeast U.S. will be significant, in both volunteers and grants.
- LCMS Life Ministry has increased participation in Marches for Life in 2024 to approximately 2,000 participants in 2024, compared to 350 in 2022. Leaders from 32 districts and all the Synod VPs will participate in the 2025 National March for Life in Washington D.C. on Friday, 24 January.
- Worker Wellness convened meetings in September and November with the Alliance Group made up of district presidents and Concordia Plans leaders to touch base on the strategic plan and discuss tactical development. Staff also collaborated with PED on church worker appreciation efforts in 2024–25.
- Worker Wellness is leading a discovery project through district referrals to congregations, schools, and workers who are exemplary in wellness. The goal is to learn the effective practices and resources that have enabled the development of faithful and healthy service in the Church. The information gleaned from the project

will allow ONM and districts to create resources and better develop a culture of care and wellness in congregations throughout the Synod.

- Family Ministry continues to work with COMMS on a large set of family discipleship resources that equip parents to teach the faith within the home. Family Ministry and CPH are exploring new delivery channels for these resources and other faith formation materials.
- Stewardship launched *Bring Giving Home* projects with Missouri and Indiana Districts and completed with Southern Illinois.
- Recruitment of participants and facilitators for the first expansion of the PALS program to commissioned workers are in place for new deaconesses (Deaconess Ministry collaborating with PED).
- Specialized Spiritual Care trained two trainers in September to lead Lutheran Visitation Education cohorts in 2025. The trainers will provide distinctly LCMS training for church workers to provide specialized care in contexts such as hospitals, prisons and senior living communities. Lutheran Visitation Education is recognized as a counterpart to Clinical Pastoral Education.

Key Approaching Milestones

- Fulfill initiation phase and Year One objectives of \$2 million Church Planting Initiative—July 2025.
- Worker Wellness summit with Recognized Service Organizations—December 2024.
- Life and Mercy conference with multiple sites and simulcast livestreaming—March 2025.
- Lutheran Visitation Education starting second cohort—January 2025.
- Stewardship hybrid conference—January 2025.

For Information/Awareness

- The ONM unit is being reorganized. Rev. Dr. Mark Wood is retiring in the months ahead. We thank God for his work and service to the LCMS over the last 10 years. ONM will move forward with two managing directors (instead of three) and an operations manager that will serve the entire unit to better communicate and collaborate with others throughout the International Center. The plan is to have an operations manager in place by November.
- ONM continues to underspend budget primarily because of a staffing shortage. While some vacancies have been filled over the past several months, a handful remain. Calling and recruiting new workers continues to be a priority and a significant investment of time for current staff members.
- Vacancies in ONM have slowed the progress of developing modules for ONM's revitalization program *re: Vitality* and context modules for *Every One His Witness*, which is the primary means of ONM supporting the fulfillment of 2023 Resolution 1-01A.
- The position for a manager of Family Ministry was posted and several promising candidates are being interviewed. Once the manager is in place the needed resourcing and programming will be prioritized. ONM is planning a second retreat for

parents of children struggling with sexual orientation and gender identity issues to be held in April 2025.

- School Ministry is developing a strategic plan for growth and a renewed zeal to support non-traditional models as well as new school starts. The search for additional personnel is being undertaken with consideration of timing with the school year.
- An additional job vacancy in RSOs will soon be posted in order to handle an increasing number of applications and move the entire process online.

Office of Pastoral Education (UE Jim Baneck)

Notable Developments and Actions (since prior meeting)

- The Pastoral Formation Committee is executing a plan to address its 2023 Convention assignments, which includes non-sanctioned routes to ordination, residential vs. non-residential pastoral formation, and SMP. This plan will include qualitative and quantitative research with the COP (all 35 DPs will be interviewed by the beginning of December), circuit visitors, seminary and CUS personnel, pastors, pastoral students, and others. Standing Partnership will be conducting many of these interviews this winter. The plan also includes capturing and analyzing existing data and specific research related to these assignments. This plan is organized through a RACI and Gantt chart. It may also solicit the expertise from outside research, marketing, and communications entity(s). The PFC is using the \$150,000 grant from the Schwan Charitable Foundation to carry out its work. The PFC's work will culminate in a substantial report for the 2026 Synod convention. A progress report will be presented to the seminary Joint Boards of Regents in November.
- The 2024 *Set Apart to Serve* workplan includes:
 - A Funding Plan—SAS is working with experts from SP and LCMS MADV to secure ongoing funding for the long-term sustainability of SAS. It is estimated that to build an SAS culture throughout the LCMS will take 8–10+ years because of the number of stakeholders and the unique structure of the LCMS. *Set Apart to Serve* is funded entirely by donor-designated gifts. The focus on funding includes: ongoing interaction with SAS mission advancement expert from Standing Partnership and LCMS Mission Advancement, building relationships with donors who have an interest in SAS and church work recruitment, grant writing, MADV resources (donor impact statement, project priority statement, grant bank document), aligning available funds with execution of SAS priorities and work.
 - A comprehensive Awareness Plan—District Online Toolkit, District Committee Pilot Group, Awareness Email Engagement Campaign, Circuit Visitors Pilot and Engaging Laity Pilot, KFUE Coffee Hour, monthly *Reporter* articles, *Lutheran Witness* articles (six per year), several in-person speaking engagements, monthly President's Report, quarterly COP update, four main research audiences, a social media campaign, lay leader database development and communications, PALS engagement, graduating church worker outreach, Church Worker Appreciation Month and an Annual Report. See SAS Reporter Insert—November 2024.
 - Youth Tactical Activation Plan — Pilot Project re-engagement, Youth Conversation Guide, development of new resources, including a parent

- resource on the importance of the Divine Service and immersion in the Word, Servant Event Resources (in collaboration with LCMS Youth), Army of Volunteers (collaborating with the two seminaries).
- Second-Career — Stakeholder mapping, journey mapping, District Education Executives Partnership and Communications, Residential Formation Proposition (in collaboration with the PFC), Second-Career Benefits and Routes communication piece, Second-Career Teacher focus and ads, Support services for Second-Career wives and families.
 - All Nations—Summit meeting with six multi-ethnic LCMS leaders to discuss church work formation and recruitment in *all* congregations and schools in the LCMS.
 - SAS will meet and develop a 5-year plan in November. SAS is building a long-term church worker formation and recruitment culture to be a part of every LCMS congregation, school, and entity with every pastor, commissioned worker, parent, layperson, and district.
 - Baneck encourages everyone and especially the BOD and mission boards to explore the SAS website at <https://www.lcms.org/set-apart-to-serve>.
 - Theology Professors Conference—PED continues to seek annual funding (typically through a Schwan grant) and assists in planning and executing this biannual conference, which was held this past year in May at CUAA. The next TPC will take place in 2026 (date and location TBD).
 - PALS (post-seminary applied learning and support):
 - 52 active facilitators are serving our pastors, wives and families across our districts, with up to 12 more being selected and engaged as facilitators soon.
 - PALS groups across the synod are having their first meetings of the PALS year (1 July–30 June). Great to see spring seminary graduates and wives engaging in their PALS groups along with the other pastors and wives entering their second and third years of ministry.
 - PALS for Deaconesses is launching soon. Facilitators have been brought on board, and deaconesses in their first years of service are being placed into PALS groups. While the format will be different for deaconesses than it is for pastors, the desired program outcomes will remain the same: to assist with the transition from student life to service in the church; to foster and enhance personal, spiritual and vocational growth; and to address the issues of isolation that occur for so many of our church workers.
 - PALS curriculum offerings being updated, improved, and expanded.
 - Monthly PALS activity continues to be published in the *PenPALS* newsletter available at [LCMS.org/PALS](https://www.lcms.org/PALS).
 - Disbursements from the Synod to the Seminaries—A six-year comparison is printed in the fall PED *Reporter* insert. There was a \$2,323,825 decrease from FY22 to FY23, driven almost entirely by bequest amounts.

Key Approaching Milestones

- Multiple SAS presentations/presence since last BOD including church worker conferences and Black Clergy Caucus.

- Journey mapping with second-career seminary students and spouses, CSL (23 September) and CTSFW (30 October).
- Present SAS (7 hours) to Lithuania Lutheran Church in Palanga, 10–15 September.

For Information/Awareness

- Currently, nothing additional beyond what is listed above.

Mission Advancement (UE Mark Hofman)

Notable Developments and Actions (since prior meeting)

- The August 2024 report's first bullet referenced a KPI called "Gift Frequency" and that the LCMS gift frequency KPI was in excess of 3.5, which is considered the "Holy Grail" target. As it turns out, the LCMS number (3.54+) has been and is artificially inflated by a combination of two factors: a CRM software limitation, and the resulting processes and procedures for recording what are called *split gifts*. A split gift is when a contributor sends a single donation but asks the LCMS to allocate the gift out between two or more gift designations. Either through a CRM software limitation or insufficient software implementation training performed in 2009 and 2010, the LCMS and LCMS Foundation have been "splitting" the gift by recording each donor-specified allocation as an individual transaction. So, a single gift a donor intends to support two programs is counted as two gifts, not one.

Following a CRM software upgrade plus proper training, and beginning in February 2025, the LCMS will begin recording a split gift as single gifts, out of which are taken two or more allocations. This means a donor's single gift with multiple points of impact will be recorded as single gifts. The "splits" will be viewable as true gift allocations, not as separate and distinct gifts.

The impact of this change will be two-fold. First, for the first time, the LCMS will be able to assess its true Gift Frequency KPI number and establish an accurate baseline (improving performance management data). This will enhance decision making. Executive leadership will see a precipitous drop in the reported Gift Frequency KPI as a result. This does not change the statement made in August that donor loyalty remains strong. The previous recording of gifts was done in a consistent manner. Split gifts simply show contributors expanding their support beyond one ministry, program or gift opportunity, but doing so in a single gift.

Second, for donor who had been splitting single gifts out into multiple "gifts" to various designations and programs and had been receiving individual receipts per selected program or designation, they will now receive a *single* gift receipt for the total amount donated. This will reduce paper usage and postage costs for gift receipts (improved budget efficiency).

- A fundraising appeal in response to Hurricanes Helene and Milton was launched in late September, beginning with an e-mail appeal and moving to a printed "disaster gram" letter appeal. As of 21 October (the date this report is being written) 3,069 contributors have supplied \$898,724 in gifts. It must be noted that constituents living in either the Florida-Georgia District or the Southeastern District are being encouraged to send their donations to their respective district. The LCMS is one of multiple Synod-related entities and districts actively soliciting donations, and the LCMS has no means of measuring the total philanthropic response to these storms. Interestingly, people in the LCMS disaster response donor constituency didn't wait to

receive a solicitation before responding. They started going online to send gifts over the eight business days leading up to the e-mail appeal.

- Four of the five strategic staffing expansion positions have been posted through various HR outlets. Individuals have applied for three of the four positions; however, the talent “pool” resembles a “puddle.” In addition, the vacancy created in a director-level position has been posted. Pre-screening of candidates is ongoing. (Langley Assessment Recommendation)
- The mission advocates and mid-range contributor care coordinators continue to work their way through virtual, on-demand portfolio management training offered by the consulting firm Veritas. Information and discussions have led to the creation of tools and documentation to support and guide staff in focusing their time and attention more effectively on assigned contributor connections. (Langley Assessment Recommendation)
- The gift planning partnership agreement between the LCMS Foundation and corporate Synod, having been revised by Synod legal counsel, is still unsigned. The chief barrier is unresolved concerns in the Foundation over donor confidentiality and privacy rights, with minor concerns over work product (intellectual) property rights. Conversations continue as time and other responsibilities permit. (Langley Assessment Recommendation)
- An extensive report on Fiscal Year 2024 gifting was shared with the Administrative Team in September. The report breaks total giving down into major designation categories, compares direct gift amounts (from living donors) to those received as bequests, and shows KPIs such as gift frequency and average gift for the living donor constituency group. Bequest totals were the highest in at least 13 years. Gifts from living donors and organizations were down slightly compared to FY2023 and the rolling five-year average. This is mostly attributable to a decline in the number of participating donors due to death or economic stress from inflation.
- The Lilly Endowment provided two significant grants. In its first-ever grant to the LCMS, Lilly awarded the Office of National Mission Youth Ministry area a \$250,000 grant for its *Support for Practicing Healthy Young Ministry—A Thriving Congregations Initiative Program*. The Lilly Endowment also awarded a \$750,000 grant to the Office of National Mission Worship program area restricted to *Support for Nurturing Young Faith In Worship—A Nurturing Children Through Worship and Prayer Initiative II Program*. Mary Hamilton in Mission Advancement worked closely with both program leaders to craft and submit the proposals leading to these awards.
- The partnership between Concordia Seminary St. Louis, Concordia Theological Seminary Fort Wayne and the LCMS Mission Advancement unit to satisfy a \$175,000 Global Seminary Initiative fundraising challenge from the Schwan Foundation met its goal in September. The deadline to meet the challenge was November 30. For the first time, LCMS Mission Advancement facilitated gifts at a level sufficient to fully satisfy the Schwan challenge on its own, with seminary-facilitated gifts boosting the overall GSI total.

Key Approaching Milestones

- The executive director of Mission Advancement and the unit's three current directors (Mitkos, Smithson, Dahlke) will participate in executive management training together in November. The training is by the consulting firm *Leader's Edge* and founding principal consultant Brian Becker. (Langley Assessment Recommendation)

- The largest standard appeal of the fiscal year is the November “Christmas” appeal, sent to most contributors. Consistent with the MADV strategy and the goal to facilitate \$4 million in annual undesignated direct support, the 2024 November appeal will solicit an unrestricted contribution to support the overall mission of the LCMS. This contrasts with prior years when recipients were presented with a catalog of mostly restricted gift options.
- The deadline to submit a major proposal before the Bolick Foundation was moved up to October 31 to support a December decision. In previous years, the Foundation's decision cycle culminated in June. President Harrison and Shane Smithson collaborate closely on strengthening connections with the Bolick Foundation and its founder.
- A request was submitted for LCMS COMMS to produce the 2024 LCMS Annual Report, which would include FY23 audited financial information. The most recently produced and released 2023 annual report contains FY22 audited financial information.

For Information/Awareness

- Three of five non-expansion vacant positions have been filled.
 - Kate Ellis has moved into the Member Engagement Operations Coordinator role, from her previous position as Gift Planning Coordinator.
 - Becca Stackle was hired to fill the Gift Planning Coordinator position.
 - Tricia Furman was hired to fill a vacancy in the Information and Donor Care Specialist position, which primarily supports both the Transformative Giving and Managed Giving teams' need for information to share with donors. The position is also one of three staff responsible for taking inbound calls on the toll-free Contributor Care Line.

The two non-expansion positions still vacant are:

- Director, Transformative Giving (Mark Hofman is functioning as the interim director, supported by Chandra Thurman and Shane Smithson)
- Data Hygiene Coordinator (posting of this position has been deferred in favor of filling more critical vacancies and the expansion positions)
- Martha Dahlke (Director, Campaigns and Special Initiatives) participated in a virtual workshop offered by Gonser Gerber, a full services consulting firm with experience in planning and completing major campaigns. The topic of the workshop was on how best to determine an organization's internal "readiness" for a campaign, including the use of surveys and other assessment tools. Executive Director Hofman had planned to participate in the workshop but did not because of a COVID infection.

Communications (UE Mike Behr)

Notable Developments and Actions (since prior meeting)

- LCMS Website/Digital Platforms: Work on this major initiative that officially kicked off in January continues, and the team has completed the “design” phase and is now in the “build” phase. This phase started in September and will run through late January or early February. The site will likely not launch until late February or March because of the massive content migration process that needs to take place. Phase 2 planning has been postponed until after the site successfully launches.

- Combining *LW* and *Engage*: A working group from both LCMS COMMS and CPH has completed its work and presented recommendations to the executive team of both organizations. Two additional surveys are being conducted currently: one to pastors and one to LCMS members who do not subscribe to *LW*.
- Additional media channels around *LW/Engage* will be developed and are intended to reach a broader and younger audience. New distribution channels would include e-subscriptions, podcasts, a YouTube series, and a much-improved online experience with the new website. This will be a topic of discussion during FY25 budget planning for resources to develop and manage the additional content and channels.
- Hurricanes Helene and Milton: COMMS worked closely with LCMS Disaster Response and MADV to secure timely video and photography from the disaster just days after Helene first hit. A multimedia awareness campaign followed, which included *Reporter*, social media, YouTube, emails to congregations with church bulletin supplements, updated website content, and interviews on KFUE and Issues, Etc. A feature article in *Engage* is also planned for the winter issue. The purpose of the campaign has been to solicit support from the Synod in disaster funding and volunteer support.

Key Approaching Milestones

- Approved plan for new business model of *LW/Engage* (December/January).
- Launch new *lcms.org* website (Phase 1) — February/March.

For Information/Awareness

- Peter Slayton, manager of Media Relations and Social Media, left the Communication team to join Hillsdale College as assistant director of Media Relations. We are working with an independent contractor in the interim to help support the ongoing work of the team, and HR is actively recruiting for a replacement.
- Al Dowbnia, director of Video Production, announced his retirement. His last day was 15 November. HR is actively recruiting for a replacement.