



RECOGNIZED SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS AGREEMENT

This sample agreement document is provided for information purposes only. Upon successful completion of the approval process, the LCMS will generate a binding agreement document for signature.

Sample Agreement

THE LUTHERAN CHURCH—MISSOURI SYNOD RECOGNIZED SERVICE ORGANIZATION

THIS AGREEMENT (the “Agreement”), dated as of the last date set forth on the signature page hereto (the last page), by and between The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, a Missouri nonprofit corporation (the “LCMS”), as set forth on the signature page hereto and the organization executing this Agreement set forth on the signature page hereto (the “Organization”). The following recitals form the basis for this Agreement and are made a material part hereof:

WITNESSETH:

WHEREAS, LCMS Bylaw section 6.2, LCMS Board of Directors Policy 5.9, and related policies of the LCMS Boards and Offices of National and International Mission provide for the granting of recognized service organization (“RSO”) status by the LCMS and provide certain criteria relative to such entities (the “LCMS Rules”), copies of which LCMS Rules, as presently stated by LCMS, are attached as exhibits; and

WHEREAS, the LCMS and the Organization desire that the Organization be designated as an RSO of the LCMS consistent with the LCMS Rules;

NOW, THEREFORE, FOR GOOD AND VALUABLE CONSIDERATION, THE RECEIPT AND SUFFICIENCY OF WHICH IS HEREBY ACKNOWLEDGED BY EACH PARTY HERETO, BE IT AGREED AS FOLLOWS:

SECTION 1. Recognized Service Organization. The LCMS hereby designates the Organization as an RSO of the LCMS on the terms set forth herein, within the class and tier indicated on the signature page. The Organization hereby accepts the designation as an RSO by the LCMS on the terms set forth herein. The Organization hereby agrees to comply with and abide by the LCMS Rules relative to RSOs as such now exist and as they may be hereafter amended by the LCMS, its boards and offices.

The Organization agrees to foster the mission and ministry of the church, engaging in program activity that (a) extends the mission and ministry of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (the “Synod”), (b) is in harmony with the programs of the Synod, and (c) respects and does not act contrary to the doctrine and practice of the Synod, as established in the Scriptures and Lutheran Confessions (LCMS Constitution Article II) and elaborated from time to time by the Synod in convention as it seeks to clarify its witness or settle doctrinal controversy (LCMS Bylaw 1.6.2).

The Organization agrees that its board of directors (or similar governing body) and executive leadership will include members of, or representatives of congregations that are members of, the Synod at an appropriate level determined by the LCMS. The Organization’s governing body shall be solely responsible for the governance of the Organization.

SECTION 2. RSO and LCMS. The LCMS is granting the Organization status as an RSO, as is set forth herein. The LCMS and its agencies disavow any participation in or responsibility for the governance, policies and programs of the Organization and all other operations and activities of the Organization. The Organization agrees to comply with any and all policies and criteria of the LCMS in order to maintain the Organization’s RSO status. The LCMS reserves the right to change the LCMS Rules at any time in its sole discretion and to require the Organization to provide evidence of compliance with any of such policies and criteria in order to maintain the Organization’s RSO status.

SECTION 3. The Organization a Separate Entity; No Financial Liability to LCMS; No Endorsement by LCMS. The Organization agrees that it is a separate, independent legal entity from the LCMS, that it is not controlled by the LCMS, and that the LCMS shall have no financial responsibility with respect to the Organization. The Organization further agrees as follows:

- (a) the Organization will not hold itself as an agent of, having authority to act on behalf of, or legally bind the LCMS in any way, or make any representations that it is a part of the LCMS or its agencies or that the Organization is an agency, division, subsidiary, or affiliate of the LCMS;
- (b) the LCMS has no responsibility for the finances or financial obligations of the Organization and under no circumstances shall be deemed to have guaranteed the same;

- (c) the LCMS does not endorse or make any representation or guarantee regarding the fiscal solvency or financial responsibility of the Organization nor regarding any services or programs that it expressly or implicitly offers, does not imply accreditation or certification of the organization or its programs, and does not express or imply responsibility by the LCMS for the debts or other financial obligations of the Organization;
- (d) the Organization will include the following provision in its governing documents:

Recognition by the Synod (i) is not an endorsement or guarantee of the fiscal solvency of [name of the Organization], nor of any services or programs offered by [name of the Organization]; (ii) does not express or imply endorsement or guarantee of the fiscal solvency of [name of the Organization], or any Synod responsibility for or guarantee of the debts or other financial obligations of [name of the Organization]; and (iii) does not cause the Synod or its districts or congregations to incur, guarantee, or be subject to or responsible for the liabilities or debts of [name of the Organization] or its subsidiaries and/or affiliates.

- (e) the Organization will include a disclaimer of financial responsibility for the obligations of the Organization in all agreements or other documents creating indebtedness of the Organization (such as promissory notes, bond issues or other financing agreements) in excess of 10 percent in value of the assets of the Organization as evidenced by its most recently prepared financial statement. Such disclaimer shall read as follows:

It is agreed and acknowledged that the recognized service organization status conferred upon [name of the Organization] by The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (i) is not an endorsement or guarantee by the Synod of the fiscal solvency of [name of the Organization], nor of any services or programs offered by [name of the Organization], (ii) does not express or imply endorsement or guarantee of the fiscal solvency of [name of the Organization], or any Synod responsibility for or guarantee of the debts or other financial obligations of [name of the Organization], and (iii) does not cause the Synod or its districts or congregations to incur, guarantee, or otherwise be subject to or responsible for the liabilities or debts of [name of the Organization] or its subsidiaries and/or affiliates. For the avoidance of doubt, and without limiting the foregoing, by recognizing [name of the Organization] as a recognized service organization, the Synod does not undertake any obligation to repay or guarantee [name of the Organization]’s debts or other financial obligations.

- (f) the Organization shall defend, indemnify and hold harmless the LCMS, the Synod, and their respective districts, integral components, boards and agencies, together with the officers, directors and employees of each (collectively, the “Indemnified Parties”, and each an “Indemnified Party”), from any and all liabilities, losses, damages, judgments, claims, actions, proceedings, liens, expenses, penalties, and costs, including court costs and reasonable attorneys’ fees, any Indemnified Party may suffer or incur that are attributable, or otherwise in any way relating, to the existence, acts, or omissions of the Organization or the recognition of the Organization as an RSO hereunder, including, without limitation, claims asserting that the Organization or any of its liabilities or obligations are owned, controlled, guaranteed or endorsed by, or otherwise the responsibility of, any Indemnified Party or that any Indemnified Party negligently granted or maintained the RSO status of the Organization or failed to properly monitor the actions and undertakings of the Organization. The provisions of this Section 3(f) shall survive the expiration or earlier termination of this Agreement.

SECTION 4. Organization Operations and Corporate Documents. It is agreed that the Organization is a separately governed ministry that is not part of the constitutional, legal structure of the Synod, and that the Organization shall operate under its own governance and policies with freedom and self-determination, independent of the LCMS and its agencies. The Organization will establish and evaluate its own objectives, activities, programs, organization, policies, administration, and financial matters.

The Organization also represents, warrants and agrees as follows:

- (a) **Employer.** The Organization is the employer of all Organization employees and the operator of all real or personal properties occupied or used by it;
- (b) **501(c)(3) Organization.** The Organization is presently an organization qualifying under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code and will maintain its exemption thereunder throughout the term of this Agreement. The Organization shall provide evidence of such status to the LCMS from time to time upon the LCMS’ request therefor;
- (c) **Financial Information.** The Organization will provide the LCMS with its policies regarding fundraising and with operational or financial information involving the Organization as reasonably requested by the LCMS at any time. The Organization’s fundraising policies and practices shall at all times be ethical and responsible;
- (d) **Background Checks.** The Organization will conduct screening and background checks, at the Organization’s expense, on its employees and volunteers who work with minors, and the LCMS further encourages the Organization to adopt policies to protect children and to train all employees and volunteers to comply with such policies;

- (e) **Compliance with Laws.** The Organization will comply with all applicable laws, rules and regulations, including, but not limited to complying with all rules and requirements relating to receiving government funding for social services;
- (f) **Insurance.** The Organization will maintain liability and other insurance customary for an entity engaged in the operations of the type and scope of the Organization. For so long as this Agreement remains in effect, the Organization shall cause the LCMS to be named as an additional insured on all policies of liability insurance maintained by the Organization;
- (g) **Trade Names, Trademarks and Copyrighted Material.** The Organization agrees that it will obtain the written consent of the LCMS communications department prior to any use or display by it of any trade name, trademark or copyrighted material owned by the LCMS. The decision as to whether or not to permit usage or display by the Organization, and the terms and documentation of any such usage or display, are entirely in the discretion of the LCMS. To the extent the Organization obtains the written consent and approval from the LCMS communications department, the Organization agrees it will abide by all terms and conditions set forth by the LCMS, including but not limited to: (i) the terms and conditions published on the LCMS website, as amended from time to time, regarding usage or display of the LCMS Logo Cross and other trademarks; and (ii) the terms, conditions and guidelines set forth in the Graphic Standards manual, as amended by the LCMS from time to time;
- (h) **Compliance.** The Organization will provide evidence of compliance with this Agreement reasonably requested by the LCMS at any time;
- (i) **Dissolution.** All applicable governance documents of the Organization will at all times provide that, in the event of a dissolution of the Organization, its remaining assets will be distributed to another nonprofit organization exempt under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code; and
- (j) **Governing Documents.** The Organization shall provide proposed changes in its governing documents on the following topics to the LCMS prior to adoption so that the LCMS may determine whether there is any impact on the RSO status of the Organization: membership, nonprofit status, purpose, dissolution, governing body election, governing body membership criteria, or any other topic that could relate to the criteria for RSO status hereunder.
- (k) **Subsidiaries and Affiliates.** Unless specifically identified in this Agreement as being a party hereto or an intended third party beneficiary hereof, no subsidiary, or affiliate of the Organization is (i) a third party beneficiary of this Agreement, (ii) entitled to the rights or benefits of this Agreement or the recognized service organization status granted hereunder or (iii) entitled to enforce the rights of the Organization under this Agreement.
- (l) **Commingle of Governance.** The Organization agrees that the governance of the Organization is not to be commingled with the governance of the LCMS, the Synod or of any agency thereof. Members of the board of directors or other governing body of the Organization that are simultaneously officers, board members, or employees of the LCMS or any LCMS or Synod agency shall disclose such participation in writing to the Board of Directors of Synod through the Office of the Secretary and certify that such participation is solely in that person's individual capacity and is not an *ex officio*, elected, or designated representative of the LCMS, the Synod or the agency served. Such participation must also be disclosed to the LCMS or agency served (LCMS Bylaw 1.5.2).
- (m) **Publications; Identification as RSO; Explanation of Status.** The Organization agrees to identify the organization as an RSO of the Synod generally, where appropriate, but especially when communicating with LCMS congregations and their members. The Organization agrees to take care in any correspondence, advertising, marketing, and other program materials that identify the Organization as an RSO of the Synod never to suggest that RSO status (i) constitutes an endorsement or guarantee of the fiscal solvency of the organization or of any of its services or programs or (ii) expresses or implies endorsement or guarantee of the fiscal solvency of the organization or any responsibility for or guarantee of the debts or other financial obligations of the Organization or its subsidiaries and/or affiliates by the LCMS. The Organization further agrees to make readily accessible Synod's explanatory material regarding the RSO program, principally by providing a prominent link to lcms.org/rso in association with any organizational website or significant publication identifying the Organization as an RSO of the Synod.
- (n) **Character of RSO Programs and Governance and Classification by LCMS.** The Organization understands that LCMS grants RSO status under a particular section of the LCMS Rules based on its understanding of the Organization's work and agrees to inform the LCMS in advance of contemplated changes in its programming or governance, including changes in the proportion of members of LCMS congregations on its governing board or in its executive leadership, with the same potentially requiring reevaluation of the Organization's classification under the recognized service organization program.

- (o) **Relation to Synod Members, Congregational and Individual.** The Organization agrees to respect the rights and obligations of Synod's members, individual and congregational, especially as relate to the call, service, and ecclesiastical supervision of church workers rostered by the LCMS, as elaborated in LCMS Bylaw 6.2.1 (b).
- (p) **Relation to Synod's Districts and Office of International Mission.** The Organization agrees to respect the authority of Synod's districts, especially as relates to ecclesiastical oversight by relevant district president(s), as elaborated in LCMS Bylaw 6.2.1 (c), to inform and seek the counsel of relevant district president(s) prior to engaging in new activities in their districts, and to inform, seek the counsel of, and cooperate with the LCMS Office of International Mission in its international work, respecting any protocol agreements between the LCMS and its partner churches, as elaborated in LCMS Bylaw 6.2.1 (e).
- (q) **Call of LCMS Rostered Ordained and Commissioned Ministers; Call-Related Disputes.** The Organization agrees that its board may extend an LCMS-recognized, regular call to ordained and commissioned workers of the Synod only as permitted and specified in LCMS Bylaw 6.2.2.2 and related policies, and that the Organization submits, as an exclusive remedy, to resolution of disputes arising under the divine call of such workers under the dispute resolution process of the LCMS.
- (r) **Scope and Change of Program Terms.** The Organization understands that RSO program requirements other than those stated explicitly in this Agreement may apply, as stated in the LCMS Rules attached as exhibits or as they may hereafter be amended. The Organization understands further that the LCMS and its responsible boards and offices can alter the terms of the RSO program at any time. The Organization agrees, upon notice of such change, to accept RSO program terms as modified or, should the Organization determine such terms to be unacceptable, to notify the LCMS promptly of its termination of this Agreement as described in Section 5.

SECTION 5. Effectiveness; Termination. This Agreement shall be effective upon the execution and delivery of this Agreement by all parties hereto and shall remain in full force and effect for a period of five (5) years thereafter unless terminated earlier as set forth in this Section. Either party hereto may, with or without cause, terminate this Agreement and all rights hereunder upon 30 days' written notice to the other party hereto. Upon the effective date of the termination of this Agreement, the Organization shall cease representing itself as a RSO of LCMS, including the use of any written, electronic, or other communications or written material and shall, upon request of the LCMS, execute documents to evidence such termination and return any materials in possession of the Organization reflecting status as an RSO.

SECTION 6. Laws. This Agreement will be governed by and construed in accordance with the laws of the State of Missouri.

SECTION 7. Notices. Except as otherwise provided herein, it shall be sufficient service of any notice, request, demand, authorization, direction, consent, waiver or other paper required or permitted by this Agreement to be made, given or furnished to or filed with the following persons, if the same shall be delivered by personal delivery, prepaid overnight delivery service, or certified mail, return receipt request, postage prepaid, or transmitted by electronic mail, at the addresses or electronic mail address listed on the signature page hereto. All notices given as aforesaid shall be deemed given on the day on which the same are hand delivered or sent by electronic mail, on the second day following the date on which the same have been mailed or on the day following the day on which the same are sent by overnight delivery service. Any party may from time to time designate, by notice given hereunder to the others or such parties, such other mailing or electronic mail address to which subsequent notices, certificates or other communications shall be sent.

SECTION 8. Miscellaneous. This Agreement inures to the benefit of, and shall be binding upon, the parties hereto and their respective permitted successors and assigns. Notwithstanding the foregoing, neither party hereto may assign this Agreement without the prior written consent of the other party hereto, which may be granted or withheld in the non-assigning party's sole and absolute discretion. This Agreement contains the entire agreement and understanding of the parties in respect to the subject matter hereof, and the same may not be amended, modified or discharged nor may any of its terms be waived except by an instrument in writing signed by the party to be bound thereby. This Agreement may be executed in any number of counterparts, each of which shall be deemed an original but all of which together shall constitute one and the same instrument. The transmission by facsimile or email of a signed counterpart of this Agreement, or the execution and transmission of this Agreement utilizing DocuSign, AdobeSign or a similar electronic signature program, to a party shall have the same binding effect as the hand delivery of an originally signed counterpart hereof. Time is of the essence in this Agreement. The preparation of this Agreement has been a joint effort of the parties and the resulting documents shall not, solely as a matter of judicial construction, be construed more severely against one of the parties than the other. All exhibits attached hereto are hereby incorporated herein by this reference.

[SIGNATURES ON FOLLOWING PAGE]



RECOGNIZED SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS AGREEMENT

Signature Page

THE LUTHERAN CHURCH—MISSOURI SYNOD RECOGNIZED SERVICE ORGANIZATION AGREEMENT

Office of the Secretary
1333 S. Kirkwood Road
St. Louis, MO 63122-7295
Phone: 800-248-1930
lcmssecretary@lcms.org

Organization: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

STATUS GRANTED TO THE ORGANIZATION SUBJECT TO LCMS RULES FOR A

[Witness, Educational, Mercy]
Service Organization (LCMS Bylaw 6.2.2).

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, this Agreement is entered into by the LCMS and the Organization as of the respective dates set forth below:

LCMS:

The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod:

By: _____

Name: _____

Title: _____

Date: _____

ORGANIZATION:

[Insert name of RSO]

By: _____

Name: _____

Title: _____

Date: _____



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THE LUTHERAN CHURCH—MISSOURI SYNOD RECOGNIZED SERVICE ORGANIZATION AGREEMENT

Office of the Secretary
1333 S. Kirkwood Road, St. Louis, MO 63122-7295
Phone: 800-248-1930 • lcmssecretary@lcms.org

Organization: _____
Address: _____

Phone: _____
Email: _____

STATUS GRANTED TO THE ORGANIZATION SUBJECT TO LCMS RULES FOR A

Service Organization (LCMS Bylaw 6.2.2).

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, this Agreement is entered into by the LCMS and the Organization as of the respective dates set forth below:

LCMS:

The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod: _____

By: _____

Name: _____

Title: _____

Date: _____

Signature: _____

ORGANIZATION:

By: _____

Name: _____

Title: _____

Date: _____

Signature: _____

The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod: _____

By: _____

Name: _____

Title: _____

Date: _____

Signature: _____

By: _____

Name: _____

Title: _____

Date: _____

Signature: _____