



# To Convene Task Force to Review Recognized Service Organization Program and Bylaws

## RESOLUTION 4-03B

### OVERTURE 4-03 (CW, PP. 329-330)

WHEREAS, The Synod has a lengthy history of recognizing the contributions made by service organizations as they fulfill the call to love our neighbors (Mark 12:31); and

WHEREAS, There are currently more than three hundred recognized service organizations in the program, including social service agencies, mission societies, camps, and schools; and

WHEREAS, The granting of recognized service organization (RSO) status by the Synod signifies that a service organization, “while independent of the Synod, fosters the mission and ministry of the church, engages in program activity that is in harmony with the programs of the boards of the Synod, and respects and does not act contrary to the doctrine and practice of the Synod” (Bylaw 6.2.1); and

WHEREAS, The needs of the Synod, the work of social service agencies, and the regulation and oversight by governmental agencies have all changed significantly over the 30-plus years of the program; and

WHEREAS, Concerns have been raised over the years by various constituencies within the LCMS, including program leadership and the Board of Directors, as to the objectives of the program and the current policies and procedures associated with the administration of the program; and

WHEREAS, Current state and federal laws may negatively impact an RSO’s ability to “not act contrary to the doctrine and practice of the Synod,” recent same-sex marriage rulings having serious implications for programs and services of RSOs especially in the areas of foster care, adoption, aging, and housing; and

WHEREAS, The LCMS desires and encourages its RSOs to live out their Lutheran identity in the services and programs they provide; and

WHEREAS, The RSO program is intended to benefit the church by contributing to its effectiveness in witness, mercy, and life together; and

WHEREAS, A thorough review of the RSO program was conducted in 2006-07 by Synod staff, which brought revision and improvement to the Synod process of recognition of RSOs; and

### TASK FORCE MEMBERS

**Rev. Kevin Robson**

*LCMS Chief Mission Officer\**

**Barbara Below**

*LCMS Office of the President representative*

**Rev. Bart Day**

*Lutheran Church Extension Fund*

**Ron Drews**

*president/CEO of Lutheran Social Services of Southern California*

**Rev. Dan Gilbert**

*LCMS Council of Presidents representative*

**Deaconess Dorothy Krans**

*director of LCMS Recognized Service Organizations*

**Rev. Dr. John Sias**

*Secretary of the Synod*

**Frank Simek**

*Chief Administrative Officer of the Synod*

**Rev. Max Phillips**

*executive director of Lutheran Family Service*

**\*Chairman**

WHEREAS, A review of the needs of the Synod, including the work of social service agencies; mission societies and other entities granted recognition status; the impact of government regulations and oversight; and a review of mutual benefits to the Synod and RSOs should be undertaken; therefore be it

*Resolved*, That the 2016 LCMS convention authorize the formation of a Recognized Service Organization (RSO) Task Force that is charged with the following responsibilities:

- Review and report on the original purpose and intent of the RSO program and its predecessors;
- Determine the needs of and benefits to the Synod with respect to the RSO program and identify the best model for the Synod to engage with organizations which foster the mission and ministry of the church and who engage in programs that are in harmony with the programs of the Synod;
- Recommend changes to the RSO program, and/or the elimination of the program, and/or replacement of the current RSO program with a new relationship model that provides benefit to the Synod and the social service agency, and/or develop and recommend other solutions;
- Recommend appropriate changes to the LCMS Bylaws, as needed; and
- Ensure that all recommendations maintain the important relationships with the agencies that are recognized by the LCMS, foster the mission and ministry of the church, engage in program activity that is in harmony with programs of the Synod, and respect and not act contrary to the doctrine and practice of the Synod.

and be it further

*Resolved*, That the task force begin work immediately following this convention, and that the members of this task force be the Secretary of the Synod, the Chief Mission Officer, the Chief Administrative Officer, the executive director of the Office of National Mission, the director of the RSO program, a representative from the Office of the President, a representative of the Council of Presidents appointed by its chairman, and the chief executive officers of two or more RSOs selected by the task force; and be it further

*Resolved*, That the task force engage with Concordia Plan Services and the Lutheran Church Extension Fund, as well as other entities and RSOs from each of the five regions of Synod; and be it finally

*Resolved*, That the task force make its first report and recommendations to the Synod Board of Directors and the President of the Synod by August 1, 2018, with a final report, recommendations, and possible bylaw changes to be presented to the 2019 LCMS convention.

**Action:** Adopted (9)

(During discussion, a motion to amend the resolution by adding a clinical pastoral educated chaplain to the membership of the proposed task force was, after response by the committee, withdrawn. When the assembly indicated it was ready to vote, Res. 4-03B was adopted as presented [Yes: 742; No: 57].)

