CONVENTION WORKBOOK
REPORTS AND OVERTURES 2019

The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod
Tampa, FL • July 20–25, 2019
Greetings in Christ Jesus! These pages contain reports and overtures, as well as the elected voting and advisory representation of the congregations and advisory members of the Synod, for the 67th Regular Convention of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, which is to be held in Tampa, Florida, July 20–25, 2019. Please give them all your careful attention. The theme for the convention is “Joy:fully Lutheran—Rejoice. Pray. Give Thanks.” This reminds us of Paul’s encouragement to the Thessalonians in 1 Thess. 5:16–18, a gem of a passage in a whole chapter and book deserving our careful attention. For as this Workbook may come to you in the midst of other concerns and may mean “just more work to do,” so Paul’s word of encouragement comes to those who sorely need it—and who have much work to do in great faith.

“As to the times and seasons, brothers, you have no need to have anything written to you” (1 Thess. 5:1). But the truth is, even in the midst of the great challenges of our age, there is joy in work if it is done in the Lord. We can rejoice even in the tremendous work of a convention, if it moves our Synod along in faithfulness to His Word and together toward the consummation of His promise of a great reaping if we do not give up (Gal. 6:9). There is prayer in work, too, as Luther recalls in his A Simple Way to Pray: “He who works, prays twice.” As we gather in the fear and love of God to focus our Synod on His work—trusting that as we not only conserve and promote the unity of the one faith but also together give it bold witness by word and deed before the world (LCMS Constitution, Art. III 1, 2), He will surely bless—does not this make all of life, even a convention, if done so, the most holy prayer and sacrifice of praise? And there is thankfulness in good work done together, as communities across the heartland are now doing, where the floods have brought the fruitful plain again to a formless, muddy void, to restore life together and rich provision. The Lord gives to our labors done in faith the ability to accomplish what is humanly impossible—even the salvation of souls in repentance and the forgiveness of sins—and for that we give thanks. Our weary churches face such challenges in many places, and have joined the Synod to have help, counsel, encouragement, and strengthening through the unity of Spirit in the bond of peace. May the Lord Jesus establish the works of our hands in convention as He does there, that a great people may come forth thankful, prayerful, rejoicing.

Delegates will note a diversity of impressions and even contested facts among some of the overtures. The President has, out of respect for submitters who have taken care to participate even if not with full knowledge or information, taken a light hand in his assigned task of culling overtures which might be “materially in error” or containing “apparent misrepresentation” (Bylaw 3.1.6.2 [c]). Ultimately, all submitted by the deadline have been published. Publication does not attest veracity of every detail; the committees and delegates must “weigh all things and hold fast to the good” (1 Thess. 5:21). The convention is the place for elected delegates to address forthrightly concerns and disagreements in the Synod. Let us only do that in the fear of God and the love of one another, following “the example of the apostolic church. Acts 15:1–31” and in keeping with “our Lord’s will that the diversities of gifts should be for the common profit. 1 Cor. 12:4–31” (LCMS Constitution, Preamble).

Convention floor committees, listed in the prefatory material of this volume, will be meeting in St. Louis May 31–June 3, 2019. Any member of the Synod (congregation, commissioned or ordained minister) or any lay delegate may offer any comment to any of the floor committees regarding the content of reports and overtures by sending a letter to me at this address: Office of the Secretary, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod; 1333 S. Kirkwood Road; St. Louis, MO 63122. Such letters must be sent at least nine weeks prior to the convention (May 18, 2019) to allow time for forwarding to the appropriate committee.

Another book, the Biographical Synopses and Statements of Nominees, contains information delegates will need to prepare for the elections to take place at the convention. Its preface explains its contents.


“Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.” 1 Thess. 5:16–18

John W. Sias, Secretary and Editor
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UNDER SEPARATE COVER
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Florida-Georgia District

REGISTERED DELEGATES AND REPRESENTATIVES

**Voting Ordained**

Brown, Timothy C; 6545 Hidden Beach Circle, Orlando, FL 32819
Burtzlaff, Paul Steven; 10130 Yacht Club Dr, Treasure Island, FL 33706
Durante, Kenneth Anthony; 4150 NW 10th St, Delray Beach, FL 33445
Gebremichael, Hiryu Bereket; 2110 Brockett Rd, Tucker, GA 30084
Glover, John E; 7964 SW 54th Ln, Gainesville, FL 32608
Green, Kenneth D; 2499 Ridgemoor Dr, Orlando, FL 32828
Kanefke, Charles J; 1306 SE 19th Ln, Cape Coral, FL 33990
Kollmann, Christopher John; 2511 Langrove Ln, Vero Beach, FL 32966
Le Sueur, Gregory Michael; 7511 N Atlantic Ave, Cape Canaveral, FL 32920
Michael, Gregory C; 1010 S Lumpkin St, Athens, GA 30605
Poock, Patrick Wayne; 9608 US Hwy 301 N, Parrish, FL 34219
Putnam, Vincent W; C/O Trinity Lutheran Church 400 N Swinton Ave, Delray Beach, FL 33444
Richter, Thomas; 6150 SW 9th St, Miami, FL 33155
Wenndt, Thomas R; 11447 Tee Time Cir, New Port Richey, FL 34653
Warnke, Joseph Matthew; 7516 Watson Cir, Locust Grove, GA 31024
Sanford, John; 11026 Lamplighter Rd, New Smyrna Beach, FL 32169
Smith, Chad L; 1631 Columbia Ave, Fort Wayne, IN 46805
Osbun, Michael; 3996 Waterloo Ave, Toledo, OH 43606
Stock, Donald Edward; 765 E 3rd Ave, West Melton, IN 46796
Thackery, Nicholas J; 1464 21st Ave N, Fort Dodge, IA 50501
Wright, John S; 1803 E 2nd St, Ankeny, IA 50023
**Advisory Ordained**

Biel, Ronald D; 1651 Golden Ridge Dr, The Villages, FL 32162
Glick, Dennis W; 3894 Candlewood Blvd, Boca Raton, FL 33437
Kleiss, Samuel; 314 Eldora Rd, Hudson, IN 46947
Kollmann, Christopher John; 2511 Langrove Ln, Vero Beach, FL 32966
Stuckwisch, Jeffrey L; 1501 Gaiser Dr, Seymour, IN 47274
Luthy, John J; 910 Blairs Ferry Rd, Marion, IA 52302
Monson, Daniel; 910 Blairs Ferry Rd, Marion, IA 52302
Rich, Robert E; 11026 Lamplighter Rd, New Smyrna Beach, FL 32169
Schewe, Karl; 910 Blairs Ferry Rd, Marion, IA 52302

**Voting Lay**

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Boshoven, Richard L; 7590 Marshall St, Merrillville, IN 46410
Dehning, K C; 422 9th St, Logansport, IN 46947
Eickels, Chad M; 2008 Joyce Ave, Evansville, IN 47714
Jonker, Shayne Michael; 5101 W 1000 N, Huntington, IN 46750
Kuhlman, Patrick J; PO Box 188, Avilla, IN 46710
Lorenz, Timothy Jacob; 657 Polk St, Huntington, IN 46752
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Osborn, Michael Joshua; 6635 State Road 331, Bremen, IN 46506
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Punke, Douglas D; 6114 Hunter Wood Dr, Fort Wayne, IN 46835
Schneider, Matthew L; 1417 S Bloomington St, Greencastle, IN 46135
Smith, Chad L; 1631 Columbia Ave, Fort Wayne, IN 46805
Stock, Donald Edward; 765 E 3rd Ave, West Melton, IN 46796
Wright, John S; 1803 E 2nd St, Ankeny, IA 50023

**Advisory Ordained**

Alexander, Brian; 35207 Harbor Shores Rd, Leesburg, FL 34788
Anderson, Fred R; 918 Abeto St NE, Palm Bay, FL 32905
Aaker, Paul; 201 18th St, Burlington, WI 53105
Bose, John; 3504 N 3rd St, Des Moines, IA 50310
Crawford, Jonathon Thomas; 2365 Fulton St, Dubuque, IA 52001
Davies, David; 3510 Franklin Rd, Des Moines, IA 50310
Graham, Charles; 301 W 3rd St, Burlington, IA 52601
Hansen, David Lee; 526 Rosedale Dr, Center Point, IA 52213
Halverson, David L; 7520 N 9th St, Des Moines, IA 50313
Henderson, John; 320 H St, Burlington, IA 52601
Kaminsk, Richard; 3401 N 2nd St, Des Moines, IA 50310
Leuenberger, John; 3504 N 3rd St, Des Moines, IA 50310

**Voting Lay**

Voting Ordained

Brown, Timothy C; 6545 Hidden Beach Circle, Orlando, FL 32819
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Wright, John S; 1803 E 2nd St, Ankeny, IA 50023

**Advisory Ordained**

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Kollmann, Christopher John; 2511 Langrove Ln, Vero Beach, FL 32966
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Monson, Daniel; 910 Blairs Ferry Rd, Marion, IA 52302
Rich, Robert E; 11026 Lamplighter Rd, New Smyrna Beach, FL 32169
Schewe, Karl; 910 Blairs Ferry Rd, Marion, IA 52302
Schuster, Ellen G; 240 1/2 E Pleasant St, Davenport, IA 52803
Smith, Craig; 205 Island View Dr, Waverly, IA 50677
Swales, James A; 224 Valley Dr, Center Point, IA 52213
Wesner, David K; 59022 Irish Rd, Prairie Du Chien, WI 53821
Zoske, Roger D; 217 W Cedar, Hubbard, IA 50122

**Voting Lay**

Advisory Ordained

Johnson, Daniel Scott; 2905 Cooper Ln, Marshalltown, IA 50158
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Southern District

Voting Ordained

Angerman, Melvin Ray; 206 Devon Ct, Ft Walton Beach, FL 32547
Ansong, Bernard; 2000 Joseph Cir NE, Huntsville, AL 35811
Beane, Larry L II; 6214th St, Gretna, LA 70053
Boltz, Louis Alfred; 11143 Martin Ln, Tickfaw, LA 70466
Culver, Perry A; 3440 Beverly Pl, Shreveport, LA 71105
Ferritta, Patrick Daniel; 2831 Valley Crest Rd, Tuscaloosa, AL 35405
Garnett, James Lee; 7980 Ocean Springs Rd, Ocean Springs, MS 39594
Manning, Gregory T; 11 Marlborough Gate Pl Apt F, New Orleans, LA 70115
Miller, Wayne John; 10028 Briarclif Dr S, Mobile, AL 36608
Thies, Daniel E; 5733 Loring Dr, Milton, FL 32583

Voting Lay

Arams, Katherine L; 3312 Crestaire Dr, Baton Rouge, LA 70814
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Clark, Benjamin; 4212 Mary Ann Ln, Lake Charles, LA 70605
George, Patricia; 17 Martin Cir, Damden, AL 36726
Hartman, Kendall P; 40 Box 52, Park City, MT 59663
Keyl, Mark D; 2 Redfin Trl, Perul, MS 38465
Lester, Gerald; 4520 Young St, Metairie, LA 70006
Ninke, Laurie D; 903 Bellemere St SW, Hartselle, AL 35640
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Schwarz, Paul; 310 Creek Dr, Fairhope, AL 36532

Advisory Commissioned

Wiese, Curtis J I Meigs Dr, Shalimar, FL 32579

Southeastern District

Voting Ordained

Ball, Benjamin T; 4069 W Frontage Rd, Verdon, ID 82097
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Hojnacki, Scott E; 10241 S Prairie Rd, Red Bud, IL 62278
Miller, Walter G; 503 E Washington St, Millstadt, IL 62260
Mueller, Timothy P; 15516 State Route 127, Nashville, IL 62263
Praun, Christen Edward; 22089 E 19th Rd, Nokomis, IL 62075
Richardt, Matthew M; 106 S 42nd St, Mount Vernon, IL 62864
Smith, Sean Rolly; 11854 Vine Hill Rd, Steeleville, IL 62888
Wright, Kyle James I; 1786 Camden Oak Dr, Maryville, IL 62062

Voting Lay

Ainslie, Raymond A; 8911 Huey Rd, Centralia, IL 62801
Barringer, Larry L; 2 Kensington Ct, Edwardsville, IL 62025
Cramer, Bryce I; 1 Lockard Ln, Murphyboro, IL 62966
Holcomb, Sharon F; 449 Florida Dr, East Alton, IL 62024
Koch, Dennis J; 111 Michael St, Nashville, IL 62263
Miller, Marilyn G; 18 Brighten Dr, Belleville, IL 62221
Piel, David P; 8841 Baldwin Rd, Baldwin, IL 62217
Miller, Marc G; 18 Brighton Dr, Belleville, IL 62221
Koch, Dennis J; 111 Michael St, Nashville, IL 62263
Holcomb, Sharon F; 449 Florida Dr, East Alton, IL 62024
Koch, Dennis J; 111 Michael St, Nashville, IL 62263
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Piel, David P; 8841 Baldwin Rd, Baldwin, IL 62217
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Koch, Dennis J; 111 Michael St, Nashville, IL 62263
Miller, Marilyn G; 18 Brighten Dr, Belleville, IL 62221
### REGISTERED DELEGATES AND REPRESENTATIVES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Representative(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Concordia University Chicago, River Forest, IL</td>
<td>Gard, Daniel L, River Forest, IL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Board of Regents</td>
<td>Hiller, Eric Arno, Chicago, IL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District President</td>
<td>Buss, Allan R, Hillside, IL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty</td>
<td>Pederson, Andrew Joel, Berkeley, IL</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Concordia University, Irvine, CA | President | Krueger, Kurt J, Irvine, CA |
| Board of Regents | Olson, Craig W, Orange, CA |
| District President | Gibson, Michael E, Irvine, CA |
| Faculty | Duport, Rebecca Hirsch, Irvine, CA; Mueller, Steven P, Irvine, CA |

| Concordia University Nebraska, Seward, NE | President | Friedrich, Brian L, Seward, NE |
| Board of Regents | Schwam, Timothy T, Appleton, WI |
| District President | Snow, Richard L, Seward, NE |
| Faculty | Jurchen, John Clement, Seward, NE |

| Concordia University, Portland, OR | President | Driessner, Johnnie Ray, Portland, OR |
| Board of Regents | Gerken, Charles, Scottsdale, AZ |
| District President | Linnemann, Paul Arthur, Portland, OR |
| Faculty | Mueller, Paul Walter, Portland, OR |

| Concordia University, St Paul, MN | President | Ries, Thomas K, St Paul, MN |
| Board of Regents | Moknes, Mark, Chanhassen, MN |
| District President | Woodford, Lucas V, Burnsville, MN |
| Faculty | Lumpp, David A, St Paul, MN |

| Concordia University Texas, Austin, TX | President | Christian, Donald A, Austin, TX |
| Board of Regents | Bannwolf, Christopher J, San Antonio, TX |
| District President | Newman, Michael W, San Antonio, TX |
| Faculty | Kirk, Kristi, Austin, TX |

| Concordia University Wisconsin, Mequon, WI, and Ann Arbor, MI | President | Ferry, Patrick T, Mequon, WI |
| Board of Regents | Donovan, Terry, Marietta, GA |
| District President | Wille, John C, Milwaukee, WI |
| Faculty | Young, Michael Edward, Mequon, WI |

### Seminaries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Seminary</th>
<th>President</th>
<th>District President</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Concordia Seminary, St Louis, MO</td>
<td>Meyer, Dale A, St Louis, MO</td>
<td>Hagan, Robert Lee, St Louis, MO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, IN</td>
<td>Rast, Lawrence Robert Jr, Fort Wayne, IN</td>
<td>Bege, Daniel J, Decatur, IN</td>
</tr>
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</table>

### SYNOD ENTITY REPRESENTATIVES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Entity</th>
<th>President/Chief Executive Officer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Concordia Plan Services</td>
<td>Sanft, James F, St Louis, MO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concordia University System</td>
<td>Wenthe, Dean Orrin, Fort Wayne, IN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concordia Historical Institute</td>
<td>Woodruff, Daniel J, Iowa City, IA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concordia Publishing House</td>
<td>Kintz, Bruce G, St Louis, MO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LCMS Foundation</td>
<td>Fiedler, David W, St Louis, MO</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### FOREIGN MISSION AREA REPRESENTATIVES

- Ferry, Charles D — Asia
- Krey, Theodore M R — Latin America
- Krikava, James Alton — Eurasia
- Schulte, Gary R — West and Central Africa
- Trump, Shauen Thomas — East and South Africa

### MILITARY CHAPLAIN REPRESENTATIVES

- Genke, Quentin M — US Air Force
- Rupe, Ryan R — US Navy
- Shaw, Jonathan — US Army

### DISTRICT BOARD OF DIRECTORS REPRESENTATIVES

- Atlantic District
- District Executive Staff: Haake, John C, Milwaukee, WI

- California/Nevada/Hawaii District
- District Executive Staff: Smith, Aaron Rosales, Sunnyvale, CA

- Central Illinois District
- District Executive Staff: Schub, Ken R, Springfield, IL

- Eastern District
- District Executive Staff: McNabb, Stuart L, Philadelphia, PA

- English District
- District Executive Staff: Mathers, Derek, Toronto, ON

- Florida-Georgia District
- District Executive Staff: Flanders, Jack, Atlanta, GA

- Indiana District
- District Executive Staff: Klotz, Karl, Bloomington, IN

- Iowa West District
- District Executive Staff: Ramm, Todd, Des Moines, IA

- Kansas District
- District Executive Staff: West, David D, Topeka, KS

- Kentucky District
- District Executive Staff: Ramm, Todd, Des Moines, IA

- Louisiana District
- District Executive Staff: Hahn, Robert, Baton Rouge, LA

- Michigan District
- District Executive Staff: Timmer, John, Kalamazoo, MI

- Minnesota District
- District Executive Staff: Tolzin, Barry, Minneapolis, MN

- Missouri District
- District Executive Staff: Estes, Tom, Columbia, MO

- Montana District
- District Executive Staff: Berg, Todd, Billings, MT

- Nebraska District
- District Executive Staff: Zietlow, John, Lincoln, NE

- New Hampshire District
- District Executive Staff: Klotz, Karl, Manchester, NH

- New Mexico District
- District Executive Staff: Zietlow, John, Tijeras, NM

- New York District
- District Executive Staff: Bildfell, John, New York, NY

- North Dakota District
- District Executive Staff: Fink, Jack, Fargo, ND

- Ohio District
- District Executive Staff: Klotz, Karl, Columbus, OH

- Oklahoma District
- District Executive Staff: Estes, Tom, Oklahoma City, OK

- Oregon District
- District Executive Staff: Bildfell, John, Portland, OR

- Pennsylvania District
- District Executive Staff: Zietlow, John, Harrisburg, PA

- South Dakota District
- District Executive Staff: Zietlow, John, Sioux Falls, SD

- Tennessee District
- District Executive Staff: Hahn, Robert, Nashville, TN

- Texas District
- District Executive Staff: West, David D, Austin, TX

- Utah District
- District Executive Staff: Zietlow, John, Salt Lake City, UT

- Virginia District
- District Executive Staff: Zietlow, John, Richmond, VA

- West Virginia District
- District Executive Staff: Zietlow, John, Charleston, WV

- Wisconsin District
- District Executive Staff: Zietlow, John, Milwaukee, WI

- Wyoming District
- District Executive Staff: Zietlow, John, Cheyenne, WY
REGISTERED DELEGATES AND REPRESENTATIVES

Missouri District
District Board of Directors
McDonnell, Ruth Erzcka, St Louis, MO

District Executive Staff
Freeman, Alan L, Saint Charles, MO

Montana District
District Board of Directors
Hartman, Kendall R, Park City, MT

South Dakota District
District Board of Directors
Olson, Darren Roger, Sioux Falls, SD

Southeastern District
District Executive Staff
Hiller, Sally Jane, Bowie, MD

Southern Illinois District
District Board of Directors
Bergelin, Daniel L, Howards Grove, WI

District Executive Staff
Cody, Christopher B, Milwaukee, WI

South Dakota District
District Board of Directors
Olson, Darren Roger, Sioux Falls, SD

District Executive Staff
Siekmann, Jeffrey A, Brookings, SD

South Dakota District
District Executive Staff
Olson, Darren Roger, Sioux Falls, SD

District Executive Staff
Siekmann, Jeffrey A, Brookings, SD

Texas District
District Board of Directors
Krueger, Larry G, Waco, TX

District Executive Staff
Fick, Jeffrey A, Belleville, IL

Wyoming District
District Board of Directors
Cain, Paul J Jr, Sheridan, WY

DISTRICT YOUTH REPRESENTATIVES

Atlantic District
Lecakes, Brynn, Bayside, NY

C. Staff and Guests

INTERNATIONAL CENTER AND CONVENTION STAFF AND SERVICES

Audio/Visual
Engelbert, William F III, Collinsville, IL

Grimpo, Phil, Lincoln, NE

Church Relations
Storkson, Darin, St Louis, MO

2019 Convention Workbook
Treasurer's Office
Stroh, Ross, St Louis, MO
Wulf, Jerald C, St Louis, MO

Worship
Bowers, Sandra J, St Louis, MO
Hildebrand, Kevin J, Fort Wayne, IN
Magness, Phillip A, High Ridge, MO
Weedon, William C, St Louis, MO

Essayists
Egger, Thomas, St Louis, MO
Hoem, Joseph T, Murphyboro, IL
Martens, Gottfried, Berlin, Germany
Muehler, Herbert C, Waterloo, IL

International Lutheran Laymen's League
Buchholz, Kurt S, St Louis, MO

LCMS Presidents Emeritus
Kieschnick, Gerald B, Georgetown, TX
Kuhn, Robert T, Oviedo, FL

Lutheran Services in America
Haberaecker, Charlotte, Washington, DC

Preachers
Eger, Christopher S, Alexandria, VA
Harrison, Matthew C, St Louis, MO
Lange, Peter K, Topeka, KS
Murray, Scott R, Houston, TX
Nour, Nabil S, Sioux Falls, SD
Preus, Daniel, St Louis, MO
Seltz, Gregory, Washington, DC
Seying, Laokouxang, St Louis, MO
Weibl, John C, Saint Francis, WI
Zagore, Robert M, St Louis, MO

OTHER CHURCH BODIES

Confessional Lutheran Church of South Africa
Khumalo, Mandla

Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus
Adugna, Tsegahun
Amenu, Teshome

Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania
Makala, Emmanuel Joseph

Evangelical Lutheran Church of Ghana
Donkoh, John Shadrack

Evangelical Lutheran Church of Latvia
Vanags, Janis

Evangelical Lutheran Church of Liberia
Boray, Amos

Evangelical Lutheran Diocese in Norway
With, Thor Henrik

Evangelical Lutheran Free Church in Denmark
Jensen, Leif G

Evangelical Lutheran Mission Diocese of Finland
Pohjola, Juhana
Soramies, Risto

Gutnius Lutheran Church
Peter, Ezekiel

India Evangelical Lutheran Church
Muthu, Swasheka

Lutheran Church—Canada
Teasheer, Timothy

Lutheran Church of Guatemala
Orozco, Abdiel

Lutheran Church in Africa—Synod of Benin
Legbanon, Patrice

Lutheran Church in Africa—Synod of Burundi
Mbunde, Fidele

Lutheran Church of Australia
Smith, Paul

Lutheran Church of South Sudan
Long, Joran M

Lutheran Church of the Republic of China (Taiwan)
Chen, Ray

Lutheran Church of Uganda
Bameka, Charles I

Malagasy Lutheran Church (Madagascar)
Rakotomirina, Dadad

Mission Province in Sweden
Gustafsson, Roland

Portuguese Evangelical Lutheran Church
Hiller, Adalberto

South Sudan Evangelical Lutheran Church
Bel, Nathaniel

The American Association of Lutheran Churches
Liens, Curtis, Fort Wayne, IN

Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod
Huebner, James, Waukesha, WI

GUESTS
Concordia Publishing House
Schultz, Jonathan D, St Louis, MO

OTHER CHURCH BODIES

Confessional Lutheran Church of South Africa
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Muehler, Herbert C, Waterloo, IL

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Kuhn, Robert T, Oviedo, FL

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Lange, Peter K, Topeka, KS
Murray, Scott R, Houston, TX
Nour, Nabil S, Sioux Falls, SD
Preus, Daniel, St Louis, MO
Seltz, Gregory, Washington, DC
Seying, Laokouxang, St Louis, MO
Weibl, John C, Saint Francis, WI
Zagore, Robert M, St Louis, MO
CONVENTION FLOOR COMMITTEES

Floor committees are appointed by the President in consultation with the Council of Presidents and Praesidium (Bylaw 3.1.7). Appointments are made from among the voting delegates, advisory delegates, and advisory representatives (Bylaw 3.1.7 [a]).

KEY TO ABBREVIATIONS:
C = Chairman; VC = Vice Chairman; SVP = Synod Vice-President; DP = District President; VOM = Voting Delegate Ordained Minister; VL = Voting Delegate Layperson; ACM = Advisory Delegate or Representative Ordained Minister; AOM = Advisory Delegate or Representative Commissioned Minister; AL = Advisory Delegate or Representative Layperson.

DISTRICT ABBREVIATIONS:
AT = Atlantic; CI = Central Illinois; CNH = California-Nevada-Hawaii; EA = Eastern; EN = English; FG = Florida-Georgia; IE = Iowa East; IN = Indiana; IW = Iowa West; KS = Kansas; MI = Michigan; MDS = Mid-South; MNN = Minnesota North; MNS = Minnesota South; MO = Missouri; MT = Montana; ND = North Dakota; NEB = Nebraska; NE = New England; NI = Northern Illinois; NJ = New Jersey; NOW = Northwest; NW = North Wisconsin; OH = Ohio; OK = Oklahoma; PSW = Pacific Southwest; RM = Rocky Mountain; SD = South Dakota; SE = Southeastern; SELC = SELC; SI = Southern Illinois; SO = Southern; SW = South Wisconsin; TX = Texas; WY = Wyoming.

Committee 1: National Witness
C: DP: Lee Hagan (MO); VC: SVP: Christopher Egger (SE); DP: Paul Linnemann (NOW); Anthony Steinbronn (NJ); VOM: Kevin Karner (NE); Bruce Lucas (MI); Richard Woelmer (IN); VL: Mark Bartlett (PSW); Dennis Patschke (TX); AOM: Steven Brief (MNS); Ernie Lassman (NOW); ACM: Connie Soso-Gomes (MDS).

Committee 2: International Witness
C: DP: Peter Lange (KS); VC: DP: Roger Schlechte (RM); SVP: Daniel Preus (MO); VOM: Bruce Scarrowy (CI); VL: Stephen Hernandez (TX); Gene Valet (MO); James Wolf (EN); AOM: Daniel Johnson (IE); Theodore Krey (EN); ACM: David Fiala (MO).

Committee 3: Mercy
C: DP: Jamison Hardy (EN); VC: DP: Eric Johnson (SO); DP: Derek Lecakes (AT); VOM: Everett Greene (OH); Preston Paul (NW); VL: Alexander Clark (MI); Steven Timmerman (SD); Mark Wamakap (PSW); AOM: Paul Cain (WI); ACM: Remke Ockander (NEB).

Committee 4: Life Together
C: DP: Allan Buss (NJ); VC: DP: Arie Bertsch (ND); DP: Michael Gibson (PSW); VOM: Mark Love (OH); Daniel Ognoskie (IE); VL: Larry Barringer (SI); Virginia Collison (NOW); ACM: Donald Schult (NW).

Committee 5: Theology and Church Relations
C: DP: Scott Murray (TX); VC: DP: Brian Saunders (IE); DP: David Maier (MI); VOM: James Douthawte (SELC); Adam Koontz (EN); VL: Clara Ball (MI); Stephen Jarvis (MT); Joshua Miller (MNS); Terry Miller (EA); AOM: Lawrence Rast (IN); Richard Serina (NJ); ACM: John Wilke (OK); Roland Ziegler (IN); ACM: David Buchholz (MO).

Committee 6: Pastoral Ministry and Seminaries
C: DP: John Hill (WY); VC: DP: Daniel Bege (IN); SVP: Nabil Nour (SD); VOM: Gregory Cooper (MNN); VL: J Justin Benson (MNS); Paul Edmon (NE); Earl Elowski (MI); AOM: Edward Kettner (KS); Max Phillips (MNS); ACM: Tiffany Manor (NE); AL: Leo Mackay (SE).

Committee 7: University Education
C: DP: Timothy Scharr (SI); VC: DP: Lucas Woodford (MNS); SVP: John Wohlrabe (SW); VOM: George Kirkup (AT); VL: Dominic Salvino (NI); Richard Schaefer (AT); Mark Stern (NI); AOM: Patrick Ferry (SW); ACM: Janet Muth (SI); AL: Gerhard Mundinger (IN); Christian Preus (MNS).

Committee 8: Finance
C: DP: Mark Miller (CI); VC: DP: Steve Turner (IW); DP: Richard Snow (NEB); VOM: Scott Klemsz (CNH); Bradley Stoltenow (RM); Daniel Thies (SO); VL: Daniel Buman (NEB); Dean Mustonen (MNN); Stanton Ullerich (IW); ACM: Louise Weber (FG).

Committee 9: Structure and Administration
C: DP: Donald Fondow (MNN); VC: DP: Timothy Yeadon (NE); DP: Michael Lange (CNH); Waldemar Vinovskis (SELC); VOM: Benjamin Ball (SI); John Berg (SW); VL: Elmer Lemkuhler (MO); Vernon Nelson (NEB); ACM: Daniel Galchutt (KS); ACM: Wendy Morris (MO); AL: Eric Hiller (NJ).

Committee 10: Ecclesiastical Supervision and Dispute Resolution
C: DP: John Wille (SW); VC: DP: Dwayne Lueck (NW); DP: Barric Henke (OK); VOM: James DeLoach (NEB); Roger Gallup (NI); Michael Holmen (IE); Arthur Littke (EA); VL: Timothy Hanusa (MDS); John Lang (OH); Jared Piepkorn (RM); ACM: Ruth Otten (NI).

Committee 11: Church and Culture
C: DP: Terry Forke (MT); VC: DP: Michael Newman (TX); DP: Gregory Walton (FG); VOM: Jason Bredesen (CNH); Timothy Mueller (SI); Michael Schuermann (CI); VL: Harry Reinhardt (SE); Bruce Schultz (KS); ACM: Adele Totak (SW).

Committee 12: Retention: Schools, Family, Young Adults, and Youth
C: DP: Roger Paavola (MDS); VC: DP: Kevin Wilson (OH); DP: John Denninger (SE); VOM: Jared Melius (RM); Tab Ottmers (TX); Heath Trampe (NEB); VL: Gladys Brown (SO); Kevin Fredrickson (KS); Christian Moen (MT); ACM: Christopher Cody (SW); Alan Freeman (MO); Rhonda Mohr (IW).

Committee 13: Registrations, Credentials, and Elections
C: DP: Scott Sailer (SD); VC: DP: Chris Wicher (EA); DP: Timothy Ahlman (PSW); Donald Anthony (SE); Charles Henriksson (MO); VL: John Riley (ND); Rhoda Reilly (FG); ACM: Samantha Brown (MI); Sarah Elliott (NOW).

Committee for Convention Nominations
(Legend: C = Chairman; VC = Vice-Chairman; S = Secretary; DP = District President; O = Ordained Minister; L = Layperson.)
C: Soft: Benjamin Ball (SI); VC: L: Gregg Hein (MT); S: DP: Chris Wicher (EA); O: Mark Brandt (MI); Jared Melius (RM); John Dieffenthaler (SE); John Rasmussen (NE); Timothy Rehwoldt (MNN); Joshua Reimche (ND); L: Rick Crain (EN); C.J. Cross (KS); Carl Hinderer (OH); Patricia Kym (TX); Catherine O’Donnell (SW); William Schmidt (NJ); Linda Stoterau (PSW); Larry Zehnder (MDS).

Bylaw 3.2.5 Committee
Benjamin Ball (SI); Patricia Kym (TX); John Rasmussen (NE).
DIRECTORY—OFFICERS, BOARDS, AND COMMISSIONS OF THE SYNOD

ELECTED SYNOD OFFICERS

President
Matthew C Harrison (2019)

First Vice-President
Herbert C Mueller Jr (2019)

Second Vice-President
Scott R Murray, West-Southwest Region (2019)

Third Vice-President
Nabil S Nour, Great Plains Region (2019)

Fourth Vice-President
John C Wehrhafe Jr, Great Lakes Region (2019)

Fifth Vice-President
Daniel Pres, Central Region (2019)

Sixth Vice-President
Christopher S Eget, East-Southeast Region (2019)

SECRETARY
John W Sias (2019)

APPOINTED SYNOD OFFICERS

Chief Administrative Officer
Frank Simek

Chief Financial Officer
Jerald C Wulf

Chief Mission Officer
Kevin D Robson

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

OFFICERS
Chairman
Michael L Kumm (2022)
Vice-Chairman
Ed H Everts (2022)
Secretary
John W Sias (2019)

ORDAINED MEMBERS
Matthew C Harrison, ex officio (2019)
John W Sias, ex officio (2019)
Michael L Kumm (2022)
Josemon Hoem (2022)

COMMISSIONED MEMBER
Kurt Senske (2019)

LAY MEMBERS
Edwin H Everts (2022)
Christian Preus (2019)

Central Region
Kathy Schulz (2019)

East-Southeast Region
Keith Frindak (2022)

Great Lakes Region
James W Carter Jr (2022)

Great Plains Region
Larry W Harrington (2022)

West-Southwest Region
Gloria S Edwards (2019)

NONVOTING MEMBER
Herbert C Mueller Jr, ex officio (2019)

ADVISORY
Chief Mission Officer
Kevin D Robson
Chief Administrative Officer
Frank Simek
Chief Financial Officer
Jerald C Wulf

LEGAL COUNSEL
Thompson Coburn LLP

COUNCIL OF PRESIDENTS
Chairman
David P E Maier (2021)
Vice Chairman
Richard L Snow (2021)
Secretary
Peter K Lange (2021)

Program Committee
Donald J Fendow (2021)
Peter K Lange (2021)
David P E Maier (2021)
Scott C Sailer (2021)
Richard L Snow (2021)
Matthew C Harrison (2019)
Herbert C Mueller Jr (2019)
John W Sias (2019)

COMMISSIONS

Commission on Constitutional Matters (CCM)
Chairman
George J Gude (2022)
Gerdah Bode (2022)
Thomas J Deadrick (2019)
R Neely Owen (2022)
Larry A Peters (2019)

Secretary, ex officio
John W Sias (2019)

Commission on Doctrinal Review (CDR)
Chairman
John T Pless (2019)
Walter A Maer III (2019)
Naomi Masaki (2019)
Steven P Mueller (2019)
Paul R Raabe (2019)

Commission on Handbook (COH)
Chairman
Dale L Sattgast (2022)
David W Totsky (2022)
Hindi Abegg (2022)
David Hawk (2019)
Richard T Nuffer (2019)

Secretary
Frank Simek

Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR)
Chairman
Lawrence R Rast Jr (2019)
Kenneth E Balsters (2019)
Andrew H Bartelt (2019)
James G Buslar (2019)
Robert A Dargatz (2019)
Thomas J Egger (2019)
Carl Fickenscher II (2019)
Jeffrey A Gibbs (2019)
Timothy D Hudy (2022)
Jack Kulkerse (2022)
Jeffrey A Oschwald (2019)
C Matthew Phillips (2019)
Andrea R Pitkus (2019)
Arlo W Pullmann (2022)
Jesse Yow Jr (2019)
Roland F Ziegler (2019)

Commission on Synodical Self-Governance (CSSG)
Chairman
Daniel L Sattgast (2022)
Richard T Nuffer (2019)

Secretary
John W Sias (2019)

Nonvoting Advisory Members, ex officio
Matthew C Harrison
Dale A Meyer
Herbert C Mueller Jr
Lawrence R Rast Jr
Joel D Lohse (2022)

Executive Director
Associate Executive Director
Executive Director
Larry M Vogel

MISSION BOARDS

Board for National Mission
Central Region
Martha Milas, comm. (2019)

East-Southeast Region
Ernest E Garbe, lay (2022)
Timothy J Droegemueller, ord. (2022)
Julia Habeck, lay (2022)
Peter C Bender, ord. (2019)

Great Lakes Region
Cristyn Sanchez, lay (2022)

Great Plains Region
Steven C Briel, chairman, (2019)

West-Southwest Region
Allison O Espinos, ord. (2019)

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE

Chief Mission Officer
Kevin D Robson
Executive Director
Daniel F McMiller

SYNOD STAFF

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
President
Matthew C Harrison
First Vice-President
Herbert C Mueller Jr
Senior Assistant
Jon D Vieker
Assistant
Barbara A Below

COMMISSIONS

Executive Director
David L Strand
Assoc. Executive Director & Media Relations
Pamela J Nielsen
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2019 Convention Workbook
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Ronald R Levesque (2020)
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Caryn Borland (2020)
Roger Burntner (2021)
Steven J Buuck (2021)
Ryan P Ermeling (2021)
Matthew Flandermeyer (2021)

Elmer Gooding (2019)
James D Henkell (2021)
Scott Klensm (2019)
Ronald R Levesque (2020)
Peter Lee (2019)
Paula E Meyer (2019)
Craig W Olson (2020)
Sandra Ostapowich (2019)
Samuel Schubelreiz (2019)
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Theodore Crofford (2024)
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Mary Beth Garrnet (2025)
Peter Hames (2025)
Ray Kym (2025)
Margaret Landswermeyer (2023)
Hedley Lewis (2024)
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Timothy Jest (2020)
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Kermit W Almstedt (2020)
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David G Bell (2019)
Jocelyn Benson (2021)
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James Gietr (2020)
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W Robert Myers (2019)
Amy S Wente (2019)

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David M Lucek

2019 Convention Workbook
Ordained Ministers

Abel, Louis H Jr 8/18/16
Albers, Walter F 12/15/18
Alms, Richard L 10/11/16
Anderson, David L 1/3/17
Anderson, Steven L 4/26/18
Arndt, Gerald John * 6/27/16
Astalos, Ronald F 8/17/16
Babel, Milan J 9/12/17
Bahlow, Norman W 9/7/18
Bahr, Donald G 11/10/18
Bajus, Luther J 2/8/18
Baker, Claude H 1/8/18
Barkow, Roland R 11/13/17
Barbals, Ralph 11/9/16
Bauder, Harold J 1/19/19
Bauer, Dean M 3/27/17
Becker, Gerald John * 6/27/16
Bekemeier, Luther W 11/26/16
Beck, Ronald V 1/15/19
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Berg, Richard W 12/16/18
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Blum, G David 1/18/18
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Bleick, Roy H 10/14/18
Blech, Randolf Derrick 12/13/16
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Boehne, Thomas V 10/25/18
Boehrer, Charles F Sr 12/9/16
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Havekottek, Alan W 9/2/16
Heck, Jack D 10/26/16
Heckart, Jakob K 1/16/18
Hein, William C 12/18/16
Helland, Lloyd J 8/18/18
Hempel, William G III 11/29/18
Hendrickson, Marion Lars 10/13/18
Henriksen, Robert C 3/12/19
Hickok, Eugene W 8/25/16
Hilgendorf, Hilbert P 3/21/17
Hilmer, Ronald P 3/3/19
Hinz, Richard Thomas 8/21/18
Hofmann, Donald H 12/29/16
Hoffmann, Peter S 7/25/17
Holt, Thes C 1/12/19
Holder, Roland E 5/4/18
Holm, Peter R 4/25/17
Hornig, Edgar W 6/16/17
Hormachea, Joel Abdias 2/2/18
Hu, Joseph S 2/20/19
Iveson, Edwin I 2/1/19
Jennings, Mark Allen 11/23/17
Johnson, Charles E 3/13/18
Johnson, Dwayne A 4/7/17
Kaarre, Martin C 2/1/17
Kaying, Hugo C 2/13/17
Kamman, Harold William 8/12/18
Kasson, John E 11/13/18
Katz, Harvey G 10/14/18
Kavasch, Robert W 11/18/18
Keller, Roland E 3/19/17
Kegel, Adam G 2/25/19
Keller, Elfred T 9/6/18
Kempf, Peter D 9/11/18
Kencer, William E 9/22/18
Kennedy, Lawrence A 5/25/18
Kline, Edward F 4/28/17
Klausmeier, Arno M 10/14/16

ENTERED INTO REST

Klausmeier, Arno M 10/14/16
Klatt, Eberhard G 4/28/17
Kinne, Lawrence A 5/25/18
Keller, Robert H 9/16/16
Kesper, Donald S 3/24/18
Kessel, Eldon J 3/18/17
Kegel, Peter R 2/25/19
Keller, Elfred T 9/6/18
Kempf, Peter D 9/11/18
Kencer, William E 9/22/18
Kennedy, Lawrence A 5/25/18
Kline, Edward F 4/28/17
Klausmeier, Arno M 10/14/16

2019 Convention Workbook
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Name</th>
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<tbody>
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**Commissioned Ministers**

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- Bailey, Andrew D
- Beckendorf, Leon E
- Becker, Elmer H
- Beckmann, Lucie
- Berg, Kirk Martin
- Bessert, William H
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- Bickel, Eugene M
- Bleeker, John H
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- Braun, Ruth E
- Bruenger, A Kenneth
- Bude, Cleo
- Burgdorf, Edith A
- Damman, Sandra Kay
- Dash, Russell W
- De Meyer, Roger
- Dierker, Wilma M
- Doering, Willard E
- Dohrmann, Aaron C
- Dressler, Derwin J
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- Goek, John A
- Goeres, Glenn William
- Goltz, Robert M
- Granger, Ralph F *
- Guymon, Michael Alan
- Haas, Walter D
- Hankel, Donald W
- Hansen, Scrote Michael
- Hei, Dorothy H *
- Heins, Eric James

**ENTERED INTO REST**

- Weber, Charles W
- Weber, Paul A
- Weerts, Leslie A IV
- Weis, Karl William
- Weis, James M
- Weishoff, Robert Lee
- Welsh, Ronald C *
- Wendland, Leland J
- Wertz, Richard P *
- Wesener, Donald O
- Widmann, Richard W
- Williams, Daniel Raul
- Williams, Donald P
- Williams, Douglas R
- Williams, Edwin
- Williams, Ronald E
- Willmann, Victor D
- Wingfield, Albert B
- Wise, Rodney A
- Wittler, Robert C
- Wuensch, Reinhard H Jr
- Wyssmann, Robert W
- Yong, Robert E
- Zabel, Richard Lee
- Zielke, Wilbur W

**2019 Convention Workbook**
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*Deceased prior to July 15, 2016, with information received too late to be included in prior list.

Yarroll, Christine Hilda  4/29/17
Zehnder, George F        2/16/17
Zessin, Catherine E      6/6/17
Zimmer, Richard Allan    11/9/16
The vilest forms of religion (like Satanism) are on the ascent. Antagonism toward Christianity continues to rise. Is unendingly rancorous and crude. Soundbite slander is the rule.

Our LCMS convention will take place in another year of temporal turmoil in our nation and the world. National politics are unendingly rancorous and crude. Soundbite slander is the rule of the day. Antagonism toward Christianity continues to rise. The vilest forms of religion (like Satanism) are on the ascent.

President’s Report

Why “Joyfully Lutheran”?

Dearest Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus, our Savior and Lord:

The writer of Hebrews states:

Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted. (Hebrews 12:1–3)

As I write, the governor of New York just signed a bill guaranteeing the “right” to abort a child up to the moment of birth, which frees from any guilt an abortionist who would deliver a child still living and kill it outside the womb. Other states are lining up with similar legislation. Sixty-one million children have been aborted in the U.S. since Roe v. Wade in 1973. The lie which denied “life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness,” (Declaration of Independence) will continue apace, claiming the lives of tens of millions more.

The Lie Is the Death of Man

Hermann Sasse (1895–1976), who was a great friend of the LCMS, described Germany in 1936 in a way very apropos for our times:

The lie is the death of man, his temporal and his eternal death. The lie kills nations. The most powerful nations of the world have been laid waste because of their lies. History knows of no more unsettling sight than the judgment rendered upon the people of an advanced culture who have rejected the truth and are swallowed up in a sea of lies. Where this happens, as in the case of declining pagan antiquity, religion and law, poetry and philosophy, life in marriage and family, in the state and society—in short, one sphere of life after another falls sacrifice to the power and curse of the lie. Where man can no longer bear the truth, he cannot live without the lie. Where man denies that he and others are dying, the terrible dissolution [of his culture] is held up as a glorious ascent, and decline is viewed as an advance, the likes of which has never been experienced. (Hermann Sasse, Union and Confession, p. 1)

How Can We Speak of Joy?

Our LCMS convention will take place in another year of temporal turmoil in our nation and the world. National politics are unendingly rancorous and crude. Soundbite slander is the rule of the day. Antagonism toward Christianity continues to rise. The vilest forms of religion (like Satanism) are on the ascent. Christianity in the U.S. is on the decline. The Catholic Church is embroiled in scandals that shake its foundations and smear other denominations with anti-Christian sentiment and bigotry. The nation is deeply divided. There is no need to mention well-known international challenges, which often affect our partners around the world, harass our missionaries, and (in the case of militant Islam) threaten their safety. How can we speak of joy?

No Surprise

First, let us not be surprised. We are in the “little season” (Rev. 20:3). “For the devil has come down to you in great wrath, because he knows that his time is short!” (Rev. 12:12). The number of the martyrs has not yet been fulfilled. “Then they were each given a white robe and told to rest a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brothers should be complete, who were to be killed as they themselves had been” (Rev. 6:11). Satan has been “cast down” (Rev. 12:9) by the death and resurrection of Jesus! But he is “loosed for a little season” (Rev. 20:3) to cause havoc, even as the times are lengthened for God’s purpose of bringing the Gospel to the world. The full number of believers shall come into the Church! What privilege it is that we, sinners that we are, are among God’s tools to accomplish this! Wow!

Jesus’ Promise

Jesus says, “I am the way, the truth and the life. No man comes to the Father but by me” (John 14:6). Jesus Himself told us it would be rough for the Church in the last days!

Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and put you to death, and you will be hated by all nations for my name’s sake. And then many will fall away and betray one another and hate one another. And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray. And because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold. But the one who endures to the end will be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come. (Matt. 24:9–14)

And more important, Jesus also gave a promise, as true for us as it was when He spoke it to His apostles: “I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world” (John 16:33). And our mission is VERY clear. “This gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world.” (Matt. 24:14). This is why the Church still exists. This is why the LCMS exists.

Joy in the Midst of All That?

In the midst of all the trials and tribulations the Church faces, Jesus promises, over and again, joy! This was promised by Jesus to His apostles, and it’s also our promise. “These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full” (John 15:11). The apostle John, likewise, promised joy to all who believed the apostolic message about Jesus and were grafted into the fellowship of the Church thereby:

That which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the
Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. And we are writing these things so that our joy may be complete. (1 John 1:3–4)

“Joyfully Lutheran”

Jesus is the key to joy. Jesus is our source of joy. Jesus is our anchor of hope. Jesus is our consolation in the face of Satan and his fury! Jesus is our joy! When I advocate being “Joyfully Lutheran,” I’m not saying there’s not joy (eternal life) outside orthodox Lutheranism. There is salvation and joy wherever Jesus’ Word of free forgiveness through cross and resurrection is present and believed. I’m not on some hyper-orthodox kick to question the Lutheranism of some. I am advocating that we revisit Luther’s Small Catechism, albeit, with joy in mind. I am convinced that orthodox Lutheranism is the best thing going! Why? It’s the clearest and most comforting refuge for sinners there is. It’s all about Jesus.

Refuge for the Troubled Conscience

Let me dare say that the whole Small Catechism is a refuge for troubled consciences. (I am speaking primarily of the catechism itself, the part written by Luther, though this is also true of the wonderful LCMS Explanation, especially the most recent edition that was published in 2017.) The whole Small Catechism gives greater confidence in the Gospel and is a strong bulwark against the devil’s lies. Indeed, the Small Catechism, as the basic confessional document of the LCMS, is chock-full of cause for joy! The basic teachings of the catechism, directly teaching the Bible, are our most effective remedy for Satan’s wiles against us.

The Ten Commandments and Joy

The hymn says, “The Law is but a mirror bright / To bring the inbred sin to light” (LSB 555). The Law is given, as St. Paul says, “that every mouth be stopped and the whole world held accountable to God!” (Rom. 3:19). That includes you and me! The Law says, “Guilty!” Even if my hands and feet or mouth are not sinning, my mind is full of lust, greed, anger, hatred, envy, and more. If you say this is not true of yourself, then you are a liar and a fool. And worse yet, you have no Savior. “If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. But if we confess our sins, God is faithful and just and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:8–9).

Where’s the joy? Jesus was punished in my place. He who knew no sin became sin for us (2 Cor. 5:21). Moreover, Jesus kept all the commandments perfectly for me! My conscience is clear! And Jesus even gives me the Holy Spirit that I begin to love and find joy in living (however imperfectly) as He wills. Joy!

The Creed and Joy

I learn in the Creed—every bit of which is taken directly from the Bible, which is God’s perfectly, verbally inspired, inerrant, and infallible Word—that I don’t have to wander in the dark, making up idols, casting about for some unknown god or gods. I don’t have to sit in ignorance wondering who God is, what He does, or what He expects or thinks of me. I know with absolute certainty—certainty born of trust in Jesus Christ, who is God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten not made—that God the Father created me and all things. I know that Jesus Christ was sent into the flesh to save me and all people from sin, death, and the devil. And I know that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son, and works through God’s Word and Sacraments to forgive. God acts to forgive me! My conscience is clear! Joy!

The Lord’s Prayer and Joy

It’s no coincidence that Paul writes, “Rejoice always. Pray without ceasing” (1 Thess. 5:16–17). Jesus gave His disciples a specific prayer. We know full well from the Bible’s many, many prayers and teachings on prayer that we have great freedom in approaching God in prayer. Yet Jesus teaches us here that God is our beloved Father, that He loves us as dear children, and that He loves to hear our prayers. We are to pray that His name be holy among us by right believing and right living. We pray the missionary prayer, that His kingdom come to everyone and also among us. We pray that His will be done (it will be!), but especially among us! We pray for “daily bread”—for everything we need for this body and life, for us and for all. We pray that our sins be forgiven, and that as forgiven people we forgive others. We pray to be delivered from temptation and the devil. And Jesus tells us to top off the prayer with a hearty “Amen,” which means, “Yes! It’s so!” I believe it! I know God the Father loves me. I know Jesus loves me and cares for my needs. I know God loves to forgive my sins and loves it when I forgive others! Joy!

Baptism and Joy

“Baptism … now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 3:21). Baptism saves because it forgives sins (Titus 3:5). Baptism cleanses from sin (Eph. 5:26). Baptism connects us with Jesus and all the benefits of His death and resurrection (Rom. 6:1ff.). Baptism is, according to St. Peter, “an appeal to God for a good conscience!” I am baptized! Jesus is mine! Joy!

Confession and the Office of the Keys and Joy

I am invited to live daily as a baptized Christian. I am just like St. Paul, “For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing” (Rom. 7:19). As the catechism confesses: “We daily sin much and surely deserve nothing but punishment” (Small Catechism, Fifth Petition of the Lord’s Prayer). But I am invited to confess my sins and to hear from my pastor, “as from God Himself,” that my sin is forgiven (Small Catechism, Confession). This regularly happens in Confession and Absolution in the Sunday service, and it happens when I ask my pastor to hear my sins privately and I am absolved. The keys are given to every Christian (Matthew 18), and I am to speak forgiveness to others who sin against me, and to seek their forgiveness in the name of Christ when I sin against them. Sin among Christians is inevitable because we are all sinners. The keys are a powerful tool to live in peace, love, and joy!

The Lord’s Supper and Joy

I come to the altar weekly. I come weak, knowing my many sins. I kneel, having confessed my sins. I also confess Christ, my Savior. I confess His body and blood in bread and wine. And I believe what He says, “given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins.” I receive what He gives. I believe what He says. Christ is mine! Heaven is mine! I’m forgiven! I forgive. I am at peace with those who likewise confess and receive. I “go in peace.”
“Our faith ever sharing, / In love ever caring, / Embracing His children of each tribe and race” (LSB 643). Eternal joy!

The basic teachings of Christianity are not arcane. They are profound mysteries that one could study for many lifetimes and not fully fathom. But these mysteries are also simple and can be grasped and believed by the simplest mind. When I urge that we be ever more “Joyfully Lutheran,” I urge that we concentrate on the Bible. I urge that we keep reading our Small Catechism. Here’s how Luther put it:

But for myself I say this: I am also a doctor and preacher, yes, as learned and experienced as all the people who have such assumptions and contentment. Yet I act as a child who is being taught the catechism. Every morning—and whenever I have time—I read and say, word for word, the Ten Commandments, the Creed, the Lord’s Prayer, the Psalms, and such. I must still read and study them daily. Yet I cannot master the catechism as I wish. But I must remain a child and pupil of the catechism, and am glad to remain so. (Large Catechism, Preface, 7)

Knowing ever more firmly the basics—the Bible, the catechism—we shall be fortified against all that the devil, the world, and the flesh can throw against us in these last days. And what Jesus said to His disciples before His death and resurrection is a promise for joy after His resurrection, no matter what they would face. That same resurrection promise is ours. “So also you have sorrow now, but I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you” (John 16:22).

God grant us an extra measure of His Holy Spirit so that we, too, may confess Christ before the world and rejoice, come what may!

And when they had called in the apostles, they beat them and charged them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. Then they left the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name. And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they did not cease teaching and preaching that the Christ is Jesus. (Acts 5:40–42)

Witness: International Mission

The Constitution and Bylaws of the Synod give primary responsibility for international mission and church relations to the national Synod. There is great freedom for congregations, mission societies, and districts to engage internationally, and it is encouraged! It is most effective when it’s done cooperatively with the national church.

- We have greatly increased the number of career missionaries and GEO missionaries on the field and continue to establish additional systems for missionary care to ensure mission efforts are coordinated and as effective as possible.
- There are currently a record 1,900+ congregations supporting our international missionaries. Missionary support is higher today than we have seen it in more than a decade.
- We have put in place theologically strong, experienced, and competent Regional Directors to run our international mission efforts, including Ted Krey, Jim Krikava, Charles Ferry, Gary Schulte, Shauen Trump.
- Launched the Global Seminary Initiative (GSI), in partnership with both LCMS seminaries, which has provided some $1.75 million to send professors overseas to provide theological education as requested by international partners, and to bring dozens of future leaders to our seminaries for study (www.lcms.org/makeagift/gsi).
- We wrote “A Theological Statement for Mission in the 21st Century” to provide theological guidance and direction for mission activity. Adopted by the Synod in convention (included in this Workbook as R1.1; www.lcms.org/doc/mission-statement).
- The largest Lutheran church bodies in the world are seeking our assistance, especially in theological education. With our sound, confessional theology, Lutherans around the world are sharpening their preaching of the Gospel.
- Our world mission efforts through OIM continue to be attentive to the needs of our many church partners and their local and cultural sensitivities. Examples:
  - Assisting our German partner (SELK) in its evangelization of Muslims in Berlin and elsewhere.
  - Sent a seminary professor to the Philippines for the first time in 20 years.
  - Developed a training program for deaconesses in Latin America and elsewhere, providing a faithful alternative for the service of women in the church.
- Opened a Spanish-language confessional Lutheran seminary in the Latin American Region (Dominican Republic).
- Some 17 districts are involved directly in “Foros” (cooperative efforts) with the national Synod in Central and South America alone!

Witness: National Mission

The Constitution and Bylaws of the Synod give primary responsibility for church planting and national mission to districts and congregations. The national Synod has the responsibility of providing resources to aid these efforts.

- We have engaged a fact-based analysis of LCMS demographic decline with the work of world-class demographer George Hawley (University of Alabama) and others. After decades of “hunches” and opinions, we have very significant and specific data to inform our work. Many cherished myths have been dispelled.
OFFICER, BOARD, AND COMMISSION REPORTS


These studies have been helpful in dispelling myths and in taking an honest look at the demographic trends at work today—generating faithful, mission-oriented responses in our LCMS approach to national mission.

- Renewed focus on outreach, revitalization, and church planting:
  - *Every One His Witness*—Synod’s first comprehensive evangelism training program in 35 years. Soon to become available in Spanish (www.everyonehiswitness.org).
  - *re:Vitality*—assists congregations to improve their outreach to new members, follow-up with inactive members, and conduct basic strategic planning (www.lcms.org/church-revitalization).

- Major expansion of conferences, webinars, and ongoing support of Rural and Small Town Mission (RSTM). This work supports pastors, professional church workers, and lay leaders by equipping them to meet the unique challenges of leading Christ-centered outreach in rural and small-town communities (www.lcms.org/how-we-serve/national/rural-and-small-town-mission).

- Completion of a major study called “Retention of Lutheran Millennials: 2017 LCMS Study of Young Adults,” which surveyed 2,000 millennials—current and former LCMS members (www.youthesource.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Congregational-Data-Webinar_pt1.pdf). Everyone interested in young people and the future of the LCMS, and especially young people in the local congregation, must read this fascinating study. We are not losing youth at any higher rates than the past two generations. The youth we lose are not overall at odds with our doctrine and worship. Most who quit coming to church are not going to church anywhere. If we retain young people into adulthood, 70 percent are retained for life.

- Launch of Lutheran Young Adult Corps. (www.lcms.org/young-adult-corps).
- The youth organization Higher Things has been designated an RSO.
- Improvements in LCMS National Youth Gathering.
- Creation and expansion of LCMS U, with a renewed emphasis on retaining LCMS youth through their college years, and the largest campus ministry gatherings in the history of the LCMS (lcmsu.org). We know that if a college student does not connect with a church in the first month, he or she will likely not return to church until having children.
- Blue Ribbon Task Force study on LCMS schools.

**Mercy**

We are called to love and serve all people in need. We seek to do works of mercy in close proximity to Word and Sacrament so that we have more opportunities to bring the Word of Life in Christ to a dying world, all in cooperation with districts and our many partners.

- LCMS World Relief and Human Care/LCMS Disaster Response continues to be very healthy, responding to major disasters around the world as well as the U.S., such as Hurricane Harvey (2017).
- With Hurricane Harvey in Texas, Puerto Rico, and elsewhere, LCMS Disaster Relief reported more than $10 million in gifts received and in various stages of being distributed. (All of this with no discernable negative impact on giving to other LCMS mission or ministry programs.) In Texas alone, together with local Lutherans, we have
  - provided eight full-time staffed disaster-response centers across the affected area;
  - provided two disaster-response warehouses and distribution centers with full-time staff;
  - helped to facilitate the work of over 110,000 volunteer hours;
  - served more than 800 homes;
  - distributed more than 2,000 pieces of furniture.

- Regular send Medical Mercy Teams to Africa and elsewhere (www.lcms.org/mercy-medical-teams).
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• Ongoing significant support of Grace Place, Shepherd’s Canyon, and DOXOLOGY for the equipping and care of church workers.

Life Together
Our Synod is a “partnership in the Gospel” (Philippians 1:5) that is a fellowship in the clear Lutheran confession of “Christ for us.” We therefore collaborate with districts, partners, and members to enhance mission effectiveness. We are in this together.

• The major restructuring of LCMS Inc. following the 2010 convention brought the realignment of all departments and personnel, and a reduction in force by 66 positions. We are currently at the same post-restructuring position count.

• Two mission boards—Board for National Mission (BNM) and the Board for International Mission (BIM)—were established by the 2010 restructuring and are running very well. These boards set the policies and parameters by which the Office of National Mission and the Office of International Mission operate and carry out the seven mission priorities set by the Synod in convention. (See below.)

• The 2016 convention established seven mission priorities, which guide and prioritize the work of the Office of National Mission (ONM) and the Office of International Mission (OIM):
  o Plant, sustain, and revitalize Lutheran churches.
  o Support and expand theological education.
  o Perform human care in close proximity to Word and Sacrament ministries.
  o Collaborate with the Synod’s members and partners to enhance mission effectiveness.
  o Promote and nurture the spiritual, emotional, and physical well-being of pastors and professional church workers.
  o Enhance early childhood, elementary, and secondary education, and youth ministry.
  o Strengthen and support the Lutheran family in living out God’s design.

• Brought in new, theologically strong, experienced staff in several leadership positions, most recently Bob Zagore (ONM; former large church pastor in Michigan); Jim Baneck (Pastoral Ed.; former district president); Dan McMiller (OIM; former missionary and missionary recruiter). Also called CMO Kevin Robson in 2015, who brings a high level of theological integrity and an MBA from the University of Chicago School of Business.

• The Koinonia Project has brought together differing parties in districts, circuits, and the COP for theological dialogue and an increased understanding and agreement under the Word of God. Widely and well received. (Note especially the fine work done in the Minnesota South District.)

• Established and implemented regular district visits, made by the President, First Vice-President, and a regional vice-president to every district, once every triennium, “to build each other up and encourage each other in the mission of Christ.” Visitation teams are now on their second round of making visits, this time with a focus on equipping circuit visitors. The materials they use are available at www.lcms.org/about/leadership/president/district-visitation.

• Addressed the licensed lay deacon (LLD) problem of men serving as pastors without the benefit of call and ordination. Carrying out a colloquy process to the specific ministry pastor roster for those LLDs regularly preaching and presiding:
  o The 2016 Res. 13-02A established the process for bringing onto the roster those licensed lay deacons doing regular pastoral work. It was adopted with some 75 percent at the 2016 convention.
  o A policy manual and colloquy application process have been prepared and implemented by the First Vice-President and a committee appointed by the COP.
  o The Synod’s Colloquy Committee for the Pastoral Ministry, under the leadership of the First Vice-President, is working effectively with the various district presidents to form regional colloquy committees (as directed by Res. 13-02A) to interview licensed lay deacons applying for colloquy to the specific ministry pastor roster.
  o We plan to have at least 70 percent of the licensed lay deacons for whom Res. 13-02A applies (men who preach and preside on a consistent and continuing basis) through the SMP colloquy process before the 2019 convention.
  o The remaining 30 percent should be finished, God willing, within a year of the 2019 convention.


• Created Protecting Your Ministry book with the Alliance Defending Freedom for our congregations, schools, and districts (blogs.lcms.org/2016/synod-provides-legal-guide-amid-increased-intrusions).

• Launched the entire “Witness, Mercy, Life Together” theme, which has been well received throughout the entire Synod.
Church Relations

- As the Lutheran World Federation leadership continues to advocate unbiblical sexual ethics around the world, an ever larger number of Lutheran churches are looking to the LCMS for theological leadership.

- We experience continued interaction with the Ethiopian Church (Mekane Yesus; 9 million members) and increased contact with Tanzanian Lutheran Church (6 million members). We have entered church fellowship talks with the Malagasy Lutheran Church (4 million members). We currently enjoy some form of relationship with 79 Lutheran church bodies worldwide, representing 40 million Christians.

- The LCMS, via the International Lutheran Council (ILC), is involved in an informal dialogue with the Roman Catholic Church through the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity (PCPCU). ILC is now seen by the Vatican as a confessional Lutheran alternative to its formerly exclusive dialogues with the liberal LWF.

- The LCMS has engaged in dialogue with Anglican Church of North America (ACNA) to find areas where the churches can cooperate in externals, particularly in the area of religious freedom.

- LCMS has engaged in dialogue with North American Lutheran Church (NALC) to find areas where the churches can cooperate in externals, particularly in the area of religious freedom.

- LCMS has engaged in an informal conversation with the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS) and the Evangelical Lutheran Synod (ELS). Our three church bodies are the closest they have been since the suspension of fellowship more than 60 years ago. We enjoy mutual respect and frank conversation.

- Fifteen church bodies have requested fellowship with the LCMS. Some of these requests will come to the 2019 convention.

- The LCMS supports the ILC, which at its Antwerp meeting in 2018, accepted 17 new members as full participants or official observers.

- The LCMS has 35 partners in altar and pulpit fellowship.

- Our oldest partner church, The India Evangelical Lutheran Church, has for decades been in turmoil over the millions of dollars of property left to that church by the LCMS. Over the last several years, we have taken a very hard line against corruption and made very significant progress. We won a decisive legal battle against very corrupt forces in the church. The level of corruption of the bad elements was put on display during the trial. A court-appointed administrator has removed the bad actors from positions of control. The LCMS should be aware that these bad actors regularly solicit the LCMS and try to use any approval from any LCMS leaders or pastors to further their ends. Contact us if you have questions.

Seminaries and Pastoral Education


- Global Seminary Initiative (GSI; see above) also sends funds to the seminaries in the form of tuition assistance for international students and support of seminary professors teaching abroad (www.lcms.org/makeagift/gsi).

- The 2016 convention amended Bylaw 3.10.4 to create a “Pastoral Formation Committee” to provide for greater coordination and collaboration between our two seminaries.

- Developed the Preach the Word Initiative to assist pastors in improving their preaching skills (www.lcms.org/about/leadership/president/preach-the-word).

Concordia University System

- Dr. Dean Wenthe continues to lead the CUS, and the various university presidents have begun working toward a more unified system to maximize mutual strength in the face of very challenging market conditions and cultural challenges to our schools.

- The 2016 convention approved a Lutheran Identity Statement for its CUS schools, which has also been adopted by its presidents (blogs.lcms.org/2016/convention-delegates-approve-lutheran-identity-statement-for-concordia-university-system).

- As of this report, candidates for president of Concordia University, St. Paul, are undergoing final interviews. Concordia University, Irvine, and Concordia University Chicago are in the process of selecting a new president. Concordia University—Portland is also in process, and we are continuing to work with leaders there to move the university into an acceptable position regarding culture and sexuality issues.

- Unfortunately, the regents of Concordia College Alabama had to close this institution. Every attempt was made to save the school. Despite billions from the LCMS, heroic efforts by the leadership of the school, and real and attempted assistance from the other universities, mounting debt, low enrollment, and inability to find a buyer for the schools finally forced the regents to vote to close. We are deeply saddened by this, and realize this is a profound disappointment, especially for many of our African American pastors and people.

Finances

- Since October 2010, we have seen a reduction of total Synod indebtedness by nearly 40 percent. Internal in-
debtedness plus CUS historic debt has been reduced from about $37 million to about $22 million.

- The BOD has identified international properties able to be sold for anticipated significant financial benefit to Synod and reduction or even elimination of the historic CUS debt. The situation in China is becoming ever more complex, and government control of assets owned by entities outside China are subject to increasing restrictions, particularly if Christianity is involved. We had a tremendous opportunity to move our Asia mission headquarters to Taiwan, to a beautiful building we already possessed. It’s the right move at the right time.

- As a response to 2016 Res. 9-04A, we published a first-ever annual report in the November 2018 issue of The Lutheran Witness.

- A monthly “dashboard” on Synod finances has been established for Reporter to increase financial transparency by reporting in a more simplified and timely manner.

- We just had our A rating with the Better Business Bureau renewed, based upon 20 criteria.

- Our cost of funds is 8 cents on the dollar—a tremendous number for the non-profit sector. The BBB allows up to 35 cents on the dollar, for instance.

Council of Presidents and Ecclesiastical Supervision

- The COP is now more unified and collegial than I have ever seen it. Meetings deal with many challenging topics but are a joy. COP Chair David Maier does a good job in leading the body. The program committee is excellent, and we are constantly seeking better ways to use our time together and to serve the church.

- COP is now reviewing pastors on candidate status at every COP meeting.

- COP is engaging with the Koinonia Project process as a body.

- I present a theological topic at most every COP meeting.

- We continue working fraternally with district presidents to build and maintain doctrinal unity, especially regarding Synod expectations on worship and Communion practice per the excellent resolutions passed in 2016 and before.

- The 2016 convention set in place a process that restored the right of an accuser to appeal to the Synod President should the district president not act in a clear case of a violation of Synod doctrine and practice. Much has been made of this in some quarters of the Synod. I could spill a fair bit of ink here too, but won’t. The current process is not new or unprecedented. The Synod President is not granted unbridled power to “kick someone out.” The Synod President has the option under specific circumstances to proceed as the district president. The rights of appeal and choosing of panels, etc., are all the same. If a district president investigates a case and consults with the Synod President, and the Synod President agrees that more serious action should not be taken, then there is no access to appeal for an accuser.

- Finally, and perhaps most important, since the new Bylaws have been in place, there has not been one single case. In fact, there has not even been an inquiry to the Secretary of Synod.

Public Square

- Our testimony before Congress some years ago regarding religious freedom and HHS Mandates (www.lcms.org/social-issues/regulations-regarding-president-harrisons-testimony-before-congress-on-religious-freedom), brought to light a growing need and interest for the Synod to act more aggressively.

- We launched the “Free to Be Faithful” campaign to educate and move people to take informed action to protect religious freedom and all the cultural issues that pertain to it: confessing the faith in the public square, marriage, defending the sanctity of human life, etc. (www.lcms.org/social-issues/free-to-be-faithful).

- We conducted a successful capital campaign and launched the Lutheran Center for Religious Liberty in Washington, DC, staffed by Rev. Dr. Gregory Seltz (lcrlfreedom.org).

LCMS Communications

- Messaging and voice of Synod. Our communications team works across multiple platforms to faithfully and consistently communicate what the Synod believes, teaches, and confesses as we bear witness to Christ and share His mercy in our life together.

- Social media. We are focused on reaching a broader audience through the use of Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram and have watched the number of followers grow exponentially over the past six years. Our Facebook followers number 141,000+ and growing. By God’s grace, the LCMS holds the largest Lutheran Facebook presence on the Internet.

- Lutherans Engage the World. We launched this new periodical to inform all donors and rostered workers about our work of sharing the Gospel in word and deed across the nation and around the world. This has resulted in a growing donor base and increase in unrestricted and less-restricted gifts.

- The Lutheran Witness. Our Synod’s official and storied periodical has been refocused on teaching the faith by exploring contemporary topics in light of our confession, with timely and critical themes, engaging writers, and outstanding layout and design.
• The Reporter. Our Synod’s only news periodical to cover LCMS activities nationally and internationally has been reshaped.

• Photography and videography. Added a professional photojournalist and videographer, allowing us to show the work of the church through compelling visual imagery that conveys what we confess and documents how that confession is lived out in the work we do (photo.lcms.org/index).

• KFUO AM. Restructured and reorganized Synod’s radio station and Internet podcast site to offer confessional Lutheran talk radio and music programming 24/7. “KFUO Radio: Christ for you. Anytime. Anywhere.” Also brought Issues, Etc. back to KFUO AM as its flagship program (www.kfuo.org).

Other

• Synod’s Board of Directors, under the capable chairmanship of Dr. Michael Kumm, has exhibited calm and theologically sound leadership through a variety of challenging issues. The Board is calm, unified, and focused.

• Publication of 2017 Luther’s Small Catechism with Explanation, which has sold nearly 90,000 copies thus far, is helping LCMS pastors and people to respond faithfully to today’s challenges.

• We conducted a successful capital campaign and restoration of the Old Latin School in Wittenberg, Germany, in time for the 2017 Reformation anniversary. It now provides a confessional Lutheran embassy and study center in the heart of Europe (oldlatinschool.org).

• We increased involvement with our three international schools (Hong Kong, Shanghai, and Hanoi) to work to strengthen Christian and Lutheran identity and the presence of the Gospel.

• We encouraged and assisted in the successful launch of Lutheran Federal Credit Union (lutheranfcu.org).

• Concordia Publishing House (celebrating 150 years in 2019) has produced a plethora of faithful and theologically rich resources, including The Lutheran Study Bible in Spanish; a new translation of Walther’s Church and Office; and volumes such as Women Pastors?, Closed Communion?, and The Christian Difference. The Concordia Commentary series continues to have worldwide impact.

• Through the President’s appointment of some 300 theologically sound doctrinal reviewers, these unsung readers have assisted in maintaining the theological integrity of thousands of publications throughout Synod and its various entities.

The Commission on Theology and Church Relations

Please do take time to read the excellent new CTCR reports:

• An Inexpressible Treasure: The Theology and Practice of Holy Baptism
• Confession and Absolution
• The Royal Priesthood: Identity and Mission

All are vital for the mission of the church! (https://www.lcms.org/about/leadership/commission-on-theology-and-church-relations)

A Word about Our Praesidium

I can’t thank God enough for these men, chosen by the church, who serve as vice-presidents of our Synod.

All the district presidents on the Council of Presidents (COP) are called upon by the LCMS Bylaws to support the LCMS President in his duties and to provide council. The President of Synod does the same with the COP. The district presidents are voices for their regions, even as they act in the place of the Synod President, providing ecclesiastical supervision in their districts. The Synod Vice-Presidents provide additional specific assistance to the President of Synod in his duties, as requested. First Vice-President Herb Mueller is retiring. He’s served on the COP for 25 years—first as a district president and then as First Vice-President. His wealth of knowledge is matched only by his sincerity and selfless service. He has been a godsend. His handling of the colloquy of all the licensed lay deacons to specific ministry pastors is awe-inspiring. It would be impossible for me to thank him enough. His wise counsel has been a blessing. His friendship is a joy unsurpassed. Well done, thou good and faithful servant!

Second Vice-President Scott Murray never ceases to amaze. To have the services and counsel of a consummate pastor with an earned PhD, serving a vibrant congregation with members from 17 different language groups, is an unbelievable blessing. Third Vice-President Nabil Nour is one of a kind. He grew up in Jesus’ hometown of Nazareth as a Christian Palestinian who learned to speak Hebrew from his childhood Jewish friends. His lovely wife brought him into Lutheranism. He never ceases to bless. His positive demeanor and his constant prayer and encouragement have been a rock of consolation. He’s a tremendous parish pastor.

Fourth Vice-President John Wohlrabe is steadfast. He, too, has an earned doctorate. His service for decades as a high-ranking Navy chaplain uniquely formed him for service. He’s seen it all, and he has a passion for helping young people know who Jesus is. Wohlrabe serves as an associate pastor. He’s an inspiration wrapped in total humility.

Fifth Vice-President Daniel Preus is also retiring. I shall miss his wisdom and encouragement, and especially his wry, ready humor. He speaks from a deep font of pastoral knowledge and care, honed over more than 40 years of service. He does not overshare his thoughts, but when he does, I listen and am greatly blessed.

Sixth Vice-President Christopher Esget is senior pastor at Immanuel Lutheran Church—Alexandria, Virginia. His congregation is vibrant in outreach and adult conversions, with
a thriving parochial school. He pastors many people who are humble Lutherans yet very significant servants of our government in Washington, DC. Pastor Esget is wise beyond his years and brings deep insight into the Gospel, with a kind, pastoral heart.

Thanks be to God!

Future Priorities

1. **Steady, straight-ahead leadership.** The Bible is clear. Our confession is clear. Our Synod has well-defined freedom and limits to doctrine and practice. Let’s be who we are (https://blogs.lcms.org/2019/lets-be-who-we-are/). The first step in being better than you are is to be who you are. Our demographic studies and study of millennials demonstrate that there is no reason to change our doctrine. In fact, our strong biblical teaching is our bedrock strength. **We must and will continue to confess the Bible’s teachings on life and sexuality and all issues, with winsome joy, come what may.** Above all, we shall continue to emphasize that Christ is for all sinners, “of whom I am chief” (1 Tim. 1:15).

2. **The launch of “Making Disciples for Life.”** In addition to Every One His Witness (our new evangelism instruction effort which has been very popular), the Office of National Mission will be rolling out a plethora of resources and tools to strengthen our churches, schools, laypeople, pastors, and church workers, all for the sake of the mission. Resources are focused on
   - outreach;
   - evangelism;
   - retention (a very significant area with lots of potential benefit);
   - church planting, especially where there should be LCMS congregations but are not;
   - connections to ethnic and immigrant communities;
   - assistance for church workers and congregations facing demographic change and challenge; and
   - many other pressing and contemporary topics.

3. **Clear, continued worldwide Lutheran leadership.** Seventeen Lutheran churches joined the International Lutheran Council at its last meeting (2018). A record. And there is much more to come.

4. **Church worker recruitment.** Through our Pastoral Education Office, and with the cooperation of the seminaries and leaders of the Concordia University System, we are launching a major recruitment effort to encourage men to enter the seminaries, and for women and men to enter our universities for teacher and other church work vocations. (See the Pastoral Education report.) We have a major need for more Synod-trained workers now, and a strong impending need for more pastors, as half of our pastorate will reach retirement age over the next 15 years.

5. **Elimination of debt.** Though the debt has been reduced significantly, we are poised to significantly reduce the current debt. The historic Concordia University System debt alone costs about $1.5 million a year to service!

6. **Finances.** Continued realistic budgeting. We have shared more financial detail than ever. See the Reporter for a new source for the latest financials; also see the annual report in The Lutheran Witness. We are striving toward more simplified and understandable financial reporting.

7. **International mission** continues to focus on the request of our partner churches and emerging partners. The overwhelming majority of requests for missionaries are for the training of pastors and evangelists. Trained workers bring stability and effectiveness to mission work and church bodies. Partnering with districts and congregations to maximize capacity is beneficial and essential.

8. **Completion of the licensed lay deacon transition** to specific ministry pastors.

9. **Continued strengthening of our universities** via capable theological and administrative leadership. All our schools will continue to work toward cooperation, which strengthens our Christian Lutheran witness in the face of an anti-Christian culture, bears witness to Jesus to tens of thousands of students, and strengthens our sustainability in a tough market for small, tuition-driven schools.

Dear friends, I wish I could sit and talk with each of you for an hour or two. A report can’t convey the richness of blessings we enjoy in the LCMS. Yes, we are challenged. I’ve done my best to help identify the challenges. And we are all doing our best at facing these challenges with fortitude and faith in Christ. I thank you for your kind prayers. I would be lost without them. Until we meet, I am

Rejoicing always … for you.

Praying without ceasing … for you.

In everything giving thanks … for you.

In Jesus,

Pastor Matthew Harrison
A Theological Statement for Mission in the 21st Century


In November 1991, the LCMS Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR) released a document, “A Theological Statement of Mission.” Just as the current document is the result of a Synod convention resolution (2013 Res. 1-03A), the 1991 CTCR document was produced as a result of a Synod convention resolution (1986 Res. 3-02). For decades, the Missouri Synod has passed resolutions in conventions in support of mission. This reflects how the Missouri Synod takes seriously Christ’s mandate for the Gospel to be proclaimed to the entire world. The 1991 CTCR statement on mission and the current document demonstrate how each generation and age of the Church must confess and put into practice the faith given to us by our Lord Jesus Christ. The two documents, while written in different styles, are in harmony with each other, expressing the same truths about Christ’s mission and the church’s response to our Lord’s mandate. In fact, the CTCR statement on mission states about itself, “This statement was not envisioned as an end in itself but as a tool that would be available for possible use by the various units of the Synod as they seek to develop their own individual mission statements.” In this regard, the 1991 CTCR statement has served as a helpful tool.

1. God. Where the Holy Trinity is present via the Gospel and received in faith, there cannot but be Witness (martyria), Mercy (diakonia), Life Together (koinonia). These three reflect God’s very being as Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier, and they encompass His holy and gracious will for all in Christ Jesus—namely, that all come to believe in and bear witness to Christ, reflect divine compassion, and live together in forgiveness, love, and joy in the Church (AC I).

2. Humanity. It is the deepest offense to natural man that, apart from the life-giving witness of God in Christ, he is blind, dead, and an enemy of God (Eph. 2:8–9); incapable of “true fear of God and true faith in God” (AC II 1; 1 Cor. 1:22–25); and is, therefore, helpless under the damning and merciless hammer of divine Law (Jer. 23:29). The condemnation of the Law knows no respect for persons, much less class, ethnicity, or sex. The witness of the Gospel (Word and Sacrament) is the sole source of life for the dead, the only remedy for sin, death, and the devil. Thus, the entire life of the Christian individual and the Church is lived in and for the fact that “the Son of man came to seek and save the lost” (Luke 19:10).

3. Christ, the content of the Gospel. Christ Himself is the content of the Gospel, and thus of the Church’s mission of Witness (martyria), Mercy (diakonia), Life Together (koinonia). The Gospel is defined by Christ’s person, words, and works, and it transcends time and space. Just as “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and tomorrow,” so the Gospel is the unique once-for-all offering of Christ, the God-man, for the sins of the world (Heb. 10:10). “The blood of Jesus Christ, God’s Son, cleanses us from all sin” (1 John 1:7). “The work is finished and completed. Christ has acquired and won the treasure for us by His sufferings, death, and resurrection” (LC III 38). The communication of the Gospel may vary from culture to culture, but the fundamental definition of the Gospel as justification is timeless because it is biblical (Rom. 3:21–26; 4:5). “We receive forgiveness of sin and become righteous before God by grace, for Christ’s sake, through faith, when we believe that Christ suffered for us and that for His sake our sin is forgiven” (AC IV 2).

4. Christ, the source and model for the life of faith. Faith lays hold of Christ, and from Him it is enlivened and given its impulse and model for Witness (martyria), Mercy (diakonia), Life Together (koinonia). Jesus spends Himself completely (Mark 1:38) to bear witness as the Son of God sent for the salvation of the world (John 3:16). Jesus has compassion on the needy within and outside the community of faith (Mark 7:28). Jesus establishes a community of believers who are “brothers and sisters” (Acts 2; Mark 3:31ff.), who are “not to Lord it over each other” (Matt. 20:25) but to live together in forgiveness (Matthew 18), love (John 15), and mutual service (John 15:12; Mark 10:45; Philemon 2). “Oh, faith is a living, busy, active, mighty thing, so that it is impossible for it not to be constantly doing what is good” (FC SD V 10).

While the church’s work of extending of Christ’s Witness (martyria), Mercy (diakonia), Life Together (koinonia) in community will always be but a weak reflection of His own, where there is no Witness, Mercy, Life Together in forgiveness and love, there is no Church, no faith in Christ. To paraphrase Luther, Christ is both sacramentum and exemplum, both sacrament (gift) and model for the Christian.

5. The saving Word of God. God’s means of bringing salvation in Christ is the Word of God proclaimed: “The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart (that is, the word of faith that we proclaim); because if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved” (Rom. 10:8–9). “That we may obtain this faith,” our confession says, “the ministry of teaching the gospel and administering the sacraments was instituted” (AC V).

Thus the Church, the assembly of all believers in Christ, is found where the Word of God is found, where “the gospel is purely preached and the holy sacraments are administered according to the gospel” (AC VII). The Word of God—read, spoken, proclaimed—will not return to God empty but will accomplish His purpose (Is. 55:10–11) and will bring people to faith in Christ “where and when it pleases God in those who hear the gospel” (AC V). That is why the Church is not recognized by individual faith or works, which may be invented or contrived, but by these external marks, “the pure teaching of the gospel and the administration of the sacraments in harmony with the gospel of Christ” (AP VII and VIII).

Therefore, where the Word of God is found; where Holy Absolution is proclaimed (the specific announcement of the forgiveness of sins for the sake of Christ); where Holy Baptism is done in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; where Christ’s true body and blood are given by His Word of promise, there you will find the Church, the assembly of believers in Christ, and there you will find Christ Himself. Moreover, where Christ’s Church is located in the Word and Sacraments, there you will find Witness (martyria), Mercy (diakonia), Life Together (koinonia) (Gal. 2:8–9).

6. Witness is the sacred and fundamental task of the Church. Bearing witness to the saving Good News of God for us in Jesus is the fundamental task of the Church (Matt. 28:19). This leads to the making of disciples. The apostolic witness is connected to the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The preaching of the Gospel consistently proclaimed Jesus as the Messiah promised by the Old Testament Scriptures, preached the damning Law in full force (“You killed the author of life” [Acts 3:15]),
and preached forgiveness through repentance, faith, and Holy Baptism. This apostolic message is to predominate proclamation by called preachers within the community of believers, the proclamation of evangelists to those outside the Church, and the witness of every Christian in the context of his or her vocations in life. It is the sacred task of preachers to know the Scriptures ever more profoundly and constantly to seek to improve the craft of preaching that the Gospel may be preached in its biblical fullness and with clarity to its hearers. It is the sacred task of preachers to equip the saints to bear witness to Jesus to their friends, family, and others who are placed before them in their daily vocations. The Word of God is equally effective for salvation, whether proclaimed by Christ, the angels, called preachers, or shared by common Christians among one another or with those who do not yet know Christ’s forgiveness (Is. 55:11). In order to carry on Christ’s witness into the world, the Church is entrusted with training, teaching, and making pastors through theological education. This witness will accompany the Church’s corporate work of mercy (the mercy is Christ’s) and will dominate the Church’s life together. “Where Christ is not preached, there is no Holy Spirit who creates, calls, and gathers the Christian Church, without which no one comes to Christ the Lord” (LC II 45).

Dr. C. F. W. Walther asked to whom the responsibility to preach the Gospel among all people of the earth has been committed. He answered:

Here we see that it is the people of the New Testament, or the Holy Christian Church, that God has prepared or established, to show forth His praise in all the world. That means that the church is to make known the great works of God for the salvation of men, or that which is the same thing, to preach the Gospel to every creature. Even Isaiah gives this testimony, having been enlightened by the Holy Spirit: The true mission society that has been instituted by God is nothing else than the Christian church itself, that is the totality of all those who from the heart believe in Jesus Christ.\(^4\)

7. Witness and confession. Witness and confession are two inseparable aspects of the Church’s life in this world. Witness to Christ is as simple as John 3:16 but as fulsome as the Gospel of the incarnation; humiliation and exultation of Christ; His Baptism and ours; Absolution; the Holy Supper; the doctrines of grace, conversion, election, bound will, and more. The Gospel is, in fact, replete throughout the Scriptures and to be applied pervasively and winsomely in manifold ways according to the need of the hearers. As confession, the witness of the Gospel rejoices in standing for the creedal truth as it is in Jesus. It is as simple as the earliest confessions of the faith (“Jesus Christ is Lord,” Phil. 2:11; LC II 27) or the Small Catechism or as replete as the Nicene Creed or the Formula of Concord. The Church’s goal is always witness unto salvation in the simple message of salvation by the blood of Jesus and growth into the full confession of the orthodox Lutheran faith. The Lutheran Church rejoices that salvation is found wherever simple faith in Jesus and His merits is found, but it always seeks a witness and confession consisting of the “whole counsel of God” (Acts 20:27). Lutheran mission is creedal and catholic.

8. Mercy as sacred vocation. The Church is Christ’s Body, and as such, she continues His life of mercy as a witness to the love of God for body and soul. The Church has a corporate life of mercy toward those within the orthodox fellowship of believers, toward the broader community of Christians, and to those outside the Church (Gal. 6:10). The Church can no more ignore the physical needs of people than Christ could have refused to perform healings or persons can be separated into body and soul in this life. Thus, the Early Church heartily and vigorously continued Jesus’ ministry of healing and care for the needy (Acts 6; 2 Corinthians 8–9). This witness, through mercy accompanying the Gospel, has been a missiological force of the Church in its great periods of advancement, especially in times of desperate need and persecution. The care for the widows (Acts 6) and Paul’s collection for Jerusalem (2 Corinthians 8–9) are the great prototypical models for mercy for the Church for all time. We care for people in need not with any ulterior motive, nor even in order to proclaim the Gospel. We proclaim the Gospel and care for the needy because that’s who Christ is, and that is who we are as the Church in this world (John 14; Acts 4:12).

9. Life Together as bestowed and lived. Our Life Together in Christ’s Church is not acquired by human decision or merit; it is a gift. Just as one does not elect one’s own family, so we are brought into Christ’s holy people by the action of the triune God. “God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord” (1 Cor. 1:9). The Lord has called, gathered, enlightened, and sanctified us through the Gospel to live together as His Church. Life in this community is a gift that entails responsibility. We see this in Paul’s exhortation to the Ephesians to bear with one another in love, “eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Eph. 4:3), even as he is quick to add that we were called into the one Body of Christ and faith in a singular Lord. We cannot create the unity of the Body of Christ; that is given. But we are to be on guard against teachings and practices that would tempt us away from the one Lord, the one faith, and the one Baptism that keep us in union with the one God and Father of us all.

10. Witness, Mercy, Life Together in the apostolic Church. The apostles testified to Witness (martyria), Mercy (diakonia), Life Together (koinonia) in the apostolic Church. An example of this can be found in Gal. 2:7, 9–10. The apostles divided up the task of proclamation (witness) to the circumcised and the uncircumcised. The apostles remembered the poor (mercy). The apostles extended the right hand of fellowship (life together).

“Bearing witness,” says Luther, “is nothing but God’s Word spoken by angels or men, and it calls for faith.” In Acts 1:8, the risen Lord says of His apostles that they will be His witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and beyond those borders to the end of the earth. It is the apostles who with their own eyes have seen the Lord, touched Him with their own hands, and heard His voice with their ears (see 1 John 1:1–4) who are designated witnesses. We are witnesses only in the derived sense that our words echo the reliable testimony of the apostles. To bear witness is to speak not of ourselves but of another—Christ Jesus. The apostolic Church is sent to repeat the witness of the apostles that Jesus Christ, true God and true man, is the only Lord who saves.

“You notice,” said Luther, “that concern for the poor is the other work of the apostles.” St. Paul exhorts the Church to care for the poor. In the third century, Tertullian wrote how the pagans would say of the Christians, “See how they love one another.” The way that the Church cares for the needs of those within the Church is a witness to the world. Yet the mercy of God does not stay within the Church but goes out from the household of faith into the entire world.

“We preach the Gospel,” said Luther while commenting on Galatians 2:9, “in unanimous consensus with you. There we are companions in doctrine and have fellowship in it; that is, we have the same doctrine. For we preach one Gospel, one Baptism, one Christ, and one faith. Therefore we cannot teach or command anything so far as you are concerned, for we are completely agreed in everything.
For we do not teach anything different from what you teach; nor is it better or sublimer." 10

The life together of the apostles was based upon having the same foundation in Jesus Christ, that is, holding to the same doctrine. This life together is not created by us but by the Lord. When the same doctrine is recognized in another Christian or in a church body, we have a life together.

11. On being Lutheran today for the sake of Witness, Mercy, Life Together. “The Gospel and Baptism must traverse the world,”11 said Luther. This is what Lutheran missions care about—faithfully preaching repentance and faith in Jesus’ name, baptizing, and teaching so that those who belong to Christ in every nation are built up in His Word and fed with His body and blood. Mission is, to use the words of Wilhelm Löhe, “the one church of God in motion,” calling, gathering, and enlightening unbelievers through the pure teaching of the Gospel. This definition lies at the heart of what it means to be Lutheran in mission. Lutheran mission is defined by an unqualified (quia) subscription to the Book of Concord as the correct exposition of the Holy Scriptures. We are in harmony in the one biblical Gospel and the Sacraments instituted by Christ. Rejecting theological pluralism and its offspring universalism, Lutheran mission is grounded in the exclusive claims of Jesus Christ, knowing outside of His Word, which is spirit and life, there is only darkness and death.

12. The Church today as a community of Witness, Mercy, Life Together. When German mission leader and theologian of the last generation Friedrich Wilhelm Hopf (1910–82) asserted, “The Lutheran Church can only do Lutheran missions,” he was observing that the Lutheran confession is inseparable from mission.12 There is no Church without mission, and no mission without the Church. Evangelism becomes the Church’s mission when its goal is gaining souls for the local community of believers and planting the church as a witnessing, merciful community of believers. When confession and mission are pulled apart, both suffer. Mission without confession is reduced to zealous fanaticism. There can be no confession without mission, for confession takes place before God and in the presence of a listening world. The mouth of confession is the voice of mission always proclaiming that Jesus Christ is the God who justifies the ungodly, giving life to the dead in the forgiveness of sins. And this forgiveness of sins is found only in the Christian Church, where the Holy Spirit “daily and richly for-forgives all my sins and the sins of all believers,” to use the words of the Small Catechism. That is why, in the Book of Acts, those who received the preaching of the apostles were baptized, being added to the Church, says Luke (Acts 2:41). In the church created by mission, which has at its heart the preaching of the Gospel, those brought to faith “devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, the breaking of bread and the prayers” (Acts 2:42). Church and mission go together; you do not have the one without the other.

The claim, no doubt disputed in our day, that Lutheran missions lead to Lutheran churches is far from a parochial appeal to brand-name loyalty or mere denominationalism. Instead, it is the recognition that the Holy Spirit calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies a holy Christian people through the pure preaching of the Gospel and Sacraments administered according to the divine Word. Lutherans are glued to the scriptural truth that the Spirit works faith in the hearts of those who hear the Good News of Jesus crucified and risen when and where it pleases Him. Faith is not created by human enthusiasm, crusades for social justice, or strategic planning. Faith comes through the Word of the cross. That’s what Lutheran mission is given to proclaim. It is precisely in this Lutheran understanding of mission that mercy and life together converge.

Lutheran mission celebrates First Article gifts of language and culture. Lutheran mission has no interest in changing the culture of a people as long as those conventions and culture are not sinful. In fact, Lutheran mission, as found in the Reformation, seeks to bring the Gospel to people in their native language. Lutheran mission teaches that Christian churches are to be subject to the governing authorities and do not engage in revolution. Lutheran mission seeks to build capacity in the newly planted churches so that, in the unity of faith and confession, these younger churches may mature and live as true partners together with us in Witness, Mercy, Life Together.

13. Word of God. The triune God is a speaking God. By His spoken Word, the Father brought creation into existence (Gen. 1:1–2; Ps. 33:6; John 1:1–3). Christ, who is the eternal Logos, speaks His words, which are “spirit and life” (John 6:63). The Word of Christ’s death and resurrection—the message of God’s reconciliation of sinners to Himself—is preached. It is this preaching that creates faith, since “faith comes from hearing and hearing through the word of Christ” (Rom. 10:17). The Holy Spirit breathed out by Jesus to His apostles on Easter evening (see John 20:22) inspired them to put His Word into writing “so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name” (John 20:31). It is through the prophetic and apostolic witness to Christ delivered to us in the Holy Scriptures—the Spirit-inspired and inerrant Word of God—that we have access to Jesus and life with Him (see 2 Tim. 3:15 and 2 Pet. 1:16–21). The Holy Scriptures are to be interpreted in light of their being given by the triune God. “The exegesis of the Holy Scriptures cannot contradict their inspiration.”13 Both interpreter and context stand under the Holy Scriptures and are, in fact, interpreted by the divine Word. The internal clarity of Scripture is mediated through the external clarity of its own words. Far from being an imposition on the Bible, the right distinction of the Law from the Gospel is nothing other than the distinction between “letter” and “Spirit” (see 2 Cor. 3:1–18). Without this distinction, the Holy Scriptures remain a dark book (see Ap IV 5–6; FC V 1–27).

The Scriptures stand in the service of preaching. Preaching that conforms to the prophetic and apostolic Scriptures is the oral Word of God and, therefore, a Means of Grace. Preaching is never merely descriptive but always a kerygmatic, efficacious proclamation that delivers condemnation to secure sinners and consolation to those broken by their sin. Preaching is always a speaking of either the Law or the Gospel in the present tense, creating repentance and faith in those who hear where and when it pleases God (see Is. 55:10–11; AC V 2–3).

Preaching is not limited to the sermon but is also individualized in the absolution, where God’s servant is entrusted to speak words that forgive sins now (see John 20:21–23; SC V). The absolution is eschatological, that is, it brings the verdict of the Last Day into time as Christ says, “I forgive you your sins.” The absolution leaves no room for doubt, for it is God’s own Word of promise to be trusted in life and death.

14. Baptism. Baptism is far more than a rite of initiation. While it is a line of demarcation between unbelief and faith, and hence not optional for mission, it is more than an entry point into the
Christian life. Dr. C. F. W. Walther wrote, “Let us never forget that through Holy Baptism we have all joined the mission society which God Himself has established.”

Baptism is best thought of as present tense; hence, “I am baptized” and not “I was baptized.” Luther notes, “I am baptized, and through my baptism God, who cannot lie, has bound himself in a covenant with me.”

Baptism is the triune God's gift whereby He demonstrates His mercy by bestowing on us a new birth (see John 3:3–6; 1 Pet. 1:3–5; Titus 3:3–7). Baptized into His own name (Matt. 28:18–20), we have God's own pledge and witness that we belong to Him through the forgiveness of sins (see Acts 2:38–39) and are heirs according to the promise (Rom. 6:1–11; Gal. 3:26–29; Col. 2:12–14). Therefore, Baptism will not be withheld from infants or from new converts to the faith. Since it is by Baptism that we are joined to the body of Christ (see 1 Cor. 12:12–13), this Sacrament is foundational for our life together.

15. Lord's Supper. Hermann Sasse described the Sacrament of the Altar as “the church's heartbeat.” In this Sacrament, Christ gives His body and blood under bread and wine for us Christians to eat and to drink. It is His testament in which He bestows the fruits of His saving sacrifice on the cross: His body given into death and His blood shed for the forgiveness of our sins. Luther underscores the forgiveness of sins in the Small Catechism as he engages in a threefold repetition of the words “given for you” and “shed for the forgiveness of sins.” These words show us that the Sacrament of the Altar is the testament of God's sure mercy for sinners. When we come to eat and drink Christ's body and blood, we come as beggars to the feast of heaven. In this Sacrament, we are not accessing Christ by liturgical mimicry; rather, we are proclaiming the Lord's death until He comes (see 1 Cor. 11:26). Eating and drinking in the Lord's Supper does not create life together (koinonia) but it does confess and express this unity we have in the proclamation of Christ's death. Life together (koinonia) in confessing Him is always Christ's work and Christ's gift by His Word. Hence, the practice of closed Communion is a necessary corollary of the doctrine of the Lord's Supper. Bringing contradiction in teaching or life in the Holy Communion fails to give witness to Christ and what He gives us in and with His body and blood.

16. Priesthood of the baptized. The apostle Peter writes to those who have been “born again to a living hope” (1 Pet. 1:3), that is, to those who are baptized into Jesus’ death. He describes us as “living stones” that are built up as a “spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ” (1 Pet. 2:5). This priesthood is holy, that is, it is cut off from the uncleanness of sin and set apart to live by faith in Jesus Christ. Notice that the New Testament does not speak of us as individual priests, each going his or her own way and doing the work of a priest for ourselves. Rather, the New Testament speaks of our lives lived within a company of priests, a priesthood.

The priesthood offers spiritual sacrifices. These are not sacrifices that atone for sin. Jesus did that once and for all on the cross (see Heb. 7:27). The sacrifices that we offer are spiritual sacrifices, the sacrifice of a broken heart and contrite spirit (see Ps. 51:17). This is the life of repentance: daily dying to sin and living in the newness of Christ’s forgiveness. In other words, the whole life of the believer is one of sacrifice. This is the point that Paul makes in Rom. 12:1, where he writes, “I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.”

Everybody in the ancient world knew that sacrifices were dead, not living. Jerusalem’s temple resembled a slaughterhouse more than a church. The priest, smattered with blood, looked more like a butcher than a clergyman. Paul’s words must have jarred his original readers, for he writes of a living sacrifice. We present our bodies as living sacrifices, for we have died to sin in Baptism and now live in Christ's resurrection (see Rom. 6:1–11).

This priestly life is our vocation, our calling. We live it out in our daily callings in the congregation, in civic community (citizenship), the family, and the place of work. Here we who have received mercy from the Father show forth that mercy in our dealings with others, and it is here that we bear witness to Christ by “proclaiming the excellencies of Him who called us out darkness into His marvelous light” (1 Pet. 2:9).

Going about our daily vocation as baptized members of Christ’s royal priesthood, we testify to Christ, speaking His saving Word, the same Word we regularly hear in preaching and the same Word we read for ourselves in Holy Scripture (e.g., through personal and family devotions). The content of our witness is always Christ, crucified and raised from the dead for all. In so doing, we are inviting others into the same life we have received from Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, the only real life there is: that given in Word and Sacrament. Baptized believers will often be found urging others, believers and unbelievers alike, to “come and see” (John 1:39) what Christ has done for them and for all.

17. Office and offices. There is one office that Christ has instituted for the proclamation of His Word and the giving out of His Sacraments. This is the Office of the Holy Ministry (see John 20:21–23; AC V XIV, XXVII). Through the call of the Church, the Lord places qualified men into this office (see 1 Cor. 14:33–38; 1 Tim. 2:8–14). The men who serve in this office are to be properly trained and capable (see 1 Tim. 3:1–7; 2 Tim. 2:1–7; 4:1–5; Titus 1:5–9) of the task of being stewards of the mysteries of God (see 1 Cor. 4:1–2). The church may not be without this office, for it is to this office that Christ has entrusted the preaching of His Word and the administration of His Sacraments. No one puts himself into this office, nor does the church have the right to refashion the office into something other than what the Lord has instituted or to put men into the office without being called and ordained (see AC XIV). The church does live in freedom to create offices that assist those who are placed in the one divinely mandated office of the ministry of Word and Sacrament. These helping offices (auxiliary offices) would include deacons, deaconesses, evangelists, school-teachers, catechists, cantors, parish nurses, workers of mercy, and the like. These are valuable offices of service to the Body of Christ and the world, but they are not to be confused with the Office of the Holy Ministry itself. The Office of the Holy Ministry might be said to be the office of faith as Christ instituted it so that faith might be created in the hearts of those who hear the preaching of Christ crucified. Helping, or auxiliary, offices are the offices of love for through these callings the love of Christ is extolled in word and deed as His mercy is extended to those in need.

Those whom Christ through His Church has placed in the Office of the Holy Ministry do not lord it over the priesthood of the baptized, but they stand among the baptized, as one of them, holding an office of service, seeking only to give out the Lord’s gifts as He intended (1 Cor. 4:1–2).
18. Worship: koinonia, freedom, catholicity, and the limits of love. Questions of liturgical diversity and uniformity need to be set within the context of the distinction between faith and love. Faith is freed by the Gospel from all works of self-justification, but faith is not freed from the Gospel or the means that Christ has instituted to bestow the Gospel (the pure preaching of this Good News and the right administration of the Sacraments according to the divine Word; see AC VII). Preaching and Sacraments require form, and this form is catholic rather than sectarian or self-invented. Lutherans gratefully inherited the Western liturgical tradition filtered through the sieve of justification by faith alone, and we honor it as our heritage (AC XXIV). Lutherans make a distinction between what Christ has mandated and what His Word prohibits. In between the two are “adiaphora” or “middle things,” which are neither commanded nor forbidden by God. The middle category of adiaphora does not mean that these matters are unimportant or indifferent; they are to be evaluated by how they confess the truth of the Gospel and Sacraments. In times when a clear confession is called for, the Formula of Concord reminds us, matters of adiaphora may cease to be adiaphora (see FC SD X). Ludwig Adolph Petri notes that mission “must abstain from establishing confessions, accepting new customs in the divine service, uniting separated confessions, and the like. As soon as mission begins to do something like that, it is manifestly in the wrong, for none of those tasks is charged or relegated to mission.” This is to say that matters of liturgical practice are not best left to the individual but should reflect our confessional consensus so that both the freedom of faith and the love for brothers and sisters is maintained. Love is always given to patience and deference to the weakness of the fellow believer (see Romans 14), but it may never be used as an excuse to compromise the truth of our confession. Liturgical diversity within the larger catholic context will be guided by the need to maintain unity in both faith and love (see FC SD X IX).

19. Visitation. Sometime after his first missionary journey, "Paul said to Barnabas, 'Let us return and visit the brothers in every city where we proclaimed the word of the Lord and see how they are'" (Acts 15:36). So the Church today—following also the example of the apostles, Luther, Melanchthon, and others—engages in evangelical visitation, appointing people to the task so that we encourage and assist one another in the confession of Christ before the world. In our Synod, we come alongside one another to advise one another from the Word of God. The focus of our visitation of one another is faithfulness both to the mission of Christ through the Church to the world and to our clear confession of Christ’s saving work. Visitors are enjoined to come to the pastors and congregations and mission stations as a brotherly adviser, reminding them of the joy of serving in the mission and ministry of the Church. Visitations is a continuing task in the Church, carried out through all segments of the Church’s life together. When we visit our partners around the world, it must also be in the same Christ-centered spirit as the Lord’s apostle who, before his visitation with them, writes to the Romans, “I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you—that is, that we may be mutually encouraged by each other’s faith, both yours and mine” (Rom. 1:11–12).

20. Two kingdoms/discipleship. Luther observed that the kingdom of Christ is one of hearing, while the kingdom of the world is one of seeing. Discussions of the place of the church in the public square inevitably lead us to reflect on how the triune God is active in His creation. Luther’s teaching on the two kingdoms does not segregate God’s activity into the holy sphere of church leaving the world to its autonomous devices. God is at work in the world in two different ways, with different means and with different ends. Hence, Luther can use the imagery of the ear to indicate God’s right-hand governance whereby He causes His Gospel to be preached to bring sinners to faith in Christ and through faith inherit eternal life. On the other hand, the left-handed work of God is identified with the eye, with seeing. In this kingdom, God uses Law to measure and curb human behavior so that His creation is not plunged into total chaos and so that this world, subjected to futility (Rom. 8:20), is preserved until the Last Day. Authorities in the kingdom of God’s left hand evaluate on the basis of evidence that is observable. Here distributive justice is the order of the day. But in the kingdom of His right hand, God’s verdict is the absolution, the proclamation of a forgiveness of sins not achieved by merit or worth. When the two kingdoms are mixed or muddled, Law and Gospel are confused.

Lutherans are concerned to keep the teaching of the two kingdoms straight and clear for the sake of the Gospel, which alone gives forgiveness of sins and eternal salvation. Luther fumed that the devil is incessantly seeking to “breat and cook” the two kingdoms together. Satan would like nothing better than to dupe folks into believing that salvation comes through secular government or conversely that the Church is the institution to establish civil righteousness in the world. Either confusion displaces Christ and leaves sinners in despair.

The teaching of the two kingdoms is necessary for the sake of the Gospel. This teaching guards us from turning the Gospel into a political ideology. The Gospel works eschatologically, not politically, as it bestows pardon to sinners and establishes peace with God. It is a faith-creating word of promise heard with the ear, trusted in the heart, and confessed with the tongue. Christians, who live by faith in this promise, also live in this world where we use our eyes to see, to discern, to evaluate. The realm of the political is not to be dismissed as ungodly or unworthy of the Christian’s involvement. God is at work here too. But He is at work here to protect and preserve His creation, making it a dominion where life can flourish. God’s left-handed work is not to be confused with salvation, but it is a good gift of daily bread to be received with thanksgiving by those who know the truth.

So Lutherans neither put their trust in political processes nor do they eschew political involvement. The teaching of the two kingdoms is an indispensable gift in an age beset by temptations both to secularism and sectarianism.

21. Stewardship. The question of stewardship begins not with what I have but with what the Lord has given me. Therefore, stewardship begins with the gifts of the triune God. This is reflective of the way that the apostle Paul deals with stewardship in 2 Corinthians 8. Paul does not start with an assessment of the resources of the congregation or with legalistic instructions about how much they should be doing to meet their quota. Rather, he begins with God’s grace, with God’s undeserved gift in Christ. Christians give not to win God’s favor but on account of His prior gift, salvation in Christ Jesus. In 2 Corinthians, stewardship is connected with assisting those in need, in showing mercy.

This is the pattern of Christian stewardship. Just as in Romans 12, Paul makes his appeal to Christians that they present their bodies as living sacrifices by the mercies of God, so here Paul wants his hearers to know first of all about God’s grace. Anchored
in the unmerited riches of God’s mercy for sinners in Christ, the Macedonians are eager—yes, begging—for the opportunity to take part in the offering. They exceed the apostle’s imagination or expectation. What do they do? They give themselves first to the Lord and then, Paul says by the will of God, they give themselves to us.

Lutheran missions seek to be good and faithful stewards of the resources the Lord has given to His church. Faithful stewardship seeks to build capacity in partners while not creating harmful dependencies. In this way, the entire Body of Christ may be strengthened in its stewardship. We recognize that we are accountable to one another in our mutual confession of the faith and in our handling of valuable resources—human, financial, and property. The financing of missions and use of funding requires transparency at every level lest the witness of Christ be diminished, mercy be overshadowed by greedy self-interest, and our life together fractured.

22. Lutheran identity. Mission, as with the entire life of the Synod, will be guided by confessional identity and integrity. Bound to the Holy Scriptures as the infallible Word of the triune God and convinced that the Book of Concord confesses what the Bible teaches, we will joyfully and without reservation make this good confession before God and the world in light of the Last Day (see Matt. 10:32; 2 Tim. 4:1–8). We will not be ashamed to be Lutheran in all that we do. Like our forefathers at Augsburg, we will speak God’s testimonies before kings and not be put to shame (Ps. 119:46). We will teach this theology without duplicity at home and globally to any and all who are open to hear our confession. Given the seismic shifts in world Lutheranism away from the historical confession of the Lutheran church, we will seek to strengthen lonely and disenfranchised Lutherans who seek to be faithful in doctrine and practice.

23. Theology of the cross. The “theology of the cross” (see 1 Cor. 1:18–2:5) stands in sharp contrast to the prevailing theology—the “theology of glory.” The theology of the cross shows God at work under opposites, giving life through death, showing mercy in wrath, making Himself known in His hiddenness, and manifesting strength in weakness. The theologian of glory attempts to access God by way of various ladders: moralism, rationalism, or mysticism. The theologian of the cross confesses God condescending to humanity in the weakness of the baby of Bethlehem and the man of Calvary. The theologian of glory would judge a church successful on the basis of how well it accomplishes certain goals defined by the tenants of this world. The theologian of the cross recognizes that the Church is hidden under suffering and defeat.

Christ’s Church faces many enemies from within and without. She bears the mark of the holy cross, not as an identifier for its own sake, but as a consequence of bearing witness to and proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The Church in every place bears the Holy Cross to some degree. The Church in some places bears what appears to be a smaller cross than the Church in other places, yet no matter how small or big the cross it serves the same purpose: a witness (martyria) to the world and, as Formula of Concord XI confesses, “to conform us into the image of the crucified Son of God.” It should not surprise us, the Lord’s people, that His Holy Church takes on the appearance of the crucified Son of God. In fact, it is a great honor and joy that the Lord conforms us into His image. This is why St. Paul says in Romans 8, “I know all things work for good.” The life of the Church is cruciform in shape. The apt words of Hermann Sasse ring true: “All that we think and do in the church has to be cleansed by the theology of the cross if we are to escape the perils of a theology of glory.”

The theology of the cross will forever be a litmus test of the genuineness of Witness, Mercy, Life Together in our midst.

Notes

1. Witness, Mercy, Life Together is an attempt to describe what the Church always has done—proclaim the Gospel, care for people’s bodily needs, and have fellowship and community together as the Church. Whatever titles are given to these activities or terms used to describe them, these basic activities have been a part of the Church since the beginning. See Albert B. Collver’s Witness, Mercy, Life Together: Bible Study (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2011). In Mission from the Cross: The Lutheran Theology of Mission (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2009), Detlev Schultz describes both the Trinitarian nature of mission as well as the activities of the Church and Christians that could be described in terms of Witness, Mercy, Life Together. Schultz uses the terms “proclamation, confession, and witness,” the church’s diakonia, “a new community … an ecclesial reality for mission.”

3. Ibid., 42.
4. Ibid., 41.
5. Ibid., 174. (Compare with Ignatius, “The Epistle of Ignatius to the Smyrneans”: “Where Christ Jesus is, there is the catholic church.”)
17. Mimesis means “imitation, mimicry.”
18. The Missouri Synod has used different nomenclature to express the idea of closed Communion at various times in her history. Different terms have been used to describe the same doctrine and practice. The terms “closed Communion,” “close Communion,” and “closed(d) Communion” are equivalent terms. Art. VI of the Missouri Synod’s Constitution states as a condition of membership in the Synod, “Renunciation of unionism and syncretism of every description.” Art. VI 2 (b) provides additional clarification by defining unionism and syncretism as “Taking part in
the services and sacramental rites of heterodox congregations or of congregations of mixed confession. The practice of closed Communion then does not include receiving Communion at churches that hold heterodox positions. The Missouri Synod has adopted Dr. C. F. W. Walther's Church and the Office of the Ministry as its official position in 2001 (Res. 7-17A). In Thesis VIII of Walther's Church and the Office of the Ministry, Walther writes, "Here the saying of Augustine holds: Believe and you have eaten." As I said before: To receive the Sacrament is a mark of confession and doctrine. Therefore, whoever does not regard as true the doctrine of the church in which he intends to attend the Sacrament cannot partake of the Sacrament in that church with a clear conscience."

(Download Walther's Thesis VIII at http://goo.gl/KqIOyo.) Werner Elert, Eucharist and Church Fellowship in the First Four Centuries, trans. Norman Nagel (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1966), 76. "By 'closed Communion' we mean the restricting of participation to full members of the congregation." Participation in Holy Communion is directly connected to church fellowship.


20. "The devil never stops cooking and brewing these two kingdoms into each other. In the devil's name the secular leaders always want to be Christ's masters and teach Him how He should run His church and spiritual government. Similarly, the false clerics and schismatic spirits always want to be the masters, though not in God's name, and to teach people how to organize the secular government. Thus the devil is indeed very busy on both sides, and he has much to do. May God hinder him, amen, if we deserve it!" (Martin Luther, "Psalm 101," 1534, American Edition, vol. 13, 194–95.)


R1.2

Chief Mission Officer

(See also R4: Pastoral Formation Committee)

INTRODUCTION

Beginning with the establishment of the office in the Synod's restructuring that took place at the 2010 LCMS Convention—and with implementation of only minor operational role/responsibility adjustments here and there since—the Chief Mission Officer (CMO) is responsible to the President of the Synod for the mission, ministry, and programmatic and coordinative functions which are implemented according to the policies adopted by the Board for National Mission (BNM) and the Board for International Mission (BIM), by providing staff and other resources in support thereof. LCMS Bylaw 3.4.3 also specifies that he serves as the President's liaison to synodwide corporate entities and commissions; works closely with the Chief Financial Officer and Chief Administrative Officer in carrying out the programmatic, administrative, and financial functions of the national Synod; supervises the work of the Office of National Mission (ONM), the Office of International Mission (OIM), the fundraising activity of the national office through the work of our Mission Advancement (MADV) unit, the Synod's communications, public relations, news, and information through the work of our Communications (COMMS) unit; and provides leadership, coordination, and oversight of pre-seminary/seminary education and post-seminary continuing education, and advocacy for pastoral education and health through the work of our Office of Pastoral Education (PED). The CMO also chairs the Pastoral Formation Committee, which was established by 2016 Convention Resolution 6–01.

These CMO duties are carried out in broad support of districts and congregations, organizations and entities, church workers and laypersons around the globe to engage the Synod's emphases of Witness, Mercy, Life Together. We do so in support of the Synod's common mission, adopted in our 1995 Convention—

In grateful response to God's grace and empowered by the Holy Spirit through Word and Sacraments, the mission of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod is vigorously to make known the love of Christ by word and deed within our churches, communities, and world—all and only under the ends policies established by the BIM and BNM and in fulfillment of the seven strategic mission priorities most recently affirmed and adopted by the Synod, 2016 Convention Resolution 4–02A:

- Plan, sustain, and revitalize Lutheran churches.
- Support and expand theological education.
- Perform human care in close proximity to Word and Sacrament ministries.
- Collaborate with the Synod's members and partners to enhance mission effectiveness.
- Promote and nurture the spiritual, emotional, and physical well-being of pastors and professional church workers.
- Enhance early childhood, elementary and secondary education, and youth ministry.
- Strengthen and support the Lutheran family in living out God's design.

Accomplishments over the Past Triennium, 2016–2019

The program areas of the Synod's national office will synchronize strategic internal ministry capabilities and coordinate with the agencies, auxiliaries, and recognized service organizations of the Synod in order to enhance efforts and activities that make known the love of Christ throughout the world.

The “Reports by Program Unit,” following, summarize our teams’ key accomplishments over the past triennium. In my position as CMO, the following accomplishments (not an exhaustive list) are noteworthy:

- Operations—Strenuous efforts have continued throughout the past triennium toward effective management and oversight of Synod program ministries’ financial performance vs. budget, action plans, organizational structure, the deployment human resources, follow-through on assignments coming out of 2016 Synod Convention, ongoing expansion of working relationships, and the continued fostering of highly collaborative, well-coordinated interaction between and within the CMO’s supervised units and
the BIM and BNM. While we are continually seeking improvements wherever opportunities present themselves, it is not an overstatement to say that since the Synod’s major restructuring in 2010, the organization (both nationally and internationally) as a whole has never been performing better than it is right now. Under God’s grace and provision, we expect this positive trend to continue. I am proud of our team and our church body that supports them so strongly!

- **Personnel changes**—Over the course of the triennium, three new unit executive directors were called to service in the Office of International Mission (Rev. Daniel McMillier), the Office of National Mission (Rev. Robert Zagore), the Office of Pastoral Education (Rev. James Baneck), who all on-boarded and assumed their sometimes-daunting and ever-wide-ranging responsibilities with energy, faithfulness, patience, doctrinal integrity, and humility. These godly men joined an already outstanding team of other unit executive directors in LCMS Mission Advancement (Mark Hofman) and LCMS Communications (David Strand). I am filled with thanksgiving and praise to God for the privilege of working with these tireless, dedicated servants of the church. Truly, I get to work with an “all-star” team every day that includes my assistant, Jeannie Smithson. During the past triennium, we also bid farewell and Godspeed to unit executive directors Rev. John Fale (OIM) and Rev. Bart Day (ONM), who served the Synod with distinction for many years between them.

- **2016 Resolution 4–03B Task Force on Recognized Service Organizations**—I had the privilege of chairing this task force, which is recommending bylaw, structural, and operational changes to the RSO program, and whose final report appears in this workbook.

- **LCMS Disaster Response efforts**—As part of LCMS World Relief and Human Care, our highly experienced Disaster Response unit and our “all hands on deck” approach from within the Synod’s other program ministry units performed admirably in the delivery of mercy to people in need worldwide, and most notably in the complex, immediate contexts of major hurricanes such as Harvey, Maria. Owing to the generosity of LCMS donors, sustained efforts in affected disaster zones will most aptly continue over optimal, longer time horizons (2–3 years out).

- **Transparency for Synod constituents and stakeholders**—LCMS COMMS and MADV continued to work closely with me, the Office of the President, the Operations Team (CMO, CAO, and CFO) and LCMS Accounting to provide new tools that will offer even further expansion of our already “best in the history of the Synod” financial and operational transparency. This includes the annual “State of the Synod” issue of *The Lutheran Witness*, a Synod Annual Report that was published for the first time in the fall of 2018, and current/anticipated FAQ-style commentaries and website hyperlinks to *monthly* LCMS statements of financial position and financial activities in *The Reporter*. Our quarterly publication, *Lutherans Engage the World*, is second to none in journalistic excellence as it reports on the life-changing impact that our donors and constituents are making, both here in the U.S. and abroad, through the program ministries of the Synod. Stay tuned for even more—a Synod web-based quarterly “shareholder meeting,” improvements to the Synod’s website (especially in OIM and ONM news and resources) and other expanded communications channels to appear in the upcoming FY20. Proactive approaches like this are just one reason that the LCMS has continued to be granted Accredited Charity Status by the Better Business Bureau (indeed, a very difficult standard for nonprofit organizations to meet) and awarded the Platinum Seal of Transparency by the GuideStar organization, the world’s largest source of information on nonprofit organizations.

**Major Objectives over the Coming Triennium, 2019–2022**

The following are notable CMO current objectives (not an exhaustive list) for the next three years:

- Secure sustainable revenues sufficient to fund domestic and international mission and ministry efforts in accord with mission emphases, priorities, and tasks assigned by Synod in convention—increase through vastly improved reach to potential new donors and improved donor engagement.

- Continue prudent financial management practices and appropriate control of unit operating expense among all units reporting to the CMO. All program ministry units under CMO’s supervision lead the drive to eliminate Synod’s internal borrowing deficit against designated net assets, per targets established in coordination with Synod Board of Directors, Administrative and Operations Teams.

- Assist with harmonizing the LCMS accounting system on upgraded basis across all regional locations of the OIM, in order to establish most effective IC executive leadership management of OIM regional revenues and expenditures.

- Strategically plan for domestic demographic trends affecting all LCMS program ministry units.

- Increase OIM deployed missionary retention.

- Continue to build a high-functioning team at every level of the organization. Increase trust, foster healthy resilience through healthy conflict, commitment, accountability, and focus on results.

- Develop a comprehensive strategy for the Synod’s international schools, addressing Lutheran identity, staffing, and the schools’ role within the mission of the church.
Issues for 2019 Convention Delegate Consideration

2019 Convention floor committees and delegates, the following list presents several important matters (insofar as these are from my perspective as CMO) to which I would draw your attention for awareness and action as you deem appropriate:

- **Clarity, consensus, and harmony on the practical meaning and application of Bylaw 3.8.3.**, with respect to the requirement that the BIM (and within the context of all of its duties and responsibilities set forth in that bylaw) “…shall serve as the only sending agency through which workers and funds are sent to the foreign mission areas of the Synod, including the calling, appointing, assigning, withdrawing and releasing of missionaries (ministers of religion—ordained and ministers of religion—commissioned) and other workers for the ministries of foreign areas …” continues to present a puzzle. Despite the issuance of CCM Opinion 14-2724, a desired clarity, consensus and harmony remains elusive among the laity, church workers, congregations, districts, Synod, synodwide corporate entities, RSOS and non-RSOS and mission societies and other entities and organizations affiliated with the LCMS through official and unofficial means. Please read carefully the comments provided below by the OIM executive director and global staff in regard to the damaging consequences of such lingering unresolved differences of opinion and practice among us in even the most basic and minimally effective communication and coordination of our work as members of one church body, especially in global mission fields outside of the 35 districts of the Synod. This is not a matter of “who controls” or “who’s in charge”—for “absolute control” is not what is needed or desired and no one in the LCMS has the capacity to implement such control absolutely on a global scale—but rather: How can we best honor, love, and respect one another in life together, in Christ, as we strive to advance the Gospel to the peoples and nations of the earth? And then do that in a fashion that reflects utmost excellence in the stewardship of the resources (e.g. the Word, human, talents and expertise and gifts, financial, material, etc.) that God has so abundantly rained down upon His Church?

- **Encouragement to the Synod’s international schools in Asia (Hong Kong, Shanghai, and Hanoi) to be steadfast and thorough in a Lutheran Christian identity and mission**, even in situational contexts where constraints imposed in the left-hand realm would otherwise attenuate or preclude a clear proclamation of the Gospel and the connection of unbelievers to their Savior Jesus.

- **The time has come, for instance, to set in place a sufficiently well-structured and funded LCMS international schools administrative organization that would provide continuous, well-informed guidance and oversight of these very significant enterprises** (some of the largest in Synod, and they are rich in mission and market opportunities, current/future financial assets, physical properties, and human capital) as a matter of chief priority to ensure consistent alignment with and support of Synod mission emphases and priorities (our international schools need, first and foremost, to be about doing the work of the church!); and then to better serve the needs of the international schools themselves (e.g., in recruitment of LCMS-rostered church workers to serve in school administrator, faculty, and staff positions).

Such an administrative-oversight organization (and its staffing) should rightly be located within the CMO’s office (that is, as part of the OIM) and be funded by the vast financial resources generated by these schools themselves, from their own ongoing operations (not taking precious mission dollars that are better applied in other mission and ministry initiatives). It would intentionally/aggressively work to ensure the fulfillment/implementation of BIM ends policies. “Policies determined by the [BIM] (implemented by staff) may include but not be limited to: … establishment and maintenance of international schools” (Bylaw 3.8.3). “[OIM] responsibilities may include but not be limited to: … international schools” (Bylaw 3.8.3.3).

- **The program offices that are under the supervision of the CMO will strongly welcome any resolution bringing about well-defined and sufficiently funded initiatives to effect better communication, coordination, collaboration, and cooperation between all of us—Synod, districts, congregations, RSOS, other agencies, church workers, and congregants—as we go about the work of the church together.**

- We pray that Convention delegates will especially take note and get behind the ONM’s “Making Disciples for Life” and PED’s church worker/student recruitment initiatives.

Reports by Program Unit

**OFFICE OF INTERNATIONAL MISSION (OIM)**

Rev. Daniel McMiller, Executive Director

The Office of International Mission plans, coordinates, and executes LCMS international mission and mercy work in order to expand and sustain the global confessional Lutheran community.

Through the seven current mission priorities of the LCMS, affirmed and adopted at the 2016 Convention and previously cited (above)—whether in new mission starts or working with a mature partner church—our focus is to bring the pure Gospel to new people who do not know Christ, and to labor to plant the seed of the Living Word more deeply with those who already hold it dear by faith. LCMS missionaries spread the Gospel, plant Lutheran congregations, and show mercy. In the reports that follow, it will be evident that this is done both in new fields and where emerging or partner churches request our support to enhance their capacities to tell the world about Jesus today and for generations to come.
In this 125th year of LCMS international missions, our work has grown to a size, scope, depth, and complexity that could be deemed by some as beyond our capacity. Yet God has provided wonderful support from individuals, congregations, districts, the LWML, Mission Central, our seminaries, universities, etc. He has also blessed us with capable leadership on every level of our international work. Our global directors bring with them nearly 70 years of experience on the foreign field. Our International Center staff is small and needs bolstering, but is experienced, working hard and becoming a close-knit unit, supporting one another with patience and love in service to the missionaries, their families, and our partner churches. Missionaries in every region have shown signs of great adjustment, traction in their work, and collegiality within their respective teams. Trust is growing within the far-flung, global organization affectionately and simply known as the “OIM.”

More needs to be done in building up our capacity and improving services to missionaries, partner and emerging partner churches. We must improve our own collaboration with major institutions such as our seminaries and universities, the agencies and auxiliaries of Synod, RSOs, districts, and every type of donor, stakeholder, or supporter imaginable. We strive to give constant, prayerful consideration to potential improvements in our practice to enhance efficiencies, while working within the LCMS ends policies established by the Board for International Mission.

We are confident that OIM has the wide support of our church body, President Harrison, Chief Mission Officer Rev. Robson, the Board of Directors, the Board for International Missions, Chief Administrative Officer, Chief Financial Officer, LCMS Accounting, Communications, Mission Advancement, and Human Resources, etc. In the next triennium, the LCMS Office of National Mission Executive Director, Rev. Robert Zagore, and I will continue examining how we might enhance the sharing of information and resources that collectively might be deployed to the LCMS in service to people of all nations, whether they are on the other side of the globe or in our own backyard. This cooperation should enhance resources available to all our LCMS congregations and districts in cross-cultural efforts.

While some choose to work independently, far more are those who want to walk together with a united voice and a cohesive, multi-generational strategy in bringing the pure Gospel of Christ to all nations. We are honored to walk together with the brothers and sisters of the LCMS in expanding our mission effectiveness. Many are they who pray for and sacrificially support our efforts. The staff and missionaries, along with our many global partners, all rejoice in the support and prayers of the LCMS. There is much for which we ought to be thankful and joyful as Lutherans in mission.

Our Regional Operations Team consists of global directors, regional business managers, and our executive staff. Among us, we continually ask the hard questions. What are the distinctive merits of joint mission endeavors in the name of the LCMS that justify the wonderful support we enjoy? What do we do well in the name of Jesus and on behalf of those who have called us to this service that merits the prayers, offerings, and good will of the LCMS? Are we proactive and effective in preaching Christ crucified to the nations, teaching faithfully and concretely establishing faithful ministry that can continue after we are gone? Are our mercy efforts supportive of the Gospel and in harmony with complex local cultural nuances, history, and relationships? Are our endeavors faithful to the very principles of the Reformation? As we ask these basic questions, and pray for God’s wisdom, we seek means to measure very concretely the outcomes of our efforts while understanding that often our work brings its greatest fruit only after decades of labor, or generations into the future.

Multi-Generational Mission

As a former church planter, I still hear stories from the three fields I served that reflect the need for patience. Only recently, I heard that a boy I taught 33 years ago in inner-city Lima (in my very first missionary evangelism call, after four months of language school) named Alejandro Carrera is now a 45-year-old Lutheran pastor in Peru. A couple years ago, I was told that one of multiple terrorists who had been assigned to kill me, and whom I had spotted on multiple occasions coming late and leaving early at services I conducted in a new church plant in Puente Piedra, Peru, later came to faith. This was in part due to my sermons but also my colleague who followed me in this work, absolved him of his sins in the midst of tears, and then catechized him. Decades later, I learned that this penitent terrorist had also become a Lutheran pastor. The work is often slow, and the fruits not always at first evident, but steadfast, continued labor, prayers, faithful teaching and preaching, bring eternal blessings in God’s good time. When he was asked, “Why didn’t you kill Pastor McMiller?” his response was, “He only preached about Jesus, and Pastor McMiller only came during siesta; we never killed people during siesta.”

From the perspective of church bodies, we can illustrate the perspective of patience in multi-generational efforts by citing war-torn Sierra Leone in Africa. After missionaries had been expelled under threat of their lives, and the country had passed through the great calamities of a horrific civil war and the Ebola crisis, it is now a flourishing church. Today, nearly 40 years after the first missionaries arrived, though impoverished by our standards, they are rich in their own personal stewardship of the Gospel, building their own churches, schools, and seminary with very little North American funding. They are educating their own church leaders and pastors with limited missionary presence (i.e., one career missionary couple, Rev. Doug Thompson and his wife, Angie). After the initial work of LCMS missionaries, many short-term groups assisted this church, and now the Thompsons, all of whom have been exceedingly careful to not create dependencies and only focus on teaching Jesus. Not only does this church body now exercise great ownership and relatively bountiful stewardship in the midst of poverty, but they are also at peace with one another.

Another is the Iglesia Luterana Confesional de Chile. After nearly 100 years of struggle, but with limited foreign missionary presence and carefully measured and limited financial support, this church body is planting congregations throughout the country. With LCMS support in response to multiple disasters, the ILCC has doubled in size in the last decade. It now supports other partners and emerging churches in the region with pastors and theological education for lay leaders and future pastors. The members are also mercifully receiving Venezuelan refugees and assisting the LCMS in providing much needed support of medical supplies back into their formerly rich home country of
Venezuela, which is in the midst of a terrible and prolonged economic crisis. The fruits of the first Lutheran missionaries from Argentina nearly 100 years ago, and one LCMS missionary, the late Rev. Dr. Juan Berndt, over 70 years ago, are now fully abounding to the glory of God.

All our experienced missionaries can tell similar stories from around the world reflecting the need for patience, and long-term, steadfast missionary presence. Their work is most efficient when working through and with partner churches formally working in harmony from generation to generation. While we all have erred in practice, current and past missionaries can speak of terrible mistakes made by well-intentioned but poorly informed help that has led to dependency, entitlements, even corruption, and in some cases the loss of faith. No doubt, our Western eyes can always find places where our resources could make an immediate impact. Yet, the healthy establishment of a new church requires careful teaching and a generation of well-placed and often-limited financial resources aligned with faithfulness to the Gospel, especially the theology of the cross. There are no doubt emergency relief or disaster needs that must be addressed quickly and abundantly when we are able. However, unbridled and poorly informed contributions can lead to jealousies, division in church bodies, corruption, lawsuits, and even imprisonment of church leaders who are led astray by the temptation of resources that might greatly exceed local church needs.

None of us has an easy answer to the proper balance between mercy and ministry of the Word and Sacrament. We all have done too little, and then again at times too much. Nevertheless, those best suited to struggle with these assessments are career missionaries who have learned the local language, history, and culture and sat alongside the local church leaders for years, seeking to more fully understand the context. Furthermore, the career missionary will be there long-term to sort out the consequences or effects of the outside assistance that has been brought to bear. What the missionary learns alongside the local church are lessons upon which we all must build.

With years of experience garnered by sacrificial missionaries who learn the language, history, culture, pains, joys, and sorrows of complex social structures, we begin to understand our partners well. Over time, as we learn from them, and they from us; then we can effectively integrate with Christian principles the best of intentions from two very different worlds. In this context, faithful and mature missionaries with faithful and mature partner church leadership guide our global strategy while working in harmony from generation to generation. We all make mistakes, but there is no substitute for being there long-term, fully engaged in the teaching, preaching, witnessing, and living out of the Gospel of Jesus Christ for years on end.

Missionary Care, Services, and Retention

With this passion from the mature, career missionaries’ perspective, an OIM “priority-one” concern is missionary retention. Care of the missionary, beginning at orientation, must guide OIM’s daily practice. In support of missionaries around the globe, an improved risk assessment and understanding of best practices for security can never be under-estimated. Global safety and security needs have increased, and we are addressing this with a qualified, full-time staff position for the first time in this fiscal year. Realignment of our current staff, and the addition of another new position in Missionary Services, we pray will greatly enhance our attention to missionary care, carefully synchronized with the services provided in our four regional offices. Our staff at the International Center is small, and funds are limited, but we are continually reassessing OIM’s procedures as they integrate with other departments in the Synod.

Four years ago, we began recruiting regional communication personnel. While we understood the overall need to improve communication from the field back to the members of the LCMS, we struggled in working out a way to integrate new, deployed communication assets and paradigms into the excellent LCMS Communications Department that has broad duties of service for the entire Synod. With the expert support of Communications, we are launching a field-driven website bringing the above-mentioned missionaries’ perspective to the LCMS: international.lcms.org. Please check it out.

Communication is not only one-way from the field back to the LCMS constituency. We also have a challenge in communicating more effectively with partner and emerging-partner church leaders. The web is worldwide and LCMS global activity is often scrutinized more often by people overseas than by our own congregation members in the U.S. The above-mentioned website will present a perspective that is real, but not paternalistic or critical. It will be informative while also seeking to protect work and workers in places that could be targeted by those who seek to thwart or destroy our efforts. It is to be a joyful celebration of what LCMS-sent missionaries are doing in the name of the LCMS; in faithfulness to Convention-established mission priorities; in fulfillment of the ends policies established by the Board for International Mission; and therefore, in faithfulness to Scripture and our Lutheran confession.

In the digital era in which we live, all government scrutiny has increased, making demands for more sophisticated banking systems, legal enterprises, record keeping, and accounting procedures. Though we increased the number of missionaries greatly over the last five years, an increase in the staff for the business operations has been lacking. This we are currently attempting to address.

In order to maintain a global operation that communicates effectively and faithfully within its own ranks, we are in the process of establishing a more efficient means for data storage and data sharing. A priority is that those who serve today can pass on accurate information to those who follow. The number of legal documents, reports, board manuals, policies, procedures, and directives continually grow in an organization that is more highly scrutinized than ever before not only by our church body but also by governments around the world. Digital information is mandated. In collaboration with our overworked Regional Business Managers and a small St. Louis Operations Team, we are enhancing integration with the Synod’s Information Technology and Accounting Departments. We eagerly anticipate improved tools for the sake of maintaining accurate shared documents for current operations and accessible historical reference that will serve us effectively for years to come.

Efficiencies that take into account new technologies can lead to better interfacing and simplification of our operations, improved stewardship and, again, missionary and staff retention. It is my prayer that we can fully utilize the gifts of so many wonderful, dedicated and competent servants that God has provided for us both here at the IC and through the global regions...
of OIM to achieve clarity and unity in priorities and operations, all aimed at telling the world about Jesus.

Overseeing these transitions is our new associate executive director of St. Louis Operations, Mr. Christian Boehlke, along with the rest of our OIM executive staff: Rev. Jim Krikava (also Eurasia Director) and Dr. Arthur Just (also CTSFW Professor of Exegetical Studies). Jim has lived and served in central Europe for approximately 20 years. Arthur has lived in Latin America and Spain since his youth, and traveled extensively in partnership with OIM and as a renowned author and professor of Exegetical Theology of Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne. Jim, while serving as director for the Eurasia Region, also serves as associate executive director of Regional Operations for both Eurasia and Asia. Art serves as associate executive director of Regional Operations for Latin America and the Caribbean.

The Challenge of Walking Together

OIM is keenly aware that much happens internationally outside of our purview. We recognize that work done by individuals outside the OIM can bring great fruit. Sometimes we are aware of the activity, at other times, we are not. I am reminded of a pastor who proudly wrote one of our global directors that he was going to begin work in a particular country through his own efforts from his congregation in the northwest of the United States. The LCMS had not called him, nor had he inquired of anyone regarding work in that country. Hence, he did not know that we had a partner church body with about 30 congregations, mercy ministries, and schools already established, all of which are the fruit of LCMS called missionaries who began work there 70 years earlier. There are cases of seminaries being built without our knowledge by well-intentioned supporters, in countries where the LCMS and partner churches had a history of presence and collaboration. Emerging church bodies will not turn down generous offers from individual congregations, pastors, independent mission societies, etc. However, when such work occurs without communication with our missionaries, such surprises can negatively impact or undermine the LCMS called workers' strategy that might have been in progress for years, not only with that particular church, but partners in the area or region. Communication and collaboration can help us avoid duplication of efforts, confusion among our partners, and even expenditures that are simply not good stewardship of the Lord's gifts. Though LCMS activity is never without error, we seek to avoid dependencies, entitlements, and even corruption. In some of the worse cases, the multiple sources of U.S. “Lutheran” dollars, result in church bodies fighting over access to the many different wellsprings freely offered and temptations that divide the church and undermine the Gospel. Finally, unnecessary funding can also be detrimental to the development, blessings, and joy of local firstfruits giving.

We rejoice in the support God provides through the wonderful members of the LCMS. Thanks to the generous outpouring of contributions from Synod donors within the Network Supported Missionary model, we have a relatively large number of missionaries (approximately 130 households) and dozens of short-term missionaries and teams (over 250 individuals last year), all working together within the OIM family. The decrease in non-designated support leaves us administratively a little thin, yet we are very grateful for those who strive to support the efforts of LCMS called and sent missionaries and staff. In thankfulness and in joy for all that has been commended to us, we appeal to all to work with our church leaders in the LCMS to align efforts in a godly way, and thereby strive to set an example to other churches and young missions of what walking together as a church body should embody.

Please also be assured that the OIM rejoices in the many RSOs and efforts of our Synod's agencies and auxiliaries. We have wonderful support from Lutheran Hour Ministries, LWML, our universities, seminaries etc. We recognize our own shortcomings. We acknowledge that much good has occurred globally outside our purview. We confess our inability to be sufficiently proactive in addressing our own need for enhanced collaboration. We can only promise to you our resolve to be faithful to our calling, strive toward improved communication, and in turn ask you to support us in that to which you have called us through the LCMS.

We encourage all to measure independent international endeavors over the same criteria used in reaching the lost in your own backyard. The world has come to your doorstep. Opportunities for outreach to the de-churched, youth of our nation, abandoned U.S. cities, universities, immigrant, and new-language groups abound. Weigh your engagement globally over against the needs to tell others about Jesus and serve with mercy in your own community, often for these same people groups and more. Weigh your ability to sustain an autonomous overseas ministry, via your own costly short-term travels, over against a ministry in your own community, where you have expertise and close proximity to resources, and where lifelong relationships can be established by the Gospel.

As we discuss the challenge of improved working together, we pledge to you that all our LCMS missionaries and administrative staff welcome partnerships. The nature of how those partnerships are to be realized is not easy. Our staff is limited, and we might not be able to do what you want and when you want it. This we lament. Some aspects of these partnerships the church must determine for us, and not OIM for the church. Meanwhile, pray for your church and your congregation’s engagement. Pray for your district and national church leadership. Pray that the Lord bless all those whom He has called for missionary service, that they might remain faithful to that which we have accorded to them through our joint action as the LCMS, and that He also keep them safe in their homes far away for many years to come.

Latin America and the Caribbean Region—Rev. Ted Krey, Regional Director

Celebrating 125 years of spreading the Gospel, planting Lutheran churches, and showing mercy in Latin America Caribbean! At the time of this report, the Latin America Caribbean (LAC) region of the OIM has 45 missionaries supporting 40 church plants in 10 countries. Thirteen are alliance missionary pastors called by partner Lutheran churches working alongside LCMS church-planting teams. The rest are LCMS missionaries, both clergy and laity alike. In 2010, there were 5 LCMS missionaries serving in LAC.

All 10 LCMS church-planting countries have foros, partnership circles that come together in the spring and the fall around the strategic plan of the church, which is ordering the human and financial resources around church planting. Mission
education is our emphasis and something done together. Fifteen districts of the LCMS and more than 200 partners such as the Lutheran Hour, LWML, and many RSOs and congregations support this effort.

Teaching the Gospel is at the heart of OIM and as such her missionaries are the primary carriers of the Gospel as sent by the LCMS to foreign lands. All our efforts focus around this core of making Jesus Christ known for the forgiveness of sins to this generation for the sake of bringing yet others into His kingdom by His means. As such, we are dedicated to spreading the Gospel far and wide, planting Lutheran churches by the leading of the Spirit in His Word, and being a merciful people to our surrounding communities.

**LAC Region Projects**

Luther Academy—OIM LAC fully supports Luther Academy, which has been an excellent means to strengthen the pastorate across Latin America. More than 60 conferences have been held in the past 6 years in Mexico, Guatemala, Panama, Venezuela, Colombia, Paraguay, Argentina, Bolivia, and Chile.

Concordia Seminary the Reformer and Mercy Center—founded in 2018 in Santiago, Dominican Republic, after planning that began in 2010. This is a 4-year program including vicarage. The men are prepared as Evangelists, Shepherds, and Teachers. Professors and students alike spend 10–15 hours a week as evangelists in church planting, with the objective of having planted a church. Greek and Hebrew alike are a staple of the seminary.

Residential Seminary—There are 10 men in residence from Chile, Peru, Mexico, Guatemala, and Spain. Five men graduate this May.

SMP—25 men are studying SMP online with students from an additional 8 countries. Four men graduate this May.

Deaconesses—Deaconesses regional intensives were launched in fall of 2018 in Mexico, Guatemala, Panama, Venezuela, and the Dominican Republic, with 115 women participating. Courses are taught in the spring and fall, with online classes in development. An online Greek class is in development.

Mercy Center—The Mercy Center is an institute of Concordia Seminary meant for laity and church workers alike. The center seeks to prepare the church to be the hands and feet of Jesus in mercy towards neighbors. *Every One His Witness* has also been translated so that a good sturdy witness of the Gospel is given alongside of loving one’s neighbor. Partnerships are with *Lutherans For Life, Hogares Luteranos Buen Pastor*, and *Ambassadors of Reconciliation*, amongst others. Eight conferences are planned throughout Latin America and the Caribbean Region.

Lutheran Hymnal—The new Spanish hymnal will include five complete orders of Divine Service, Matins, and Vespers, the Psalter, Small Catechism, and 600 hymns. It is projected that the hymnal will be received in more than 15 Spanish-speaking countries. Lord willing, the hymnal will be released in spring 2020. The last complete Spanish hymnal was completed by LCMS in the 1950s.

VDMA—The average Lutheran pastor had access to three Lutheran books. Today, thanks to our online VDMA project and the work of many translators and editors, we have released 18 books, various issues of *Journal of Lutheran Mission, Logia, Good News*, and others. 195 Spanish-speaking pastors have access to this online literature via phone, tablet, or computer. Books are prepared for pastors in preaching, Bible studies, academic books, and journals.

**LAC Missions and Partner Churches**

- **Argentina (partner church)—Iglesia Evangélica Luterana Argentina (IELA)—**This mature church body has over 250 congregations and 80 pastors serving throughout the country. Concordia Seminary, founded by LCMS missionaries, is today served by an all Argentinian faculty and is 80 years old. In recent years, the IELA has founded new Lutheran schools and has more than 10 elementary and high schools.

- **Belize (LCMS mission)—**Missionaries have been in Belize for two years. We will celebrate the confirmation of our first Belizian on January 24, 2019, in Seine Bight. Reynelle Gonzales has been associated with the Belize Mission Society for many years and Missionary Duane Meissner has been working with her for several months. We rejoice at this celebration after almost two years of work in the country. Vicar Benjamin Flores continues to instruct another lady in Seine Bight in Spanish, and she will become our first Spanish-speaking confirm and when ready. Vicar Flores has also made inroads into the community in Riversdale with kids’ club activities. As we endeavor to center our work more around the hub in Belmopan, the capital, participation in worship and kids’ club at Banana Bank Ranch continues to grow. We also provide regular ESL classes to Spanish-speaking participants in Valley of Peace (an UNHCR refugee settlement). Ties with a group in Orange Walk continue to strengthen as we include a family of Peruvian Belizeans in our short-term activity planning and Belize FORO.

- **Bolivia (International Lutheran Council, ILC, partner church)—Iglesia Cristiana Evangélica Luterana (ICEL)—**Bolivia is a landlocked country divided between its mountainous west and lowland east, with a strong indigenous culture. The ICEL has sought theological and continuing education resources for her pastors from the LCMS, and men preparing for the ministry in the ICEL are attending Seminario Concordia in the Dominican Republic. A primarily rural church, the ICEL hopes to move the seminary-formed future pastors into urban church-planting contexts.

- **Brazil (partner church)—The Igreja Evangélica Luterana Concórdia (IELB) is a mature church which was planted by 102 LCMS missionaries from 1901 to 1976. Today, the IELB has over 2,000 congregations and more than 800 pastors. The IELB is the first daughter church of the LCMS to purposely work overseas in western Portuguese-speaking Africa planting churches. Eleven pastors were ordained two years ago, and more than 90 churches have been planted. Additionally, the IELB has bought a compound and founded a seminary as well.**
- Cayman Islands (LCMS mission)—An international congregation called Safe Harbour Lutheran Church proclaims the Gospel to the people of this Caribbean UK territory of just over fifty thousand people. Without a full-time missionary pastor since 2017, the congregation has been served by retired pastors volunteering their time for 3-5-month periods on island. It is the prayer of the people of Safe Harbour that a new full-time missionary pastor would be called to serve them and assist in reaching the island of Grand Cayman with the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

- Chile (partner church)—Chile sits nestled between the Andes Mountains and the Pacific Ocean, extending 2,670 miles from north to south. The Confessional Lutheran Church of Chile (Iglesia Luterana Confesional de Chile (ILC-CHI)) began from one church and school in the northern Chilean port city of Valparaiso. Since 2010, it has been the fastest-growing confessional Lutheran church body in South America. New mission starts in the capital, Santiago, extended the national footprint of the ILC-CHI. Partnering with LCMS Disaster Response, the ILC-CHI served Chileans affected by a series of natural disasters, including the 2010 Chilean earthquake, fires, and flooding. This has resulted in new congregations and mercy centers. The congregation in Talca, Maule department, is a direct result of the ILC-CHI’s disaster response and has given birth to another congregation in nearby Constitucion and has begun planting a third congregation in the city of Concepcion. In the Valparaiso area, a devastating fire in 2014 left the Cerro de la Cruz neighborhood of 2,500 homes almost destroyed. The ILC-CHI has begun serving the neighborhood and recently dedicated a new mercy and community center. The ILC-CHI is a model for faithful, loving response to natural disasters, showing Christian mercy and sharing the Gospel with those affected.

- Cuba (exploratory)—As a result of historic political situations, the LCMS does not currently have officially recognized partnerships that are active in Cuba. However, recently there have been invitations to renew relationships with a historic partner church body, the Iglesia Evangélica de Confesión Luterana en Cuba (IECLC). The IECLC currently has three house churches and one group that would like to form a congregation. The churches are in the provinces of Isla de Juventud and Artemisa. The IECLC also has interests in reestablishing the Martin Luther Institute of Theology (Instituto Teológico Martín Lutero), for the training of pastors.

- Dominican Republic (LCMS mission)—Missionaries have served here for 13 years. Currently there are five missions, two Lutheran days schools, and a seminary. Concordia Seminary the Reformer and Mercy Center serves as a regional seminary, forming men both residentially (10) and online (25) from 14 different countries. A regional deaconess program, which initiated in the fall of 2018, serves 115 women in Panama, Mexico, Guatemala, Venezuela, and Dominican Republic. The online program is in conjunction with Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Indiana, and is a Spanish-English SMP program. There are two Dominican pastors, with a third to be ordained in September this year, and four deaconesses. The seminary faculty of eight consists of two Argentinians, one Venezuelan, and two LCMS professors. Additionally, the seminary has four adjunct professors in other countries.

- Guatemala (partner church)—We rejoice that a partner church of many years now participates in outreach to their brothers in Honduras. Dr. Abdiel Orozco, President of the Lutheran Church in Guatemala (CONLUT), has participated in the Honduran FORO since its inception. Reverend Ignacio Chan was elected as the new president as of January 2019. Lutheran Academy classes and deaconess courses in Guatemala include invited participants from the Lutheran Church in Nicaragua and Lutheran missionaries in Honduras. CONLUT meets at the end of January to discuss the possibility of forming a FORO to advance work in Guatemala. Their leadership also wants to discuss opening a medical school in Guatemala in collaboration with a benefactor in that country.

- Haiti (partner church)—The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Haiti (ELCH) ordained 11 of its pastors in July of 2017. These men received their formation from their seminary in Leyogone, which is largely directed by their theological director, who uses pastors and professors from the LCMS to teach classes. It is estimated that more than 500 LCMS congregations work with the Haitian Lutheran church and many other denominations in Haiti. Disaster Response worked in 2018 in coordination with Ministry in Motion to put 50 roofs on pastors’ houses and congregations that had lost them due to a hurricane. Numerous wells have been drilled in front of Lutheran congregations too.

- Honduras (LCMS mission)—The third Honduras FORO meets in early February 2019. Born and launched from the formative work of the Lutheran Church in Nicaragua, the Honduras FORO has already helped to improve communication between the church workers in Southern Honduras, LCMS supporting congregations in the U.S., Lutheran Church in Canada leadership, Lutheran Church in Nicaragua, and Lutheran Church in Guatemala (CONLUT). Rocky Mountain District is a partner to the work here. As we focus more attention on the joint effort in Southern Honduras, we hope other LCMS congregations will join to support this work. Members of the mission in Comayaguela are presently working to establish a national church body recognized by the government of Honduras.

- Jamaica (LCMS mission)—The mission work of the LCMS in Jamaica is led primarily by an alliance missionary, the Rev. Obot Itie. Obot, his wife, Abasifreke, and their young daughter, Abasifion, have served in
the Kingston area over 11 years. He has continued leading the original LCMS mission of St. Andrew in mid-town Kingston, has planted a second congregation, Faith, in downtown Kingston, and is working on establishing a third two hours west of the capital. A native Jamaican, Claudious Dell, is being prepared for ministry and doing evangelism work in the western Jamaican parish of Westmoreland. A new ministry center in the Halfway Tree area of Kingston was dedicated in 2018. It is currently being renovated to provide missionary housing, short-term team accommodations, and worship space.

- Mexico (partner church)—In partnership with the Lutheran Synod of Mexico (LSM) or Sinodo Luterano de México (SLM), the LCMS currently has work taking place throughout the country. A FORO has been established to further coordinate these efforts. Throughout the four sub-regions, the LCMS supports the work of our partner church (LSM) through online and in-residence pastoral formation. Such efforts are supported through a partnership with Concordia the Reformer Seminary in the Dominican Republic, Luther Academy, and the establishing of the Martin Luther Institute (an institute of the LSM). Theological courses support the formation of pastors, deaconesses, and other church leaders. These efforts continue to increase the number of ordained pastors in the LSM from three and have already doubled to six their number in the past few years. In addition, there are currently two young men studying at Concordia the Reformer Seminary, with over 10 in online programs. The number of pastors in 5 years could be more than 20. Additionally, OIM has two full-time missionaries serving in Mexico City. Rev. Daniel Conrad serves the congregation of San Pablo, and Rev. Andrew Schlund serves the congregation of El Buen Pastor. Both also serve as mentors to students in theological training programs.

- Nicaragua—This church body is planted by Lutheran Church Canada and is a partner church of Lutheran Church of Canada (LCC) and the ILC. She has more than 27 congregations and pastors and an even greater number of deaconesses. Her seminary is in Chinandega and is between cycles with professors coming from Canada. Recent efforts on the part of OIM are to bring continued education courses to pastors via Luther Academy by Spanish-speaking professors.

- Panama (LCMS mission)—The work of the LCMS in Panama has been centered on planting churches and strengthening existing congregations. Currently, efforts are under way to (re)plant a church in Sabanitas (Colón area). Plans for future evangelism include expanding the work in the area of Margarita, also in the Colón area. The formation of pastors and deaconesses is also a key component of LCMS work in Panama. Rev. Brian Gauthier serves as a theological educator, where he assists with training and mentoring pastors, while Deaconess Eva Rickman assists with diocesan formation. Rev. Arthur Rickman also serves alongside our partners in Panama in various capacities. Additionally, Rev. Arthur Rickman serves as an area facilitator for the countries of Cuba, Colombia, Mexico, and Panama. The Gauthiers and Rickmans also serve the needs of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Panama (Iglesia Evangélica Luterana de Panamá, La IELPA) as various other needs arise.

- Paraguay—(Partner church) Landlocked Paraguay sits between Argentina, Brazil, and Bolivia. The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Paraguay (Iglesia Evangélica Luterana del Paraguay, IELP) began with Lutheran immigrants from Brazil in the 1930s and today has more than 60 congregations. After several generations as an immigrant church, intentional expansion beyond the eastern base of the church body has begun. LCMS partners with Lutheran Hour Ministries to help the IELP expand to both the cities and rural areas throughout Paraguay.

- Peru—(LCMS mission) LCMS OIM Mission has worked diligently to found a new Lutheran church in Peru, beginning in the capital of Lima. The congregation in the Los Olivos neighborhood is outgrowing its current facility and looking for a new site. Castillo Fuerte (“Mighty Fortress”) mercy house focuses on the children of the neighborhood of La Victoria, who receive educational help and Bible teaching while many of their parents are working in the nearby fabric and clothing factories. This has given birth to a new congregation, where multiple Baptisms are a common occurrence. In the San Borja neighborhood, English classes have resulted in many contacts and several people who are ready to begin the process of confirmation into the Lutheran Church. Contacts in Lima have also moved to other parts of the country, and the team is exploring the possibility of expanding to other areas.

The most exciting news is that this young church mission has already begun to send men to prepare for the Holy Ministry. The first son of this mission is preparing for his vicarage, and a second student is finishing his first year in seminary. The prospect of Peruvian congregations served by seminary-trained Peruvian pastors is only a few years away.

- Puerto Rico (LCMS mission)—In 2015, the LCMS returned to intentional, full-time mission work in this U.S. territory by deployment of two missionaries for service in the city of Mayagüez. Previous work had established the small congregation of Príncipe de Paz (Prince of Peace) in this western city, with its own constitution and facility. In 2017, Hurricane Maria wreaked havoc in this U.S. commonwealth, and the LCMS responded with a significant disaster response effort. That effort has seen over 2,000 bags of relief supplies distributed, over 50 roofs rebuilt, and classes offered in English and music to over 70 disaster victims. During this effort, a second congregation was planted in Ponce, Puerto Rico’s second largest
city. The mission team in Puerto Rico now consists of three ordained pastors, a commissioned teacher, a deaconess, a native Puerto Rican lay evangelist enrolled in seminary by distance, and a new Lutheran Hour (CPTLN) office with its own director.

- **Spain (LCMS mission)**—The work in Spain began in 1998 in partnership with the Argentinian church and the LCMS. In 2015, LCMS missionaries took on the work from the Argentinian church and three churches have been planted in Sevilla, Madrid, and Cartagena. Due to many members reaching out through the Internet, the church has members in 20 cities and has doubled from 70 in 2015 to 120 in 2019. Additionally, they have gone from one Spaniard pastor to a second being ordained in 2018 and three more in preparation.

- **Uruguay (partner church)**—Uruguay is a heavily secularized country of 3 million people in the Southern Cone of South America, between Brazil and Argentina. LCMS missionaries work together with the Lutheran Church of Uruguay (Iglesia Luterana del Uruguay, ILdU) and Lutheran Hour Ministries to reach out beyond the capital, Montevideo, where St. Paul Lutheran Church and School were established in the 1940s. Rev. James Sharp and his wife, teacher Angela, focus on training and equipping local leaders, including theological education and identification of potential church workers.

In the northern Uruguayan town of Chapicuy, construction has begun on the first new Lutheran Church building in the country for over 70 years. In the Montevideo City Center Mission, LCMS supported Deaconess Valeria Bustamante’s mercy ministry serves people who commute from the metropolitan area to work, shop, and go to school downtown, as well as the many immigrants who are coming to Uruguay from other parts of Latin America. The staff reaches out with mercy projects and educational opportunities to connect with unbelieving Uruguayans.

OIM and Lutheran Church Extension Fund (LCEF) are participating in the educational foundation that operates the 1,400-student St. Paul School as they seek to open the first Spanish-speaking Lutheran university. This university has the potential to support educational and mission projects all over Latin America.

- **Venezuela (partner church)**—We continue to pray for and support the people and the pastors of the Iglesia Luterana Venezuela (ILV) in this economically depressed country. The 16 pastors who hold positions in Venezuela provided a comprehensive package of projects to support future church planting and mercy projects at the first Venezuela FORO staged in Dominican Republic. The projects include support for their Bible institute, Juan de Frias; a circuit visitor network to encourage and support pastors; mercy houses for accommodating families close to a hospital; pre-natal and family care for young mothers; a national youth committee; and a mission pastor in western Venezuela. Hyperinflation hit over a million percent in 2018 and 25 percent of the membership of the church has gone in exodus to other countries. Many of these are now congregating in LCMS missions such as Peru and Chile, but also in Bolivia and Panama. OIM has provided all pastors a week of respite and is sending via its Chilean church partner life-saving medicines to the Venezuelan congregations four times a year.

**Eurasia Region**—Rev. James Krikava, Associate Executive Director–Regional Operations Eurasia and Asia

The OIM has a particular stake in this year’s Convention, at which—among many blessings—our beloved LCMS commemorates the sending of her first international missionary. Likely many do not know the name of Rev. Theodore Naether, who was given by his God the bravery of faith that enabled him and his family to pick up and move to India, where he would bring the Gospel of Jesus Christ to a people unknown to them, seemingly strange to them, perhaps even frightening to them, and in a land so very far away. And there was no turning back, only lots of unknowns (no small world, no planes, no cell phones, no GPS, and only moral support from the sending church abroad). He took up his task with a Bible, the Lutheran Confessions, a few other good books, the prayers of the saints abroad, a Baptist of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, the Word of Christ crucified preached (1 Corinthians 1:23), the Word of forgiveness of the risen Savior of mankind who has placed His Word into our mouths (John 20:21–23), and the body and blood of the Lord, given and poured out for the forgiveness of sins. And as Luther put it so well, “For where there is forgiveness of sins, there is also life and salvation” (Luther’s Small Catechism, Part VI, Q&A 3).

After 124 years, what pastor Naether took with him is what we continue to take with us into the many international mission fields established by the LCMS over the past century and a quarter. With contemporary ease of travel, amazing technological advancements, and truly remarkable support of missionaries through the OIM, the world has truly gotten smaller, faster, and more efficient, with instant communication at the click of a mouse and many other advantages and blessings. Yet, with all of this, it is still the unchanged and unchanging Gospel in Word and Sacrament through which the Holy Spirit continues to work that mysterious and miraculous conversion in the hearts of Christians. We may not have missionary Naether’s name on the tip of our tongues. But this is really a good thing. For through the preaching office, it is Christ who is at work under the forms of forgettable sinful men. And He is never forgotten but seen under humble forms of human flesh, Word, water, bread, and wine; called into His service of salvation, won and given us by grace alone, through faith alone, by the Word alone.

It is an exciting time to be involved in LCMS international missions today! We are looking at LCMS missions in over 40 countries of the world, with dozens of partner churches and allies in fellowship with the LCMS communicating, collaborating, and cooperating with us in ever-expanding ways to further the spread the word of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, plant congre-
The work in Eurasia varies greatly, not least due to the immense geographical area of the region from Europe (actually Greenland is included on the Eurasia Map) all the way to Vladivostok, Russia, on the Sea of Japan and including most all of Europe, the Middle East, all the former states of the old USSR, and Mongolia. One can only imagine the great diversity of culture over such an expanse; however, while sensitive to culture, we strive to find a proper balance between contextualization of the universals of the Lutheran Church and faith. It is easy to become oversensitive to culture, forgetting that all culture among people is the product of a fallen world and entangled by the sin of Adam. There still needs to be that divine counter-culture which can be recognized by Christians (in our case, confessional Lutheran Christians) the world over, so that Christ may be seen, heard, and remembered—and not us. As annual site visits are made to the areas of work and influence in Eurasia, it is a priority of OIM Eurasia to observe how the church, whether in the former Soviet Union, the Baltic States, Eastern, Central or Western Europe, is not merely sensitive to the given culture but especially recognized by the universals of Lutheranism. For example, whether we can understand the language of the Divine Service of Word and Sacrament, we should be able to recognize where we are even by the external markers of the Lutheran liturgical life of the mission church.

It has been an amazing experience for me personally, having spent 16 years as a missionary in Central and Eastern Europe, to witness the general tendency to avoid secular intrusion into the church’s worship life as well as the keen interest in the history of the Lutheran Church in a given country. As an example, the people of the revived Czech Lutheran Church dug deeply into the theology and work of Jiří Třanovský, a Czech student in Wittenberg around 1600. His monumental hymnal includes translations of more 16th-century Lutheran hymns than all American Lutheran hymnals combined. Also, a thorough study of Luther’s Formula Missae and his Deutsche Messe led them eagerly to embrace and adopt the Order of Service from the 1530 Agenda of the Lutheran Church of Minden, Germany. (It is quite similar to Divine Service V from LSB.) Such decisions enhancing Lutheran identity are quite indicative of European churches generally. What a joy to have had a part in this development since the fall of Communism. They have understood well article XXIV of the Augsburg Confession: “The chief purpose of all ceremonies is to teach the people what they need to know about Christ.” In similar ways, this same mentality can be noticed in Eastern Europe and Russia due to German Lutheran influence not only in Russia but in the Baltic states, Ukraine, Romania, and elsewhere.

Our actual work encompasses actual missionary work on the ground, support of partner and emerging Lutheran churches through theological education, and mercy projects connected with Lutheran Word and Sacrament ministry. On the ground, missionaries are working among Kazakhs in Mongolia, in Kyrgyzstan, Germany, Romania, and Italy (OIM also has two missionaries and their families in Spain, but Spain is still under the direction of the Latin America Region since the original work in Spain began under the Lutheran Church of Argentina). We are rebuilding our work in Russia with two lay missionaries working in St. Petersburg and two theological educators teaching at the seminary of the Ev. Luth. Church of Ingria in Russia (ELCIR) in Koltushi, near St. Petersburg, Russia. Our full-time theological educator in the seminary of the Siberian Ev. Luth. Church (SELC) has now retired, but the Siberians now have a full faculty of their own indigenous pastors and teachers. Among our Russian-speaking work, both of these seminaries are involved in providing continuing education for Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Ukraine, and Belarus. While OIM Eurasia supports them in these efforts, the fine Russian Lutheran teachers are providing a valuable service to these churches. Our own LCMS men are also involved in this work, but it is always better to have qualified men teaching who are completely at home with the language and mentality of the believers being served with the Gospel.

Other theological education in the region, which is sponsored by OIM Eurasia, includes:

1. CTSFW STM program in Gothenburg, Sweden. OIM Eurasia sponsors study for the more advanced indigenous pastors of the Eurasia region who can handle instruction in English.

2. Luther Academy Riga is the seminary of the Ev. Luth. Church of Latvia. OIM is assisting the Latvians in their 6-year reaccreditation process, which will now also be recognized throughout the EU with an English language seminary curriculum. The Latvian church is a strong partner with the LCMS, and we will hopefully be providing the newly accredited seminary with one full-time theological educator for their faculty as well as several associate professors from our region who will serve in Riga, teaching 1–2 week intensive courses.

3. Through Eurasia Regional support, we sponsor numerous pastoral conferences through NYLT (the Network of Young Lutheran Theologians), Corpus Christi (an annual youth conference patterned after the LCMS Higher Things), an annual theological conference for pastors and laymen from Central Europe, regular 1-week seminars for theological training and continuing education for the Ev. Luth. Church in Ukraine, and assistance with similar seminars in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan.

Mercy projects include:

1. The Hope Center in St. Petersburg, part of the EL-CIR’s work in Russia.

2. The Faith and Hope Center in Novosibirsk, connected to the work of SELC in Russia.

Other efforts:

1. We currently have three GEO missionaries and one career missionary assisting in the refugee work of our partner church, SELK (Independent Ev. Luth. Church of Germany).

2. We have LCMS pastors serving in international Lutheran congregations in Prague, Frankfurt, and Kaiserslautern (in cooperation with the LCMS military chaplaincy office).
3. Over the last two years, we have been sponsoring an Alliance Missionary from Romania, who by the Holy Spirit has started a congregation in Bucharest and is also working to do the same in Padua, Italy. From this faithful servant, our interest in Mediterranean missions is growing. We have the potential for another indigenous pastor to start work in Rome and to help out in Padua.

For all of this we give thanks to our gracious and merciful Lord for expanding His kingdom to many unlikely places on the globe. There is still much room to expand our efforts in the Eurasia region. To be a witness of the Lord opening doors to us is truly a labor of love. We thank you for your guidance and support and pray the Lord of the harvest that He will continue to bless us with faithful servants in the mission of God in our world.

Africa Region, West and Central Area—Rev. Gary Schulte, Area Director

I’ve been saying for as long as I can remember that the planting of the church in West and Central Africa is generational in nature, not something that can be adequately accomplished or fairly evaluated over a five- or even twenty-year outreach plan. Now I truly think the Lord of the Harvest has given my wife and me a unique perspective to evaluate the truth of that contention as, last year, Stephanie and I celebrated the 30th anniversary of our arrival in West Africa as young missionaries. In addition, we were blessed to visit 11 of the 13 countries in which the LCMS is currently involved with mission and partner churches. That has added quite a bit of latitude to the already longitudinal nature of these observations.

The OIM has been the consistent player in this blessed history of church planting and mercy work. So now I’m going to share with you just a few of the stories we were telling everyone on our recent home service to show you just how blessed our involvement has been here from generation to generation. Stephanie and I bear eyewitness testimony to each of these blessed accounts.

Rev. James Yasseh in Sierra Leone—In her mercy medical work, Steph, who is the Mercy Medical Coordinator for the region, was blessed to oversee four Mercy Medical Teams (MMTs) in a two-year period as well as half a dozen CHE (Community Health Evangelism) events. Of the four MMTs, the one in Sierra Leone is the one that has moved our hearts the most so far. Held in the former missionary home of Rev. Ricky and Kim Jacob, God began the redemption of this area through this work of mercy from three different hellish scours—such as the scourges of warfare, pestilence, and persecution. The Jacob’s home became the headquarters of a northern rebel group during the war years, where daily executions and other atrocities occurred on a daily basis. Just as the nation was getting on its feet again after the long war ended, they became the epicenter of the Ebola outbreak that not only killed thousands but also wiped out 90 percent of their medical doctors! The third scourge threatening the existence of this baby church in the Kono region has been the rapid spread of Islam. An area that was 20 percent Muslim when Ricky arrived is now 80 percent Muslim! So this medical team manifested the healing mercy of Jesus in an environment where people have no idea what mercy is. Among the most merciful was James Yasseh, who has been the principal teacher of the church for more than a decade. He helped out in the pharmacy, gently explaining to the patients, often mothers with four or five kids in tow, how to take the medicines prescribed to them. As the day progressed, the afternoon sun advanced on their little makeshift pharmacy. We kept moving our distribution table further back in the room to get it out of its merciless heat. But Francis, the local pharmacist, had to sit in the front in the full sunlight to distribute the meds to the people. At one point, Steph, as she turned from the table where she was filling pre-
scorations, saw James hovering over Francis with his own body to protect Francis from the sun. This was not done for show. This was the fruit of a humble servant of God. James, by the way, is the son of one of the first Leonean church leaders ever baptized and trained. He and the other Leonean church leaders are super eager to leapfrog off this signal event to begin a new effort to evangelize the Muslims in the area. Within weeks of the MMT, the church opened a new training center in the area!

Please pray for the new generation of LCMS missionaries bringing the love and mercy of Christ to this poor, struggling part of the world, where the church is sorely persecuted! Rev. Jacob Gaugert, Rev. Micah Wildauer, and Rev. Ryan McDermott are teaching at the international seminary in northern Togo. Rev. Steve Schumacher is training men for the ministry at the seminary in Accra, Ghana. Rev. David Erber is working with the current pastors to get them ready for true leadership as they enter upon a new generation in the church, where last year they elected only their second church president in 65 years of existence. Rev. Doug Thompson is helping James Yasbeh and others in Sierra Leone to bring that church to the next level of pastoral formation as they are working to establish a new seminary there. Rev. Charles Wokoma is serving in our oldest partner church of West Africa, the Lutheran Church of Nigeria (LCN). The LCN’s rich history of bold national leadership from Rev. Jonathan Udo Ekong, and many generations of missionary work, beginning with the pioneers Rev. Henry Nau and Deaconess Helen Kluck, has been well documented. Rev. Wokoma, with the help of periodic volunteer teachers, serves tirelessly in a faithful—and in our largest—partner seminary in Africa. Please pray for these missionaries of your church and their families! And support their work! It’s what we do! It’s what we’ve been doing for blessed generation after generation! To God be the glory!

Africa Region, Eastern and Southern Area—
Rev. Shauen Trump, Area Director

The OIM collaboratively supports and encourages God’s people in Lutheran churches or Lutheran mission areas across Eastern and Southern Africa to enact the Holy Spirit’s work of building the church such that the clear proclamation of the Gospel may go forth.

The OIM works closely with the following church bodies in mutually agreed activities that spread the Word, plant churches, and show mercy. These relationships are our highest priority in this area due to the opportunities they represent for the Gospel and the OIM’s capacity and resources that can be brought to bear for those particular opportunities:

- Evangelical Lutheran Church of Kenya (Fellowship Partner, 2004)
- Lutheran Church of Uganda (Fellowship Requested)
- Lutheran Church of East Africa (Fellowship Requested)
- Ethiopian Evangelical Church of Mekane Yesus
- Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania—Select Dioceses
- Confessional Lutheran Church—Malawi Synod
- Lutheran Mission in Africa—Synod of Thousand Hills (Fellowship Requested)
- Ethiopian Evangelical Lutheran Church (Fellowship Requested)

The OIM also has relationships with other church bodies but has limited ability to engage due to a lack of resources to dedicate to the opportunities or due to the church body’s existing capacity to do the work God has put before it. The OIM currently has some level of engagement beyond correspondence with the following church bodies:

- Lutheran Church of Southern Africa (Fellowship Partner, 1989)
- Evangelical Lutheran Church of South Sudan / Sudan (Fellowship Requested)
- South Sudan Evangelical Lutheran Church (Fellowship Requested)
- Igreja Crista da Concórdia em Moçambique
- Lutheran Church of Sudan
- Fiagonana Loterana Malagasy

Categorized by the Synod’s mission priorities, the following examples demonstrate the kind of work the OIM is doing in this area and what she anticipates doing in the next triennium.

1. Plant, sustain, and revitalize Lutheran churches

Through the OIM, the church currently strives to provide funding, missionaries, or other material support for

- A local missionary pastor of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya to plant churches in the remote northwest Turkana region
- The Mission Training Center program in the South East of Lake Victoria Diocese of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania, which includes the expectation that program participants plant a new congregation before graduation from the program
- Motorcycle grants to provide local pastors the means to visit congregations and mission areas
- A local pastor or seminary student to provide catechesis and Word and Sacrament Ministry to rapidly growing numbers of refugees in the refugee camps of Kenya and Uganda
- The Mission Training Center program in the Lutheran Church of Uganda, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya, and Confessional Lutheran Church—Malawi Synod, which provides training for lay leaders of congregations and often functions as a pre-seminary program
- Guest preaching, administration of Holy Communion, confirmation, and Baptism in the course of visits
- Roofing of church buildings for congregations transitioning into larger or more permanent worship spaces (also Priority 3—Human Care)
In the next triennium, the OIM hopes to continue and expand upon the work above and additionally recruit missionaries or provide new material support to:

- Add a missionary to plant a church in Karen, Kenya, and support church-planting efforts in other outreach areas of Kenya, including Murang’a and Lodwar
- Support new Mission Training Center programs in Malawi, South Africa, and Rwanda
- Add two missionaries to establish an English as a Foreign Language program in Tanzania in part to enable relationship-building with non-Christians

**2. Support and expand theological education**

Through the OIM, the church currently strives to provide funding, missionaries, or other material support for the following seminaries:

- Matongo Lutheran Theological College in Kenya
- Lutheran Theological College in Uganda
- Mekane Yesus Seminary in Ethiopia
- St. Peter Lutheran Theological Seminary in Tanzania
- Lutheran Theological Seminary in South Africa

In addition, the OIM supports the following programs in the sphere of theological education:

- Development of an Amharic hymnal for use in Ethiopia

In the next triennium, the OIM hopes to continue and expand upon the work above and additionally recruit missionaries or provide new material support to:

- Establish a sponsorship program for seminary students attending school in the area
- Support the costs for representatives from Kenya, Uganda, and Ethiopia to attend the triennial Hymn Writer-Translator’s Conference
- Start a program of Local Leadership Development and Care in Ethiopia, Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zambia (also Priority 4—Collaborate and Priority 5—Worker Care)
- Expand theological scholarships to include new pastoral and deaconess students from Rwanda, Malawi, Sudan, Ethiopia, and Zambia
- Provide introduction seminars for the new Amharic hymnal in Ethiopia
- Add three missionaries to the faculty of Matongo Seminary in Kenya—a theological educator, a deaconess instructor, and a music/voice teacher
- Add a missionary to the faculty of Mekane Yesus Seminary in Ethiopia
- Add a missionary to the faculty of St. Peter’s Seminary in Tanzania
- Add three missionaries to the faculty of Lutheran Theological College of Uganda—a theological educator, a deaconess instructor, and an administrative seminary principal/president
- Add two missionaries to establish an English as a Foreign Language program in Tanzania in part to enable seminarians and pastors to access the abundant resources available in English, including English-based seminaries and theological materials

**3. Perform Human Care in close proximity to Word and Sacrament Ministry**

Through the OIM, the church currently strives to provide funding, missionaries, or other material support for:

- Mercy Medical Teams in Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, and Madagascar
- An Area Nurse Educator in Tanzania
- Church construction matching grants, including tin roofs in Madagascar, Kenya, Tanzania, Malawi, Uganda, and Ethiopia
- Water projects in Ethiopia, Tanzania, and Malawi
- Agricultural Consultancy in Malawi, Tanzania, and Kenya (also Priority 7—Strengthen Families)
- Scholarships to professional governance-training programs
- Roofing of church buildings for congregations transitioning into larger or more permanent worship spaces (also Priority 1—Plant Churches)
- Christ’s Care for Children, sponsoring over 300 children in 6 sites and boarding schools in Kenya (also Priority 6—Youth Education)
- Project24 building school-boarding sites in Kenya (also Priority 6—Youth Education)

In the next triennium, the OIM hopes to continue and expand upon the work above and additionally recruit missionaries or provide new material support to:

- Support church bodies developing their office of deaconess
- Expand the Christ’s Care for Children: Kenya program to double the number of children in the program
- Construct two additional Project24 school boarding facilities in Kenya
- Initiate a multi-year malaria education and eradication program in Tanzania
- Add missionaries to provide medical services and education in Uganda and Tanzania

**4. Collaborate with the Synod’s members and partners to enhance mission effectiveness**

Through the OIM, the church currently strives to provide funding, missionaries, or other material support for:

- Newly deploying missionaries to participate in online missionary training provided by Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Indiana
• On-field missionaries to participate in a continuing education program provided by Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri

• Partner’s meetings for Ethiopia and Uganda

In the next triennium, the OIM hopes to continue and expand upon the work above and additionally recruit missionaries or provide new material support to

• Encourage and participate in partner’s meetings in additional countries

• Facilitate the formation of a council of South Sudanese Lutheran churches

• Extend invitations to the Ethiopia Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus (EECMY) to observe and participate in LCMS activities for mutual benefit and learning

• Start a program of Local Leadership Development and Care in Ethiopia, Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zambia (also Priority 2—Theological Education and Priority 5—Worker Care)

• Add two missionaries to establish an English as a Foreign Language program in Tanzania in part to enable increased mission effectiveness through access to additional resources and relationships

5. Nurture pastors, missionaries, and professional workers to promote spiritual, emotional, and physical well-being

Through the OIM, the church currently strives to provide funding, missionaries, or other material support for

• Team placement of all missionaries with language proficiency requirements

• Access to the Sacraments for missionary teams not placed into contexts where there is a fellowship partner

• Annual goal-setting and reviews for missionaries

• Professional development course (12–15 classroom hours) offered on-field to missionaries once per year

• Missionary care event focused on fellowship, rejuvenation, worship, counseling, and spiritual care offered on-field to missionaries once per year

• Six-month sabbaticals to missionaries in their seventh year of service

• Facilitation of Luther Academy, Pastoral Leadership Institute International, Ambassadors of Reconciliation, short-term teams, volunteers, and grants to local church bodies for the ongoing care and development of their workers

In the next triennium, the OIM hopes to continue and expand upon the work above and additionally recruit missionaries or provide new material support to

• Establish Council of Elders formed from retired missionaries to provide feedback, guidance, and historical background

• Develop a Member Care team

• Start a program of Local Leadership Development and Care in Ethiopia, Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zambia (also Priority 2—Theological Education and Priority 4—Collaborate)

6. Enhance elementary and secondary education and youth ministry

Through the OIM, the church currently strives to provide funding, missionaries, or other material support for

• Karama Academy (primary school)–Kibera, Kenya

• Church worker’s children’s scholarship fund in South Africa

• Christ’s Care for Children, sponsoring over 300 children in six sites and boarding schools in Kenya (also Priority 3—Human Care)

• Project24 building school boarding sites in Kenya (also Priority 3—Human Care)

In the next triennium, the OIM hopes to continue and expand upon the work above and additionally recruit missionaries or provide new material support to

• Open scholarships for Turkana primary school teachers to go to teacher training college

• Add a missionary to establish a Lutheran elementary school association in Uganda

• Add missionaries to teach in primary schools in Uganda

• Add missionaries to support youth work in Uganda and Kenya

• Add missionaries to teach in primary, middle, and secondary schools in Tanzania

7. Strengthen and support the Lutheran family in living out God’s design

Through the OIM, the church currently strives to provide funding, missionaries, or other material support for The Agricultural Consultancy program, which includes Scripture-based teaching on the family (also Priority 3—Human Care). Because the church bodies with whom we work are not currently requesting support or sharing opportunities within this mission priority, this area is not further engaged in this type of ministry.

The Eastern and Southern Africa Area strives to support the church bodies with whom we have relationships, re-establish historic ties, and be responsive to requests for new relationships with emerging churches. We work under the theme verse “On this rock, I will build my church” (Matthew 16:18). Our field’s principles are Partnership, Professionalism, Interdependence, Trust, Humility, and Enculturation.

After a triennium of growth on the field reported at last convention, the Eastern and Southern Africa area has stabilized
well with a humble and capable leadership team and missionaries deeply, passionately, and capably involved in spreading the Word, planting churches, and showing mercy. We have two dozen openings for new missionaries in this area alone and countless unmet requests and opportunities within the churches with whom we work.

The significant numbers of individuals, congregations, districts, Recognized Service Organizations (RSOs), and entities of the LCMS who are operating independently of the OIM reflect the capacity of the LCMS and the eagerness of our brothers and sisters in Christ to serve His church around the world. Such independent LCMS-affiliated mission endeavors can be a God-glorifying complement to the work of the LCMS as a Synod through the OIM. Unfortunately, those same independent mission endeavors can also support heterodox groups, foster conflict within the autonomous church bodies with whom we have a relationship, or undo a generation's worth of work through the Synod's official mission arm and thus act at odds to our synod-wide endeavors and to the Gospel itself.

In one country in this area, an independent group of several LCMS congregations refused the counsel of resident missionaries and lacked an understanding of the local culturally nuanced means of communication. They elected to behave directly contrary to the local church body's direction and were primary contributors to a conflict that has resulted in deep and ongoing schism in the church, removal of pastors from leadership and ministry, and the filing of local lawsuits against the church. Much of the conflict was due to the abundant resources this group brought to bear, their belief that they were more astute than those workers the LCMS called and sent as residential missionaries to live in the context and serve the church, and the independent group's decision to select for themselves local individuals to work with, contrary to the church's requests. The conflict has led God's people to leave the church and congregations to leave the church body altogether. Missionaries carry heavy in their hearts example after example of well-intentioned LCMS-affiliated work that caused significant damage.

This area calls for a unification and collaboration between independent efforts and the work the Synod has tasked the OIM to do or a clarification of the intended role of the OIM in missions abroad. While the OIM is resoundingly supportive of the directives of the Synod, it must be resourced to carry out those directives. As your selected and tasked mission arm, the OIM must be resourced to carry out those directives. As your selected and tasked mission arm, the OIM has scores of sometimes fleeting opportunities we are eager to fill, openings where we are eager to walk with members, congregations, and the Synod's entities to spread the Word, plant churches, and show mercy.

Asia Region—Rev. Charles Ferry, Regional Director

As the Synod gathers in convention this 2019, we remember 125 years ago, when the LCMS sent out its first official missionary. No one feels more profound gratitude and respect for those blessings than those of us who serve in the Asia Region of LCMS International Mission. Rev. Theodore Naether and his family were sent to India to preach the Word and plant churches, and we are blessed today to continue interacting with the descendants (natural and theological) of what our Lord accomplished through that first missionary. The Lord Jesus is still doing that work, using the same underestimated Means of Grace, although our role in Asia looks dramatically different today than it did 125 years ago.

In today's mission work, the LCMS works almost exclusively through established church partners. Many (if not quite all) of these church partners are the fruit of first-generation LCMS missionary work. They have carried forward what the LCMS brought to them in years past: proclamation of the Word, theological education, scriptural and confessional resources, and donations of property. Today, they are autonomous sister churches. But they still request our fellowship, our assistance, and our partnership.

This is most joyfully and clearly seen in places like Japan, Papua New Guinea (PNG), the Philippines, and India. In previous generations, the LCMS missionaries in these places were myriad and were involved directly in proclamation of the Word to those who had not yet heard it. They often hacked their way through the bush to find newly discovered groups of people. We hear first-hand stories of those who engaged in just that work, and we are amazed and thankful.

Today, we are blessed to build upon the work from years ago and to take it forward in the direction requested by our partners. What a joy to see people like Rev. Dr. Daniel Jastram, who grew up in Japan as the child of LCMS missionary parents, now returned to Japan and engaged in furthering the work of his father and others. Similarly, Dr. Martin Dicke, son and nephew of former LCMS missionaries to PNG, returned to the country where he grew up and continues the family legacy. These two men are just two examples of the multi-generational work our church performs in these mission fields, which outside organizations cannot or will not stay engaged long enough to do.

We remain cautiously optimistic regarding India, our original mission field. The secular Indian government has officially recognized the faithful and rightful leaders of the India Evangelical Lutheran Church (IELC) after much suffering by the faithful Indian church workers and servants. We remain hopeful that this situation will eventually fully resolve and we will remain partnered with the IELC administration to continue fighting. We have also expanded our partnership with the IELC seminary (Concordia Theological Seminary, Nagercoil) in southern Tamil Nadu. We look forward to the first official Pastor's Refresher Course to be held at CTSN in several years, following the leadership of the seminary faculty and our own Rev. Dr. Edward Naumann, a descendant of the original LCMS missionary to India.

Our partner churches most frequently ask us to continue providing theological education. This is a perfect fit for us with the long-established LCMS Mission Priority 2: “Support and expand theological education,” and has always been a strength of the LCMS in her work domestically and internationally. Our church partners continually request us to send our pastors, professors, and teachers into their midst to provide ongoing and continuing education in the Scriptures, the Confessions, pastoral practice, teaching methods, Sunday School instruction, the faithful service of women in the church, Lutheran homiletics [preaching], and other topics. Thanks to the faithfulness of our congregations and your dedication to true Lutheran identity, the LCMS continues to be seen as experts in these fields.

The Asia Region of the LCMS has seen incredible change over these last three years. As the past triennium was beginning, the position of Regional Director was vacant, and the
post of Regional Business Manager soon followed into vacancy. The region had just recently been reconnected into one after having been divided into two separate regions, and there were fields that had been without a visit from regional leadership for many years. And at that time, our headquarters was in an aging building in Hong Kong, one of the most expensive places in the world to live and work, especially for expatriates.

Now as this convention begins, the Asia Region has a regional director (RD), who was recruited originally to be a frontline missionary in this particular region, and an experienced Regional Business Manager, who previously served in another LCMS international region. Every field in Asia has been visited at least once by the RD, who is engaged in listening and collaborative strategic planning. Every worker in the region is thankful for the selfless service of Rev. John Fale, who served as the Interim Asia Regional Director during the vacancy (in addition to his duties as OIM Executive Director), and Mr. Kendall Crottrig, who served as the interim Asia Regional Business Manager. Only God knows what would have happened without these two faithful men stepping in when they were most needed.

In addition to the new regional leadership, the LCMS Asia Region headquarters relocated to Taiwan. This move was partly the result of decisions made and encouragement offered by the LCMS Board of Directors in their ongoing work of ensuring the best stewardship of Synod resources. Taiwan is strategically located, has a much lower overall cost of living, and the facility made available to us by the China Evangelical Lutheran Church (CELC) was unutilized. The CELC allows us the rent-free exclusive use of the top three floors of the five-story building, which gives us space for multiple theological education classrooms, offices, and theological library, temporary housing for visitors and students, and living space for several large LCMS families. The lower two floors are to be rented out by the CELC for local businesses and residences, providing us direct interaction with our Chinese-speaking community in southern Taiwan.

Despite the relocation of the LCMS Asia corporate presence to Taiwan, we continue to be engaged with our church partner in Hong Kong, The Lutheran Church—Hong Kong Synod, primarily in theological education. We enjoy a wonderfully rich partnership in particular at Concordia Theological Seminary Hong Kong, and with the Hong Kong Synod’s Lutheran School for the Deaf. In fact, we currently still have more personnel living and working in the Hong Kong area than anywhere else in Asia, even after our headquarters moved to Taiwan.

While theological education continues to be the main emphasis of work in the Asia region, we have great hopes for the expansion and focusing of Mercy efforts made in close proximity to Word and Sacrament (Mission Priority 3). Recently, Asia appointed an experienced missionary to the position of Mercy Manager for Asia, which had been lacking in recent years. This trusted colleague has the responsibility to not only monitor the mercy work of OIM Asia (often done through the Concordia Welfare and Education Foundation) but also to watch for further opportunities to show mercy in Asia where it can be connected to the Means of Grace and to Lutheran Churches.

This past triennium has also seen a renewed focus on the Synod’s three international schools, all of which are located in the Asia region. This is a living out of Mission Priority 6, and a desire to ensure that these schools are continually operating in ways consistent with our Lutheran identity and confession. Behind the leadership of the Synod’s CMO, LCMS Asia seeks to strengthen the relationship between the schools and the Synod, which owns them.

What will the LCMS Asia region look like when this triennium concludes? Only our Lord knows, but He continues to work through His chosen Means of Grace as He has promised. He continues to see us through tumultuous changes; gives us strength to stay steadfast as some partner churches are departing from His Word and His teaching; provides wisdom to adapt as key positions for missionary care and support cannot find funding in the Network Supported Model; and grants patience to teach as well-meaning organizations send funds and personnel into situations where they cause conflict and strife.

Come what may, we will remain faithful to the Word of God and to proclaiming it in its truth and purity, and to the Sacraments rightly distributed. We will continue to take the long view and recognize that our mission work will take place over many years—even generations—knowing that we might not see desired fruit in our lifetimes. We will continue to respect our church partners, while working to decrease their dependency upon us for material and finances. In short, we will be Lutheran, for that means Christ is at the center of everything we do and everything we are.

Ministry to the Armed Forces—Chaplain Craig G. Muehler CAPT, CHC, USN, (Ret.), Director

The greatest blessing is that God has sent us faithful pastors to serve as military chaplains during these most challenging times, both culturally and on religious freedom. During a time when many denominations are having a difficult challenge getting qualified pastors to serve in the military as chaplains, the LCMS has been blessed! We have several who have answered the call to serve the men and women of our armed forces by bringing them Word and Sacrament ministry and showing the compassion and mercy of Jesus Christ to those whom they are “called to serve.” Yet we still need more! If not us, then who? Your Ministry to the Armed Forces (MAF) chaplains voluntarily go into harm’s way, serving in physically dangerous and austere conditions to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ in season and out of season to their flock of military personnel and their families. These chaplains truly are shepherds who live, train, eat, and suffer with their flock. What a blessing God has given to His Church for faithful pastors who serve as faithful chaplains in bringing the love of God in Jesus in everything they do! We ask all to continue to pray for our chaplains and their families and all who serve our nation selflessly and voluntarily.

We will need to continue to receive good pastors to serve in the military to replace those who are retiring. We need to be present with chaplains who will preach the Gospel in its truth and purity to those men and women who are sacrificing so much to defend our way of life. Currently, we have 59 active-duty LCMS military chaplains. Another 95 chaplains serve in the Reserve, National Guard, Civil Air Patrol, and Coast Guard auxiliary. We also support two Directors of Religious Education (DREs). Your MAF continues to support them with prayers, pastoral care, Lutheran continuing education, religious liberty, and supplies for Lutheran worship and catechesis. We also coordinate with the Department of Defense to ensure your chaplains remain endorsed properly and in good standing with the LCMS.
and the Department of Defense as qualified chaplains who are free to be faithful.

Our goal is to have 72 active-duty chaplains and 120 Reserve, National Guard, Civil Air Patrol, and Coast Guard Auxiliary chaplains by 2021. We continue to recruit and encourage our young pre-seminary university students, seminarians, and parish pastors to consider serving our Lord and His Church as military chaplains. The average age group of the personnel served by military chaplains is 18–25 years old. It is a challenging calling; however, it is very rewarding, as they are always present, no matter what clime or place, with these brave young men and women who serve our country so faithfully.

One of the challenges for our chaplains is the cultural shift on biblical issues. Be assured that your chaplains continue to teach the Word of God faithfully where they are called to serve. They treat everyone with dignity and respect without compromising the clear Word of God or our Lutheran confession. Chaplains are still protected by law and policy of the Department of Defense to preach and teach in accordance with the tenets of their faith. While certainly living in a challenging environment, they are still free to be faithful and uphold the teaching of the Word of God and the LCMS. There is no doubt that MAF will keep an eye on this and ensure our chaplains receive the support they need, as there is a constant movement from organizations and individuals seeking to mandate compromise and violation of conscience and religious liberty.

MAF continues the Ministry-by-Mail program, where we publish over 7,000 copies of Lutheran devotional materials and resources (including Portals of Prayer and “So Help Me God”) and mail them to our personnel stationed throughout the world. Our goal is to increase that number by 1,000 each year, as we know there are more LCMS members who are serving our nation in uniform but have not made contact with us. We will continue to encourage parents, grandparents, local congregations, and friends to submit contact information of their loved ones serving in the military so we can reach out to them with this program as well as put them in touch with LCMS chaplains and congregations where they are stationed. We need the help of our LCMS members to send in the contact information for those who are currently serving in the military so we can support them.

One key highlight for MAF centers on care for veterans. Operation Barnabas, organized in 2007, not only supports our pastors who are also Reserve chaplains but also our Lutheran veterans in the pew and the millions of veterans who live in the shadow of our churches but never attend any church. It is estimated that there are currently more than 30 million veteran alive today from all wars. This is an unprecedented mission field and opportunity for the church. MAF is leading the way to reach veterans and all military-connected people to draw them back to the cross of Christ. Throughout the history of the Lutheran Church, God has moved His people to actively display His love for military communities. To assist the LCMS in sharing the forgiveness of sins Christ Jesus won for us on the cross, the Holy Spirit has moved us to joyfully build upon the work and strength of our church in service to the military. This effort, called Operation Barnabas, has grown into a united network of care responding to the unique needs of military-connected people.

The vision of Operation Barnabas is that every military-connected person lives in the hope and peace of God’s love and mercy as revealed in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Called by Christ’s love, Operation Barnabas engages, empowers, and equips LCMS faith communities to provide hope, healing, and support to military-connected persons living in their community.

The Operation Barnabas project has made a positive difference in the lives of veterans who are members of LCMS congregations, and also to the veterans in their communities. The training and networking has greatly increased the mercy and compassion of the local congregations to all military-connected people in their own congregation as well as in their community. An Operation Barnabas congregation is a place where veterans are respected for their vocation as a military member and are provided hope, healing, and support in their time of need through the sharing of the Gospel and the compassion of the congregation.

Many new veterans are returning to the civilian world after serving their country. We need to continue to establish Operation Barnabas congregations who will be equipped to welcome them and give them the support they need as they transition to other vocations. Our goal by the end of 2021 is to have 900 LCMS congregations join Operation Barnabas as either a congregation or a chapter and be a part of our network of care for military-connected people.

The Doctor of Ministry (DMin) in Military Chaplaincy was initiated in 2005 and is designed exclusively for our military chaplains to enable them to complete a DMin degree while remaining on active duty.

Deaconess Ministry—Deaconess Grace Rao, Director

OIM encourages and supports the deaconess ministry—women who are called and commissioned by the church to provide diaconal care. Deaconesses serve through works of mercy, spiritual care. They teach the faith while focusing on Word and Sacrament. Echoing “Joyfully Lutheran,” deaconesses serve as channels for the love and compassion within our church body and with LCMS partner churches and non-partner churches.

The Director of Deaconess Ministry engages and informs the Synod’s districts, congregations, and partner church bodies of the LCMS’s work of mercy, thus increasing the awareness of diaconal needs and deaconess ministry of LCMS Mercy programs. Also, the position serves as a catalyst in identifying, directing, and supporting educational and diaconal needs internationally. The ministry promotes deaconesses through different forms of media and speaking engagements. Over the past decade and more than a half, OIM LCMS Mercy operations has awarded $500,000 in grants to enhance deaconess programs supporting scholarships and women seminars. Additional scholarships have been provided for international deaconesses to take part in theological conferences.

Past Triennium Major Accomplishments

- The highlight of 2016—deaconess ministry was honored to initiate a dialogue with the leaders of a few partner churches to encourage their youth to participate at the 2016 New York Gathering. Rt. Rev. Mindaugas Sabutis, Bishop of Evangelical Lutheran
The Lutheran Church of Philippines successfully introduced full-time deaconess studies at their Lutheran Theological Seminary in Baguio City, Philippines. Prior to this, an advanced deaconess program started as well. The exciting news is that in May 2018, one deaconess student from the residential program and two from the advanced program graduated and were commissioned. The two deaconesses who graduated from the advanced program are serving as parish deaconesses, and the residential student is serving at a diaconal center.

In the fall of 2016, we were invited by Rt. Rev. Dr. Solomon Rajah, Bishop, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Malaysia, to speak at Diocesan Women’s Convention, focusing on their convention theme “Beautifully Rooted in Christ,” at Perak, Malaysia. The three-day seminar was well attended. In 2018, three students were consecrated as deaconesses, by Rt. Rev. Bishop Rajah.

By God’s mercy, Lithuania and Nigeria incepted the deaconess program in building up the ministry, thereby encouraging the women of the church to serve the Lord in various vocations, particularly a deaconess, or diaconal leader. For the past two years, with His continued blessings, both programs are progressing well.

We continued to support the spiritual programs for women of Silesian Diakonia of the Lutheran Church of Augsburg Confession in Cesky Tesin, Czech Republic. The Silesian Diakonia continue to look upon LCMS to learn from various ministries, thereby incorporating some of the techniques in their outreach.

Thanks be to God! The Silesian Diakonia have successfully completed the translation of the book Christ Have Mercy, authored by Rev. Dr. Matthew Harrison. The translated book is given as a gift by the diakonia to their pastors and diaconal and lay leaders. The LCMS funded the project. Thanks to Concordia Publishing House for the copyright.

We initiated contact in the areas of international outreach to a non-partner church in Malawi organizing a women’s seminar to understand “The Role of Women in the Church,” which may pave the way for the church body to consider implementing a deaconess program.

Another outstanding memorable occurrence was that five students graduated from the residential deaconess program from Lutheran Theological Seminary, Lutheran Church in South Africa. Out of the five students, two are natives of South Africa, two are from Zambia, and one is from Liberia. Once again, we thank God for His gifts.

A big thank you to Lutheran Women’s Missionary League and Concordia Lutheran Ministries for their continued support and encouragement towards deaconess ministry. In 2015, LCMS OIM received a grant of $50,000 from LWML and $21,000 from CLM.

We continue to support teaching deaconess studies in 11 countries—Indonesia, Latvia, Liberia, Lithuania, Malawi, Malaysia, Nigeria, Philippines, and South Africa. We are blessed that more than 110 ladies are in training. The work of our triune God keeps increasing and bringing people to us to nurture and train them in theological deaconess formation.

We thank CLM for funding “Deaconess Student Mercy Mission Trips.” For this project, we coordinated with the deaconess directors of all the three programs. In 2017, three students from Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, ventured to Peru; and seven students from Concordia University Chicago made a trip to Dominican Republic. In 2018, eight students from Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, went to Dominican Republic. On all the trips, the respective program directors accompanied the students. LCMS Director of Deaconess Ministry was able to accompany and lead them on two trips.

We continue to support all deaconess programs in five regions of the LCMS, not only the partner churches but also other non-partner Lutheran churches who are keen to maintain a Lutheran identity.

We would like to honor and recognize the dedicated service of late Diakonisse Adelheid Hahn, who received the crown of eternal life in February 2017. She served in our partner church SELK at Naomi-Wilke foundation for 70 years as a deaconess nurse. Thank you, Diakonisse Uberin, for your faithful services to our Lord and His Church! Amen.

**New Triennium Major Goals**

- Plans are in progress to assist partner churches in Hong Kong and Korea to consider training of women in leadership roles, especially as deaconesses.
- Plans are in progress to help, assist, and build deaconess program in Ethiopia.
- We plan to continue visiting once a year the SELK deaconess mother house in Gubin, Germany, and also continue to assist with the women refugees where SELK congregations are engaged.
- We plan to continue to engage and inform the districts and congregations by promoting, identifying, and advocating the diaconal needs with special relevance to deaconess ministry.
- We plan to continue to build relationships with partner churches to assist, coordinate, and direct their deaconess studies by coordinating with OIM Regional and Area Directors, theological educators, and LCMS Church Relations, focusing on Lutheran doctrine and Confessions and other diaconal needs.
• We plan to bring out a Deaconess Ministry DVD, coordinating with all three deaconess education programs of LCMS.

Today, more deaconesses serve in the United States and around the world. We are particularly blessed in the LCMS with a strong and growing corps of women of old, who continue to work hard, laboring in the Lord’s harvest fields, serving alongside the office of pastor, helping and supporting the office by using their gifts to bless and serve others.

**Short-Term Mission Service—Ms. Erin Alter, Director**

The Short-term Mission Service Unit was officially formed in July 2016. Since that time, we have sent almost 100 teams and more than 700 people to serve God’s people around the world.

Mercy Medical Teams bring tangible care and compassion to thousands of people who are without even basic medical care, and they do so side by side with our Lutheran brothers and sisters in those countries. Theological Educators teach intensive courses to men studying to be pastors. Children have fun learning about Baptism, God’s promises, and even a little English grammar at English Bible Camps.

When connecting people to the local Body of Christ is a priority, lives and communities are impacted. Those connections are an essential part of LCMS International Mission short-term mission service.

**Accomplishments over the Past Triennium**

• Sent the very first Mercy Medical Teams to Togo, the Gambia, and Sierra Leone.

• Celebrated the tenth summer of English Bible Camps in Poland.

• Streamlined and unified processes for people who serve with LCMS International Mission short-term.

• Began collaborating with Office of National Mission on recruitment efforts for all kinds of LCMS service.

**Plans for the Next Triennium**

• Develop mission education resources for congregations.

• Write our own curriculum for English Bible Camps.

• Create training materials for short-term service, focusing on both leaders and individuals.

**Disaster Response—Rev. Dr. Ross Johnson, Director**

**Accomplishments over the Past Triennium**

Training and preparedness (including theological education)

• During the last years, we had the privilege of leading multiple trainings/conferences throughout the various regions in Disaster Preparedness. The intent has been to raise up leaders in our partner churches and give guidance to our missionaries on the ground as it relates to mercy work in the church in general and Disaster Response in particular. Trainings were held in Madagascar, Haiti, India, the Dominican Republic (over 12 partner churches across Latin America were represented), and South Africa.

• We also held the 2017 International Disaster Conference at the seminary in Fort Wayne. Of the attendees, 30 were considered “international,” representing each region, and an additional 50 were partners from across the United States. The topics included case studies from previous disasters as well as theological offerings to help us all grow in our understanding of mercy. Particularly, the conference included case studies from the typhoon in the Philippines, the refugee crisis in Germany, flooding in Madagascar, the Sierra Leone mudslides, and Hurricane Matthew in Haiti. Other notable topics were Mercy in a Secular Environment, Spiritual Care after a Tragedy, Animism and the Gospel in Africa, and Mercy and Outreach Leading to the Church. Many connections were made to further our relationships with these other church bodies during times of disaster, which makes our responses more effective and efficient.

In response to natural and manmade disasters

• In the past triennium, we supported a multi-year response to Hurricane Matthew, which struck western Haiti in 2016. We worked with our Regional Office and the Haitian Lutheran Church to provide food, water, and building supplies. The long-term response included rebuilding 50 homes for pastors and 12 churches, and digging 17 deep water wells at the churches as well. The wells have become community meeting points as clean water is hard to find, particularly after the storm. We also did two Mercy Medical Clinics in remote villages to combat cholera outbreaks.

• In the fall of 2017, Hurricane Maria struck Puerto Rico and caused massive destruction across the island. We worked with our Regional Office and missionaries in Mayagüez and Puerto Rico to assess and put together an action plan for response. To date, thousands of people have been given food and cooking supplies and dozens of roofs have been rebuilt for needy families. We worked with Ted Krey to increase staffing in the area to support a four-year response. We purchased a Mercy Center adjacent to the current church building in Mayagüez to increase capacity on the ground. We are now in the second full year and have received a grant for $600,000 from the Harold C. Smith Foundation to further our work there. Our total response to Hurricane Matthew is budgeted at roughly $2,300,000 over the four years. Providing care for people in their bodies, while also connecting them to the Word and Sacrament is a hallmark of LCMS Disaster Response, and this effort epitomizes that connection. To date, our response in Puerto Rico has been roughly $790,000.

• In December 2017, a typhoon hit the Lutheran Seminary in Nagercoil, India. We deployed to assist our Lutheran brothers and sisters early in 2018. The
seminary was essentially a total loss and on the verge of closing completely. After assessing the damage, we quickly worked to put in place a multi-stage plan that has included (to date) the rebuilding of the kitchen, library, classrooms, chapel, and several other structures. We also helped with putting into place an effective mitigation system to lessen the impact of future storms. Future stages include the dormitories and others. It has been a blessed relationship that highlights the wonderful work that we’re able to do when all parties work together for the sake of the Gospel. To date, our response in India has been roughly $343,000.

- Other disasters that we responded to, in person, include mudslides in Sierra Leone, earthquakes in Mexico, fires in Chile, and a volcano in Guatemala. Additionally, we responded to numerous other disasters via our grant process and counsel provided through email, Zoom, and other forms of communication.

**Plans for the Next Triennium**

Training and preparedness (including theological education)

- Over the next three years, we intend to host/lead multiple yearly conferences on Disaster Preparedness with the same goal as our previous conferences. In an effort to efficiently use our resources, many of these will be incorporated into other conferences as an additional day or two for attendees.

- We do not currently have plans for another International Disaster Response Conference here in the states. However, we plan on leading a yearly conference to be held in each of the regions. This will allow a greater number of international church partners to participate, as well as our missionary staff. This will help foster relationships, allow a greater number of local church leaders to attend, and provide for an even more efficient response when a response is necessary.

In response to natural and manmade disasters

- Our goal over the next three years is to maintain a rapid engagement of international partners (LCMS and other Lutherans), regional staff, and missionaries on the ground to deploy to regions if necessary. Our ability to assist in the development and implementation of Disaster Response plans greatly increases our efficiency and ultimately provides for a greater stewardship of the resources available.

- We also intend to continue providing grants to our partner churches to help build their capacity and effectiveness ($400,000 budgeted)

- Our response to Hurricane Maria in Puerto Rico will also continue for an additional 2 years while our response to the typhoon that hit the seminary in Nagercoil India will continue for 1–2 years.

**Missionary Services—Mr. Kendall Cortright, Director**

**Past Triennium Major Accomplishments**

The Missionary Services department, comprised of three full-time staff, provides care and support to LCMS missionaries and their accompanying family members. With a smaller team caring for over 100 missionaries, the department has striven for effectiveness, efficiency, and fiscal responsibility. Some of the major initiatives include the following:

- **Missionary Training.** Missionary Services has drastically improved Missionary Orientation and Doxology over the last three years by reducing costs significantly, adjusting content, and making even better use of the time. This was accomplished through a number of initiatives, especially in splitting orientation into two separate weeks so that content was better absorbed and retained.

- **Implementation of New Technologies.** With a smaller Missionary Services team, the department has had to look into ways to create more efficiency with less personnel. New technologies have recently been and still are being implemented, such as Office 365, Zoom, and Expensify. Implementing such technologies has saved thousands of hours, to the point of even freeing up staffing positions to take on entirely new tasks that were unable to be done previously.

- **Collaboration.** More than ever before, because of new technologies, the Missionary Services department has been able to collaborate with our missionaries and offices in the field. Such collaboration has drastically improved the flow of information, allowing for both to work more efficiently and effectively.

**Future Triennium Goals**

The Missionary Services department aims to heavily build upon its recent accomplishments. Here are some of the major goals for the next triennium:

- **Mastery of New Technologies.** With the recent implementation of new technologies, Missionary Services hopes to continue to build upon these achievements and implement these technologies to the fullest. Doing this will assist with streamlining and automate processes. The hope is that additional time will be saved so that staff can devote their efforts to caring for missionaries even more than before.

- **Safety and Security.** With positions being freed up from handling manual processes, we hope to give even more attention to the safety and security of our missionaries and their families. This will begin with hiring a full-time Director of Safety and Security, who will be able to help in training and implementing safety precautions for all of our field personnel.

- **Expanded Partnerships.** As part of the overall goal of caring for our missionaries and their families, Missionary Services hopes to develop and foster relationships with local top-of-the-line medical facilities that
can be used by missionaries for general care and in emergency evacuations, if need be. This will allow for those who have been out of the country for many years to be able to quickly get in to see doctors who are familiar with the various unique health challenges faced while abroad.

**Missionary Recruitment**—David A. Fiala (DCE), Assistant Director of Recruitment

The OIM Missionary Recruitment team serves the Synod by connecting missionary candidates through a consideration process to vacancies in the foreign mission field. Candidates for missionary service are members of LCMS congregations, clergy and laity alike, who have a desire to participate in the coming of Christ’s kingdom in foreign lands (Large Catechism; Lord’s Prayer; Second Petition). Roster-eligible church workers and other professionals can be missionary candidates. Missionary candidates are able to articulate the basic doctrine of the Christian Church as found in Scripture and outlined in Luther’s Small Catechism, eligible for employment in the USA, at least 18 years old, in good physical and psychological health, able to relocate to a foreign country, and holders of (at least) a bachelor’s degree. If you, or someone you know, has international mission interest and meets these basic prerequisites, please reach out via email to mission.recruitment@lcms.org or via phone 1-888-843-5267 for more information.

There are two tracks for long-term, international, missionary service with the Synod: “GEO” and Career Missionary. While missionaries in each category are Globally Engaged in Outreach (GEO), Career Missionaries are encouraged to consider serving for no less than five years deployed, whereas GEO Missionaries serve an initial term of 30 months and have the option of extending their service for 12-month increments.

**Looking Back**

In the past triennium, Missionary Recruitment sought out candidates via social media, email, phone calls, and personally at district and LWML conventions, Concordia University System School visits, Mission Conferences, Recognized Service Organizations’ (RSOs’) hosted events, congregational mission fairs, etc. There were hundreds of individuals who reached out to Missionary Recruitment for conversation about international missionary service; more than 100 who formally began the missionary candidate consideration process; 58 who received invitations (Divine Calls or Solemn Appointments) from the Board of International Mission to serve as missionaries; and 53 who accepted the vocation and became missionaries.

**Looking Forward**

Missionary Recruitment will continue to listen to the deployed regional leaders and missionaries of LCMS OIM and communicate the news of international missionary service opportunities within the Synod through any means possible.

**OFFICE OF NATIONAL MISSION (ONM)**

*Rev. Robert Zagore, Executive Director*

The Office of National Mission will enliven, equip, coordinate, and engage domestic congregations, districts, and Recognized Service Organizations in order to enhance their local and regional missions and ministries.

As one can see from the following ministry reports, the ONM is an expansive office. Her very broad mission is moved forward by the work of dedicated experts and ministry directors and their staffs. The last triennium has been one of accomplishment (as the ministry reports convey) and substantial change. ONM has been served by three executive directors. The Reverend Bart Day ended a highly successful tenure of office in August 2017 to become the President and CEO of the Lutheran Church Extension Fund. Deaconess Dorothy Krans was subsequently appointed Interim Director while simultaneously serving as Director of LCMS Recognized Service Organization (RSO) ministry. Her work in both positions is widely praised. In May 2019, the Board for National Mission called the Reverend Robert Zagore to the position. Zagore had previously served for 27 years in LCMS parish ministry.

While such transitions would normally cause tremendous disruption, the directors and staff of ONM have responded wonderfully by drawing together to serve the Lord and His church. This is important in these days. The LCMS herself also needs to enter a time of unified purpose as we face dramatic changes in our culture and on the U.S. mission field.

The mission facing our Synod is enormous, but it is a joyful time to serve in this church body. LCMS President Harrison has given ONM the challenge of forming a systematic and effective approach to help districts and congregations to make, retain, and nurture disciples. This initiative, under the name “Making Disciples for Life,” will be a multifaceted approach. It will include a new interactive website, which not only will readily make available a vast array of resources to our congregations, church workers, and lay leaders, but will also be structured to provide easy access to these resources, with the option of speaking with a live person if an inquirer runs into difficulties.

ONM has prioritized some of the key challenges to be addressed in the coming triennium. We need to respond to the challenge of retaining our young people, especially those aged 17–26. Studies show that women are becoming more active in leadership positions within the congregations of Synod. We are encouraged by their godly service. However, the overall participation of men appears to be declining. We must work with the church to retain and raise up male leaders.

We need to help identify and train leaders that are equipped to fill key roles in Synod and among our Synod partners (such as Recognized Service Organizations). Likewise, we need to develop a systematic way to seek leaders who, through their vocations, can provide expertise for the challenging problems of the day. We will be in a greater position to walk together if we know each other.

Among the many good surprises that we have found is that people are not intentionally leaving the LCMS to the degree bare numbers would suggest. Many are moving from places of historic LCMS strength to geographic areas without a significant LCMS church presence. We need first to help such scattered people (Acts 8) to see themselves as missionaries in their new homes. While church planting is an obvious solution, the LCMS and most Christian denominations do not have a successful record of centrally managed church plants (e.g., among the LCMS, those implemented by district and Synod). The Holy Spirit moves when and where He pleases. No one wishes to gain-
Every One His Witness (E1HW) was developed to equip Lutherans to be Third Article witnesses telling the Second Article story using their First Article gifts.

E1HW considers the real-world context in which Lutherans find themselves as witnesses of Jesus Christ. Building on the solid foundation of Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions, E1HW instructs Lutherans on how to witness to nonchurched people regardless of their worldviews. It emphasizes evangelism as a work of God and the role of witnesses as instruments through whom the Lord brings His Word to those whom He has chosen for eternal life. E1HW puts sound doctrine into practical action through a relational approach for sharing the faith with the people whom God has placed alongside His witnesses in their everyday lives.

E1HW is made up of two components. The first component is a workshop called the Core Module. It addresses how to witness using the LASSIE (Listen-Ask-Seek-Share-Invite-Encourage) approach in a general sense. That second component is an array of modules that show how to use the LASSIE approach in specific witnessing contexts. These modules are called Context Modules.

Core Module

The Core Module of E1HW is available as a kit through Concordia Publishing House (CPH). The kit, which costs $129.99, contains all of the materials needed to conduct the workshop for twelve participants, including participant workbooks, pens, LASSIE Journals, exercise cards, and a DVD with all of the instructional materials. Additional workbooks, pens, and journals are available for purchase through CPH. The kit also includes a guide for the workshop leader that provides detailed instructions for planning and conducting the workshop.

The Core Module workshop can be conducted in multiple formats, including a single-day workshop, a weekend retreat, or a six-week series. It can also be held for a single congregation, multiple congregations, a circuit, or a variety of other groups or organizations (e.g., LWML zone).

The Core Module is focused on teaching participants the LASSIE approach to witnessing. This approach provides a contextual and relational approach to witnessing that is rooted in the vocations of those whom Christ has called to be His witnesses. The letters of the acronym stand for Listen, Ask, Seek, Share, Invite, and Encourage, but LASSIE is not a checklist or series of sequential steps for a witness to execute. Rather it is an iterative approach to engaging nonchurched people in the contexts of the relationships which the Lord has crafted in our everyday lives. Highlighting the significance of vocations as a fundamental element of witnessing reinforces the relational aspect of witnessing.

LASSIE provides an approach that encourages witnessing as a natural activity in a believer’s everyday life in the context of the person’s relationships with nonchurched people in his or her vocations. A fundamental element of this approach is the explicit and intentional sharing of God’s Word “with gentleness and respect” (1 Peter 3:15).

From its release in September 2017 through February 2019, over 900 Every One His Witness Core Module kits have been distributed through CPH. With the purchase of additional workbooks, resources for equipping more than 11,000 people have reached Lutheran congregations.
The Every One His Witness Core Module has been translated into the Spanish language and is available to LCMS congregations at no cost through the ONM. Also, LCMS Youth Ministry has developed a supplement to the Core Module to address the unique witnessing issues facing high school youth. Work is underway to develop a supplement for LCMS Campus Ministry that addresses witnessing in college settings.

**Context Modules**

Context Modules build on the Core Module to equip disciples for speaking of Jesus to people in specific witnessing settings. A Context Module addresses the challenges of witnessing to nonchurched people in a given context. Each Context Module features the expertise and experiences of people who are subject matter experts in the specific witnessing context addressed in that module.

Categories of Context Modules include “World Religions,” “Religious Organizations and Movements,” “Dechurched,” “Unchurched,” “Life Events,” and “Human Care.” As of February 2019, five more Context Modules have been completed, including “Witnessing to Mormons,” “Witnessing to Muslims,” “Witnessing to Jewish People,” “Witnessing to Dechurched Adult Children,” and “Responding to Scientist.” Over 50 additional Context Modules are planned.

Context Modules include video instruction on how to use the LASSIE approach effectively in the subject context, video case studies, links to additional resources on the subject matter, and an online forum for users to interact with other participants in that Context Module. Although the Context Modules were originally designed for independent study, the additional resources for selected Context Modules will now include group study guides.

The Context Modules are available through the Every One His Witness website. Access to the website is provided at no cost to all people who complete the Core Module workshop. Instructions and access codes are included in the E1HW participant’s workbook.

**Revitalization—Rev. Dr. Mark A. Wood, Director**

**Background**

With nearly 80 percent of LCMS congregations in some stage of decline, our need for revitalization has never been greater. But it has also never been less.

The key to faithful revitalization is to focus on that which gives a congregation vitality. Vitality is found wherever God’s Word is proclaimed in purity and His Sacraments are rightly administered. This understanding of vitality is what the re:Vitality (literally, “regarding vitality) program has been built on. However, vitality is not the same thing as viability (i.e., sustainability).

Our Lord Jesus promised vitality when He said that “wherever two or three are gathered in my name, there I am with them” (Matthew 18:20). A congregation of two or three has vitality, but not viability. re:Vitality seeks to address both vitality and viability while keeping the emphasis on that which makes a congregation vital.

**Focus**

re:Vitality is a suite of resources designed to assist congregations achieve better health and viability. Initiated in response to Resolution 3–08A passed at the 2013 LCMS Convention, re:Vitality focuses on “doing what we do because we are the Church, not because we are a church in decline.”

**Approach**

Through its threefold approach of self-assessment, action-oriented training, and outreach-integrated witnessing, re:Vitality guides congregations in identifying and implementing actions that increase vitality and sustainability by becoming more effective in inviting, welcoming, and receiving people from outside the church.

**Self-Assessment**

Congregations are able to objectively answer the question “Where are we … really?” through the re:Vitality self-assessment tool. This resource is an online survey developed in conjunction with Dr. Rachel Eells of Concordia University—Chicago. Data correlation and analysis was performed by Ryan Curnutt of LCMS Roster and Statistics to develop a concise, meaningful report. The resulting report provides a one-page, graphical overview of the congregation’s overall stage of development or decline and the factors contributing to that status. The self-assessment is available at no cost to LCMS congregations.

**Action-Oriented Training**

re:Vitality was originally designed to provide resources for action-oriented training to congregations through districts that had partnered with the ONM to implement the program. In this arrangement, districts identified people to serve as facilitators, whom ONM then trained and supported. As the program evolved, it became apparent that requiring trained facilitators was a significant constraint. Only eight districts agreed to identify candidates to serve as facilitators, and the results were mixed.

To make re:Vitality resources more widely available and more easily accessible, modules are being redesigned to be used.
by congregations without the need for outside facilitators. This self-directed approach is based on the success of the Every One His Witness Core Module kit developed by the ONM and distributed through Concordia Publishing House. Conversion to the self-directed model is expected to be completed by the end of 2019.

Training on key topics related to congregational health and well-being is provided through re:Vitality modules. The most widely used re:Vitality module is “Connect to Disciple,” which focuses on improving outreach. Two additional modules are available on a limited basis through a piloting process. Production versions of “Serving in God’s Mission: Strategic Planning for Congregations” and “Shepherding Our Strays: Actively Serving Our Inactive Members” will be fielded as self-directed modules in the third quarter of 2019. The next module scheduled for development is “Members of One Body: Incorporating People into Active Service.”

Further Development

Our greatest revitalization need is to develop a culture in which all congregations recognize that revitalization is part of their ongoing work no matter which stage of development or decline they are currently experiencing. This means that congregations that are healthy and growing would make use of re:Vitality resources for continued health and growth. Revitalization from strength rather than from weakness is fundamental to addressing congregational well-being through a proactive approach. To facilitate this shift in thinking about revitalization and to promote the use of re:Vitality resources, re:Vitality was identified as the basis for the Synod’s triennial emphasis on discipleship, Making Disciples for Life.

Building on the understanding that revitalization is “doing what we do because we are the Church, not because we are a church in decline,” re:Vitality continues to expand and evolve to address the needs of congregations seeking to carry out the Great Commission in their contexts.

Church Planting—Rev. Dr. Steven D. Schave, Director

Church planting has long been considered the most effective way to reach the lost, to evangelize in places where we are not, and to bring vitality to the church at large, yet only a small percentage of congregations are actively engaged in starting new missions. At the same time, the U.S. has the third largest number of unchurched people in the world, in an ever-diversifying population that continues to shift towards urbanization. The Mission Field: USA initiative continues to encourage and support domestic missions, as either new starts, or through partnerships for replanting where financial resources are scarce. A flexible framework has been developed to reach new people groups in new places, in various contexts, or among lapsed Lutherans who have moved to new areas where there is no Lutheran presence. We have learned much from our original pilot projects and pray they have been a catalyst for others to reach the least and the lost in the margins of the U.S., now having been equipped with our resources. These efforts are in accord with 2016 Convention Resolution 1–02, “To Encourage Church Planting throughout the Synod and Supporting the Mission Field: USA Initiative.”

New training resources continue to be developed to equip mother congregations, planting networks, and districts in starting new missions. A print and e-book guidebook are available along with a new e-learning companion resource. The online course is a first-of-its-kind resource for the LCMS in church planting. It consists of four one-hour modules, which lead individuals or congregations through the LCMS Church Planting Guidebook. It is smart, simple, self-paced, and educational. It provides helpful theological background for church planting using Witness, Mercy, and Life Together as the framework. It is specific, with a step-by-step approach to chartering a new congregation. It is adaptable to any context. The guidebook is also being translated into Spanish to assist with Hispanic ministry. And equally important to this free educational training is the ongoing coaching and mentoring for new starts and new church planters.

To continue the conversation after initial training, a new series of Mission Field: USA podcasts have been released to study various questions related to church planting within a Lutheran framework. Topics covered include ecclesiology and mission; the Synod’s threefold emphasis of Witness, Mercy, Life Together; missiology; the effect of demographic trends on the church and its mission; discipleship through catechesis and assimilation; and ethnic church planting. To be sure, serving as “mother” to a “daughter” congregation can feel as daunting as having a first child, but the podcasts are designed to alleviate the fears and obstacles that may accompany the church-planting process and to provide not just the ‘why,’ but also the ‘how-to’ of mission development in Mission Field: USA.

Creative means for funding are also underway in collaboration with LCEF in developing the Merle Freitag Church Planting Revolving Loan, which gives access to resources needed to start new mission work. To assist with funding for domestic missionaries serving in the margins, LCMS Church Planting is working with districts and RSOs and ethnic mission societies to promote their national missionaries through the Mission Field: USA initiative as they develop a network of support. Much has been learned in the initial pilot projects in working with our districts and RSOs wishing to serve in more impoverished communities and getting ministries off the ground. To ensure that there is a pipeline for new church planters, both seminaries have partnered to offer urban mission opportunities and mission development tracks in their seminary education programs. So, too, resources are available throughout the entire missionary life cycle—assessment to training to orientation to coaching—in conjunction with our districts and mission-oriented RSOs and ethnic mission societies. This mission work has been targeted in multiethnic communities as well in accord with 2016 Convention Resolution 1–04, “To Encourage Immigrant and Refugee Outreach” as we continue to raise up diverse local leaders to serve.
ways to create homeless kits and prayer cards, and writings on how we are called to provide for our neighbors in need. And, of course, all of our mercy work is anchored by altar, pulpit, and font to give not just earthly clothes, food, drink, and shelter, but also an eternal dwelling place, the wedding garment, the bread of life, and the water to drink to never thirst again.

And while there will always be those in need of emergency aid in catastrophic circumstances, the ultimate goal of our charity is to lift people out of poverty rather than to create an unhealthy dependency. This was the purpose of the Urban and Inner-City Mission Denarius Project, named for a day’s wage earned. In an effort to assist with self-sustaining ministries using social enterprise, to lift individuals from poverty, and to assist with economic development in underserved communities, an e-learning resource was developed. This resource is for those interested in going beyond giving aid and exploring more enterprising ways to show mercy with dignity. This resource provides an introduction to the concept of social enterprise, recommendations on evaluating an organization’s suitability to start a social enterprise, and tools to use during the process. Mentoring and funding are also key components of this endeavor. The Denarius Project encourages Lutheran churches and ministries to think of compassion in more enterprising ways. Social enterprise can be a powerful form of ministry, a means to harness community resources and alleviate poverty and suffering in response to the love of God in Christ Jesus. It can be a means to further put our mercy into action. This includes programs for at-risk youth, who can be equipped to become young entrepreneurs and in turn, make a difference in their communities.

Urban mission itself can certainly leave workers feeling isolated as they feel they must fight the battle alone, so developing a network has been a major priority. One way to address this is through monthly webinars that are a great way to start the conversation about the challenging, rewarding, and sometimes gritty world of urban and inner-city mission. It is our prayer that these webinars will, in a way, become our urban mission community gathering place to learn from one another, encourage one another, and find ways to impact and transform our inner cities through Word and Sacrament ministry and by loving our neighbors.

Rural and Small Town Mission—Rev. Todd Kollbaum, Director

LCMS Rural and Small Town Mission (RSTM) exists to support and encourage rural and small-town congregations in engaging their communities and growing together in Christ through Word and Sacrament. Rural and small-town congregations, those located in communities of 15,000 or less in population, make up over half of the congregations and over half of the membership of the LCMS. With approximately 3,200 congregations, it is a foregone conclusion that while some are strong and vibrant, many suffer from a lack of hope, dwindling resources, lack of access to training and ministry assistance. While there is certainly no “one size fits all” solution to the unique challenges rural and small-town congregations face, RSTM seeks to provide training and resources which train and equip these congregations to assess their community and ministry, and to look for opportunities to revitalize and engage those around them in a robust way.

Diagram: Making Disciples through Church Planting

**Urban and Inner City Mission—Rev. Dr. Steven D. Schave, Director**

In 2013, the Synod in convention mandated that we be working to increase significantly our support of congregations in urban and inner-city settings (2013 Convention Resolution 3–07A). To that end, we have made large strides in supporting urban mission work throughout the LCMS. New resources have been developed, districts and RSOs have begun to deploy urban missionaries with our assistance, and new opportunities for gaining practical experience during seminary education have also been created. Likewise, collaborations with the Lutheran Young Adult Corps and LCMS Medical Mercy Teams have allowed people of all walks of life to participate in urban mission. So, too, we have also strengthened our connections to our CUS programs that are connected to our cities to prepare future leaders for urban communities.

Post-Seminary Applied Learning and Support (PALS), a collaborative effort of the LCMS PED and the Synod’s districts to help pastors and their wives in the transition from seminary to congregation, released a new course on the transition to urban ministry, and LCMS Urban and Inner-City Mission helped to develop it. The course uses a combination of videos, prayers, Bible readings, and study questions to guide new pastors in their transition from seminary. Ministry in the inner city can be complicated and even messy for incoming church workers. But through this study guide, new pastors and their families are encouraged that this work is also extremely rewarding and can be transformative, not just in individual lives, but for entire inner-city communities. This guide also helps the new worker to understand that they are not in it alone, nor do they need to reinvent the wheel for urban missions. It points them to resources that will allow them to focus on their Word and Sacrament ministry while also enhancing their outreach and witness to the communities in which they have been called.

One of the challenges of inner-city ministry is working among those in extreme poverty. This might include immigrants and refugees or the homeless population. A new set of resources have been developed to reach the least and lost of our cities. These tools provide ways to show mercy with dignity for the marginalized. These new resources include a whitepaper on how best to provide community development and care for the poor,
To that end, RSTM partners with the districts of the LCMS in order to provide support for these rural and small-town congregations. This is so that they are supplied with the necessary resources to carry out mission and ministry in their specific context. In order to provide that support, training, and equipping, RSTM provides the following resources:

Our primary training vehicles are our Engaging Your Community (EYC) and Engaging the Wandering (ETW) events. These day-long interactive seminars encourage congregational leaders to examine how their congregations reach out to those around them, be they members who have wandered away or the community at large. The EYCs encourage congregation leadership to examine their communities and demographics, and consider ways in which they can serve the unique needs of those communities, identify the assets with which their congregation has been blessed and make a plan to utilize those resources to actively engage their community. Herein, RSTM assists those congregations in attendance to utilize practical approaches to develop an action plan to engage their community with the Gospel. The ETWs encourage congregations to do self-examination regarding the motivation for reaching out to those who have absented themselves from the congregation’s life. Through scriptural study, participants recognize why this ministry is an imperative. They are also educated on the varying reasons why members become inactive and are coached on methods of securing congregational participation and methodology for reaching out to inactive members. During the past triennium, RSTM has partnered with 18 districts to host over 20 events. These events assisted more than 600 participants representing nearly 150 congregations.

While the EYC is our primary event, RSTM also takes advantages of invitations to provide training through other events such as pastors conferences at the district and circuit level, congregational mission festivals, and LWML and LLL events, such as zone and district rallies. We have even conducted the worship service twice at the Missouri State Fair in partnership with the MO District LLL as well as the Nebraska State Fair in conjunction with the NE District LLL. We have presented at numerous regional and district mission festivals and convocations throughout several districts in the last triennium. We have also presented and preached at a number of regional Reformation Day convocations and celebrations.

Another way RSTM provides rural- and small-town-specific training, support, and resources for our congregations is through our annual National Rural and Small Town Mission Festival. Held in November each year, the National Mission Conference has hosted nearly 500 participants representing dozens of congregations and districts. Through these events, participants have grown and been encouraged through exploring the themes of “Standing Where You Are Planted: Living Your Vocation Where God Has Planted You,” “Standing On Our Heritage: It’s Still All About Jesus,” and “Have No Fear: With God All Things Are Possible.” These conferences bring together best practices and practitioners in a broad range of ministry areas and then share and connect with rural and small-town congregations, so that professional church workers and lay leaders in these settings will be trained to understand their role in rural culture, help trigger surface changes that lead to productive outreach ministry, and most importantly, lead dynamic change by being in God’s Word.

RSTM continues its initiative to support church workers, which was kicked off in 2015 at the first National Worker Priest Respite Retreat. In partnership with Grace Place Wellness Ministries, LCMS RSTM will again be hosting a bi-vocational pastor’s retreat for pastors and their families who are currently engaged in that unique type of ministry. Because bi-vocational pastors and their families are seldom supported in the very unique challenges of that type of ministry model, RSTM sought to provide for them a time of rest and retreat. RSTM will also be endeavoring to explore and research the future needs for bi-vocational ministry as well as varying staffing models for rural and small-town congregations. RSTM is also looking into research possibilities and concepts for parish partnership models, including multisite models as well as partnerships made up of larger congregations assisting and supporting small ones within their region.

In order to provide a consistent stream of practical ideas and resources to rural and small-town congregations, RSTM hosts monthly live webinars on timely and important topics as well as providing the opportunity for people to view the archived webinars from the RSTM website. Congregations have reported they use the archives for things such as elder training and Bible study. There have been a wide range of topics covered, and they have reached people from coast to coast. These webinars have covered topics which range from how to best put together congregational publications to assimilating new members to care for church workers and their families.

Another way we strive to communicate timely resources is through our RSTM newsletters. We publish a quarterly printed newsletter, which includes resources and information about the work of RSTM congregations. We also publish a Monthly E-News, which is a brief newsletter which continually provides information and ideas about particular themes related to mission and ministry in rural and small-town areas. We continue to provide resources, updates, and archives of our materials through the RSTM page on the LCMS website. This provides a place for us to direct people for the calendar of events and archives of newsletters, webinars, and other forms of media. We also utilize the RSTM Facebook page to facilitate the sharing information regarding our events and services, other LCMS entities and pertinent information about RSTM, the LCMS, and our faith lives. Our Facebook page is currently being followed by over 1,500 users.

In an effort to promote continuity of support as well as provide another avenue for training and resources, RSTM continues to develop and strengthen relationships with district rural and small-town mission task forces. We are also providing training to districts which currently do not have these groups to promote the support of RSTM congregations. RSTM is also endeavoring to assist pastors in their transitions to rural and small-town congregations. To this end, RSTM has hosted rural immersions for seminarians which seek to familiarize these new future pastors with the climate and rigors of RSTM pastorates, congregations, and rural and small-town life in general. RSTM also has partnered with Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, to provide on-campus instruction for seminarians as well. RSTM also developed, in conjunction with LCMS Urban and Inner City Mission and LCMS Post-Seminary Applied Learning and Support, a resource for new pastors transitioning into the parish.
RSTM, through its various training opportunities continues to assist congregations as they look at ways in which they can remain viable and active in the ministry area they have been called to serve. One way that we are accomplishing this is to provide resources and leadership training to assist congregations in considering new models for ministry sensitive to the unique needs of staffing, distance, properties, governance, scheduling, ministry priorities, relationships of congregations, and changing demographics of rural and small-town America. RSTM has also finished a major research project looking at outreach, assimilation and retention practices of LCMS rural and small-town congregations. There will also be another research project focused primarily on missions and mission understanding and attitudes of RSTM congregations in the coming triennium.

Finally, the RSTM office regularly receives emails and phone calls seeking various kinds of resources. We either supply the congregation or pastors with the information/resources they require or act as a clearinghouse, connecting them with those who can best meet their needs. We are currently assisting congregations in transitioning into life with a new pastor as well as providing information and support to all new seminary graduates placed in rural and small-town settings. This individual attention to the needs of our constituent congregations often proves to be invaluable, as they seldom have another way to access resources specifically geared toward the unique setting of the rural and small-town congregations. Because of this, RSTM frequently receives positive feedback for our assistance and resources.

School Ministry—*Dr. Rebecca Schmidt, Director*

In July of 2018, Terry Schmidt former director of School Ministry, retired and Dr. Rebecca Schmidt was called to serve as the next director. Currently the position of associate director is vacant.

During the past triennium, to serve students in 1,954 schools, School Ministry has been involved in the management of ongoing programs, developed specialized projects, and provided access to resources for districts, congregations, and educators serving Lutheran schools. (Of the 1,954 schools, 1,774 provide programs for early childhood children, 785 provide programs for elementary students, and 96 provide programs for high school students.)

National Lutheran School Accreditation (NLSA) encourages, assists, and recognizes schools that provide quality Christian education and engage in continuous improvement. Currently, 682 schools are accredited through NLSA. The NLSA Early Childhood Accreditation protocol was revised, tested with ten BETA schools and released for use for all centers and schools in 2018. Formal partnerships with regional accrediting agencies (AdvancED, Consortium for Classical Lutheran Education, Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools, and Western Association of Schools and Colleges) provide opportunities for schools to obtain dual accreditation. The rubrics of identifying exemplary schools and best practices were reviewed and revised by the NLSA National Accreditation Commission. Seventeen *Schools of Distinction* were identified, and eighteen *Powerful Practices* were developed into webinars, shared nationwide, and archived on *LuthEd.org*. Recognizing the importance of pastoral involvement in a Lutheran School, the NLSA School Shepherd Award was developed and awarded annually to three outstanding pastors during the past triennium.

The School Leadership Development (SLED) project serves to recruit and prepare the next generation of administrative leaders to serve in Lutheran schools. In 2017, the SLED project was evaluated and revised to better meet the changing needs of new administrators. Revisions included connecting the face-to-face events with an online platform for communication and course structure and revising the curriculum to reflect practical topics and experiences. During the past triennium, 76 educators were prepared in the SLED program. Additionally, participants are offered the option to take SLED for course credit through Concordia, Nebraska and Concordia, Wisconsin.

Nine LCMS Leadership Coaches (trained and certified) continue to serve schools and congregations with the specific purpose of working with leaders and educators. The partnership between the leadership coach and the educator embraces the Christian faith and is committed to the highest ethical and legal standards of the coaching profession.

Lutheran School Consulting Services (LSCS) provides diagnostic services designed to strengthen and revitalize Lutheran schools in order that the mission of sharing Christ with children and families is more effectively accomplished. In the past triennium, 32 schools have been served through the assessment and implementation of improvement plans.

Along with elementary and high schools, School Ministry serves as an advocate to affirm, equip, and empower leaders and educators serving in Christ-centered early childhood centers and schools. Early childhood consultants work with districts to support the development of high-quality programs. Training and support for consultants is conducted through monthly conference calls and an annual conference for professional development in the field of early childhood education.

The School Ministry staff continues to develop and distribute resources to schools that enhance the educator’s ability to serve students and families. Resources include the annual preparation of *Chapel Talks, National Lutheran Schools Week (NLSW)* materials, and the *School Ministry Mailing*, consisting of 12 monthly articles available each month from September through May.

The *Governing Board Resource for Lutheran Schools* was updated in 2017. In celebration of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, resources were developed, including *Chapel Talks, NLSW* materials, and the *Reformation A–Z Coloring Book* designed for use with schools and congregations. The library of resources located on *LuthEd.org* is available for congregations and schools to download free of charge. Additionally, the School Ministry social media presence on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Pinterest reaches educators daily.

The following 2016 Convention Resolutions were addressed with the support and involvement of School Ministry:

- Resolution 8–01A—“To Encourage and Strengthen the Lutheran Ethos in our LCMS Early Childhood Centers, Elementary Schools, and High Schools.”
  Work with district presidents and education executives is ongoing. See report in Officer, Board, Commission, and Task Force Reports of the *Convention Workbook*.

- Resolution 8–02—“To Recruit and Equip Lutheran Administrators for Service in Early Childhood Cen-
Lutheran Schools continue to be on the forefront in reaching out to serve their communities and operate with the purpose of helping students grow in knowledge and in their love of Jesus Christ while receiving an excellent Christian education. Lutheran schools nurture the faith in children, preparing and equipping them for a life of service in this world and for eternity.

Youth Ministry—Rev. Mark Kiessling, Director

At the very end of the last triennium, LCMS Youth Ministry hosted the 13th LCMS Youth Gathering, In Christ Alone, in New Orleans, Louisiana. The five-day event provided opportunities to learn more about the Lutheran Christian faith along with emphasis on current and future vocational roles. The days were filled with workshop sessions, large-group events, servant events, worship, and learning experiences and fellowship opportunities. Over 22,000 youth and adults from over 1,500 LCMS congregations and 12 countries participated. In addition, roughly 2,000 program planners, volunteers, exhibitors, speakers, and special guests provided planning and support. The event also showcased Concordia University System institutions, LCMS ministries, Recognized Service Organizations, and other LCMS-related ministries.

On July 11–15, 2019, congregations will again gather for the 2019 LCMS Youth Gathering in Minneapolis, Minnesota: “Real. Present. God.” The event will focus on God, our Mighty Fortress and His Word in Psalm 46. Participants will again engage in learning and service opportunities and close with the Divine Service on Monday, July 15.

In 2017–18, LCMS Youth Ministry and LCMS Rosters and Statistics conducted a three-phase research study on millennials and the LCMS. In the first phase, LCMS congregations were surveyed about their congregation and specifically on the confirmation classes of 2004–2006. Assuming the standard confirmation age of 12–14, these young people would now be 23–27 years old. In the second phase, over 2,000 young adults were surveyed. These young adults were confirmed in the LCMS and answered questions of their life, current faith practices, and theology. While most are still active in the church, some had left for other denominations or walked away from the faith entirely. In the third phase, we conducted nine focus groups with nearly 40 active LCMS young adults to clarify their survey data. The full data on this research and its companion research within congregations is available, and will be continually updated, on the Youth E-Source (www.youthesource.com). Additional resourcing will be provided, starting at the LCMS Youth Gathering in July 2019.

The inaugural service year of Lutheran Young Adult Corps (LYAC) started in Summer 2017. LYAC provides full-time service opportunities (3-month and 10-month terms) for LCMS young adults (ages 18–26) in urban settings. Participants have lived and served in five cities: Baton Rouge, Boston, Detroit, New Orleans, and St. Louis. Each participant serves full-time with LCMS churches or RSOs, increasing their capacity for ministry. Through the 2018–2019 service year, 12 participants have served in the 10-month program, 19 participants have served in the 10-month “gap year” program, and over 35,000 hours of service have been provided in the name of Christ.

LCMS Servant Events continued to be hosted by LCMS congregations, RSOs, camps, and other social service agencies. More than 4,000 young people served at such events over the triennium at over 70 sites. Through servant events, youth engage in acts of mercy and enhance their understanding of vocation and service in the church.

The Teen Leadership Initiative of Lutheran Youth Fellowship provided training for teens in three areas: 2017—Faith During Times of Transition discussed Jesus as our foundation during transitions in life; 2018—Share Hope introduced the Christian worldview and our opportunities to share Jesus Christ, our hope; 2019—Motivated by Love focused on Every One His Witness, the LCMS evangelism program. A primary principle of the Initiative is to provide training which allows for young people to replicate the training for their peers in their congregation, circuit, district, or community. In three years, over 140 youth and adults attended the training.

Leadership training for adults included the January 2018 Youth Ministry Symposium in St. Louis. This event was the initial reveal of the millennial study data. Over 120 attended, and representatives from all LCMS Districts, Concordia University and Seminary institutions, and leaders in campus ministries received a special invitation to attend. The National Lutheran Youth Workers Conference took place in July 2018 in Minneapolis, with over 400 participating. This conference was a stand-alone youth ministry training, with information especially geared to preparing for the 2019 LCMS Youth Gathering.

Resource development included regular monthly updates of YouthESource (www.youthesource.com) online resource. Bible studies, blogs, and youth and young adult ministry-based resources are available. In August 2019, LCMS Youth Gathering speakers will provide over a year’s worth of resources for congregational youth ministry. The office also provides resources through servant events (Bible study and devotion materials), Youth Gathering (Bible studies, adult leader helps), and Lutheran Youth Fellowship (leadership training materials). Youth Ministry staff also presented on the millennial research and other youth ministry topics at venues, including LCMS seminaries, Concordia universities, LCMS district youth events, district church-worker events, and other LCMS conferences.

Campus Ministry (LCMS U)—Rev. Marcus Zill, Director

In 2020, we will celebrate the 100th anniversary of the
planting of the very first LCMS campus ministry at the University of Wisconsin in Madison. While we certainly rejoice in the tremendous gift that our campus ministries, big and small, have been to the life of the church over the past century, and still are, we also have exponentially increasing opportunities going forward. We cannot abandon our young precious sheep at the time that they need us most, but we also have endless opportunities in the academic square to confess the faith, reach the lost, and maintain a much-needed place in the academic incubator of ideas.

The continued rebirth and revitalization of direct support for campus ministry in the Synod through LCMS U has now been taking place for five years. Much of the focus during the last triennium has been on the continued development of LCMS U and its integration within the Synod’s new structure, while tackling the tough issues that college students face on campus in a timely manner and increasing resources for congregations and others to start and develop campus ministries.

A major highlight continues to be the national biennial conferences which afford LCMS students and campus ministry workers the needed opportunity to gather together for worship, study, fellowship, and collaboration. As a follow up to TABOO, the 2015 National LCMS Campus Ministry Conference, which focused on marriage and sexuality issues, LCMS U held the following two national events that were each attended by approximately 350 college students and campus ministry workers:

- **LIBERTY**, the 2017 National LCMS Campus Ministry Conference was held in metro Washington, DC, and specifically at the University of Maryland in College Park. Speakers from throughout the LCMS and local groups such as Alliance Defending Freedom helped provide college groups and students tools for not only protecting their own rights on campus but for encouraging religious liberty for all on campus. The conference also served as the site for “The Great Mustache Shave Off” between Synod President, Rev. Dr. Matthew Harrison, and Montana District President, Rev. Terry Forke, that ended with both men cleanly shaven. At the closing Epiphany Divine Service at Redeemer Lutheran Church in Hyattsville, MD, our LCMS U chapter at the University of Maryland, students raised over $1,550 in a special offering that was split to support Redeemer’s outreach to internationals, immigrants, and refugees and the Synod’s efforts to develop the Lutheran Center for Religious Liberty.

- **WITNESS**, the 2019 National LCMS Campus Ministry Conference was held in Fort Wayne, IN, at Purdue University Fort Wayne and Concordia Theological Seminary, with St. Paul’s Lutheran Church in downtown Fort Wayne hosting most of the prayer offices for the conference as well as the closing Divine Service. College students and campus ministry workers from around the nation had a timely introduction to the Synod’s *Every One His Witness* Lutheran evangelism program by Rev. Dr. Mark Wood and learned about witnessing in various other areas of most interest to them in their college contexts. They also had the chance to spend quality time getting familiar with one of the Synod’s two seminaries. At the closing Epiphany Eve Divine Service, students raised over $1,400 in a special offering that was given to the Shepherd’s Hand Community Outreach Center in Fort Wayne, an organization affiliated with Shepherd of the City Lutheran Church, our LCMS U chapter at Indiana Tech University.

The LCMS U radio program on KFUO, “The Student Union,” continues to grow in popularity as a weekly opportunity to connect college students, campus ministry workers, parents, and all who love the young people of the church while providing opportunities to highlight our individual LCMS U chapters. Topics range from apologetic interests, the intersection of science and academic pursuits, issues of marriage and sexuality, the support of religious liberty, the cultivation of one’s spiritual and devotional life.

All campus ministry is ultimately local. The heart and core of our efforts takes place in, with, and through local congregations and in conjunction with districts, circuits, and recognized service organizations. There are now over 240 intentional LCMS U chapters throughout the United States, ranging in size from large full-time campus ministries and part-time town/gown congregations to congregations taking initiative to reach out to students at a nearby college campus. This represents a 20 percent chapter increase since this same time in 2016. In some circumstances, campus ministries are supported directly by districts, entire circuits, regional mission societies, and recognized service organizations. The necessary consultation and support for this growth will continue to be provided for campus ministries as they seek to expand their outreach efforts going forward.

In the past triennium, LCMS U, in response to 2016 Convention Resolution 16–05, “To Increase Our Efforts to Retain College-Age Youth,” began the process to develop a “COLLEGE BOUND” initiative to help provide high school seniors with the resources and worldview training necessary to get prepared for the world they step into as they prepare to go to college. A roundtable was held on the topic of college preparation and the transition that college students face; resources are in development, and initial beta COLLEGE BOUND retreats for rising seniors will be held this June 2019, aiming at fine tuning the experience with a full round of mini-conferences to coincide with the 100th anniversary of campus ministry in 2020. This effort will also include an unprecedented comprehensive strategy to connect rising college freshman to one another and our LCMS U chapters well before they begin their freshman year.

It is no secret that reaching out with the Gospel of Jesus Christ in the collegiate square is not easy. There are many barriers on the battleground of ideas, and our campus ministries need all the support they can get, spiritually, organizationally, and, yes, financially. As we begin this second century of LCMS campus ministry, there are ultimately four reasons to CARE about campus ministry that we continue to champion through the efforts of LCMS U both at the Synod and local chapter levels:

- Catechizing and caring for our own
- Apologetics in the academic square
- Reaching out to those who are lost
- Engaging a dying culture with Christ

Catechizing and Caring for Our Own—This is our number 19 Convention Workbook
one priority. Our LCMS college students need substantive opportunities to grow in their faith, address issues they face on campus, receive further catechetical training, and enjoy one another's company. Many of them have an LCMS campus ministry at their school, but most do not. Preparing our young people for life during college requires our full attention as we seek to support these students and their parents, congregations, and campus ministries.

**Apologetics in the Academic Square**—The university campus has always been a place designed to facilitate learning, formation, and the pursuit of truth. Our college campuses are great incubators of societal ideas, both good and bad. The church cannot surrender its place in the academic square without dire results. We also need to support our LCMS faculty and staff who work in these communities. As confessional Lutherans, we have something to say to everyone on campus—in the kingdom of the left and the right.

**Reaching Out to Those Who Are Lost**—College campuses are quickly becoming one of our primary national mission fields. In addition to the task of continuing to care for our own LCMS college-age youth, God has opened doors for outreach to international students (now over 1 million study on American soil), as well as those who have either lost the faith or are searching for truth. The opportunity for evangelism and mission is breathtaking.

**Engaging a Dying Culture with Christ**—This generation of young people is becoming increasingly lost in a world of gray, where false idealism and misplaced priorities rule. Idols are everywhere. Where truth is being set aside, cultural decay soon follows. However, the Word of God is powerful and effective. Christ alone is the answer, even as He reminds us that "you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free" (John 8:32).

As we celebrate the centennial of LCMS campus ministry next year, we thank God for the tremendous opportunities to confess the faith and witness to the lost that exist on our nation's campuses. The need is greater than ever, and LCMS U is continuing to help provide the structure and resources for congregations and campus ministries engaged in this effort. Many new horizons await us, including urban campus ministry and outreach on community college campuses. The challenges are increasing, but the opportunities are far outpacing them.

May God continue to bless all the young people of the church, our collective efforts at the Synod, district, circuit, and congregational levels to support them, and the opportunities that we have to witness in the academic square and reach the lost for the sake of the Gospel.

**Black Ministry**—Rev. Dr. Roosevelt Gray, Director

LCMS Black Ministry is a specialized ministry of encouragement and assistance to the more than 300 congregations and schools within the LCMS that provide for large black populations, reaching out with the Gospel in mercy and compassion for their neighbor. It advocates and influences Lutheran mission and LCMS districts, congregations, schools, and service organizations that serve indigenous black and African populations in promoting faithfulness to the theology of the LCMS and cultural sensitivity to communities we serve.

Black Ministry began the 2016-2019 triennium with the 2016 Convention charge to work on starting new Rosa J. Young Academies, an emphasis and result of *The First Rosa* documentary of 2015. The process of starting the first academy is underway through the Alabama Public Charter School Commission. An application for the first Rosa J. Young Academy for Selma, Alabama, has been submitted and is presently waiting for approval. In 2017, Black Ministry celebrated the 140th anniversary of the LCMS in Black Ministry with a Family Convocation in historic Birmingham, Alabama, with 500 participants in remembrance of the 500th anniversary celebration of the Reformation, under the theme of *All For Jesus: Know Him, Confess Him, Serve Him* (Philippians 3:7–11). The TimeLine quarterly newsletter is emailed to help encourage, equip, and empower congregations in black ministry with articles of congregation awareness, best ministry practices, and witness and outreach resources. We facilitate the continued support of the black and African immigrant clergy caucus and leadership training. The preparation, planning, and location of the 2020 Family Convocation is in process for July 2020. Congregations are encouraged with resources in witness, outreach, and church planting. Resources have been developed and provided in person and online at the Synod's website for congregations in black ministry.

**Worship**—Rev. Will Weedon, Director

The Synod's Worship program ministry nurtures a culture of confessional faithfulness, artistic excellence, and integrity in the presentation, distribution, and reception of God's life-giving gifts in Word and Sacraments.

Worship is more than an aspect of congregational or Christian life. It is, in fact, the very purpose of our existence, that “we might be to the praise of His glory” (Ephesians 1:12). In the past triennium, we have sought out and been blessed to find numerous ways to foster in LCMS congregations and workers the great joy and awesome privilege that is ours as we live from the good gifts that our loving heavenly Father never ceases to bestow on us in Christ through His Holy Word and the blessed Sacraments.

**Daily Catechesis in the Word of God**

Through the Monday to Friday KFUO radio show/podcast *Thy Strong Word*, we provide an in-depth look at the Sacred Scriptures, chapter by chapter, from a Lutheran perspective. A guest pastor (they are drawn from all over the Synod), joins Pastor Weedon for each show. As of the end of December 2018, *Thy Strong Word* had been downloaded well over a million times since its inception in August of 2014. The show has seen a steady growth of downloads, with the most downloads occurring thus far in 2018 (over 400,000). A recent listener to the show wrote us:

I want to thank you for your study of Revelation. It is an answer to my prayers and it is a book that requires guidance. I am an American citizen, living in Portugal so far from home and family, but so blessed to take part in the various shows available to me through KFUO. I particularly enjoy *Thy Strong Word* and your animated way of reading Scripture, sharing your insights and making sure that we understand the main points in what the Lord is saying to us.

2019 Convention Workbook
Institute on Liturgy, Preaching, and Church Music

What an unspeakable joy this was in 2017 as we gathered at Concordia University Chicago and spent three days pondering the theme: “The Just Live by Faith: Make It Clear in Sermon, Service, and Song” in honor of the 500th anniversary of the Lutheran Reformation. Over 400 musicians, pastors, and interested laity joined in the event. Aside from the excellent keynotes and workshops, the conference sang the debut of two new settings of the music for Divine Service Setting Five, one of which was geared for congregations with smaller musical resources and the other for congregations with larger musical resources.

Ecumenical Cooperation

Worship continues to work with the Association of Lutheran Church Musicians in a partnership that seeks to strengthen the artistic excellence of our musicians. LCMS Worship has published a listing of resources in its publications, and Pastor Weedon has been asked to provide for their CrossAccent journal a written copy of a paper that he delivered at the Good Shepherd Institute on the campus of Concordia Theological Seminary in Fort Wayne.

Resources Online

Worship continued to roll out helps for congregations and pastors and musicians for free, usually by PDF downloads at the worship resources site on the LCMS website: https://www.lcms.org/worship/planning-resources. A totally updated version of Kids in the Divine Service was produced with excellent graphic presentation and keyed to Lutheran Service Book. For Bible study, we’ve released The Word in Song: Hymn of the Day Studies. These are still being issued, but they’re almost complete. LetUsPray and Lectionary Downloads continue to be popular. We also have released Suggested Hymns for both 3-year and 1-year series; suggested Lenten and Advent Midweek Prayers; Advent and Lenten Family Table Devotions; and much more. Additionally, Worship has continued its creative partnership with Lutheran Public Radio, providing numerous series in liturgical catechesis, hymn studies, and commentary on the Church’s feasts, festivals, and commemorations.

Consultation

Pastor Weedon and Deaconess Bowers continue to field questions related to best worship practices as these arrive at the International Center (through our Church Information Center and via direct email and phone calls). In all of these, it is our aim to provide prompt and accurate replies so that in the worship of our congregations “the Word of Christ may dwell among [us] richly” and that the joy of Christ’s people in His saving gifts may increase.

Stewardship Ministry—Rev. Heath Curtis, Coordinator

By working with the districts of the Synod, LCMS Stewardship Ministry helps pastors and congregations teach the Word of God regarding one aspect of Christian sanctification: imitating God in sacrificial generosity. “By the mercies of God: present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God,” (Rom. 12:1) for “where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (Matt. 6:21).

Faithful, biblical, cross-focused stewardship is a key aspect to congregational health. In the past triennium, it has been our joy to help foster this stewardship across our Synod. Here is an email we received the weekend after our last More Than Giving workshop:

Let me extend a thank you your way for your words of scriptural truth and the practical application of them. On Saturday afternoon I received a text from one of the couples in attendance saying that they had been thinking and talking about stewardship all day. That’s not normal! I may never receive another text like that again. Our stewardship board had a great meeting last night and have taken some first steps toward making some needed changes.

We receive feedback like this after every workshop we conduct: there is a hunger for solid, Lutheran teaching on stewardship across the Synod. We bring that teaching and training out to the districts in the following ways.

Stewardship Workshops

Pastors and lay leaders gather at the circuit, bi-circuit, or regional level to learn the theological foundations and practical implementation of faithful stewardship. This is our most potent tool in effecting real, positive change in the stewardship life of congregations: face-to-face instruction with pastors and lay leaders. In the past triennium, we held workshops in more than half of the districts. Several districts have asked us to hold a workshop in each circuit! We have also had great success in our two-day conferences in partnership with Doxology, which typically draw in participants from multiple states.

Generational Generosity Workshops

Many of our congregations serve in demographically challenging areas, which has a real impact on the financial health of a church. Our Generational Generosity workshop helps pastors and lay leaders understand the demographic landscape around them and how to make faithful stewardship plans in response.

Online Resources

We maintain a curated collection of stewardship resources at our website (lcms.org/stewardship) for the entire Synod to utilize. All resources are provided free of charge, and we are continually looking for new resources. In the past triennium, we produced a major new resource to help Lutheran congregations make faithful use of Financial Peace University, the most popular and effective personal financial management program in the country. Each month, we produce newsletter articles and bulletin blurbs keyed to the lectionaries so that the Synod’s congregations can continually keep faithful stewardship before the eyes of the people.

Specialized Pastoral Ministry (SPM) and Worker Wellness

This program ministry is currently supervised by the ONM executive director, assisted by several contracted individuals, and includes Institutional and Emergency Services (ESC) Chaplaincy, Clinical Pastoral Education and Pastoral Counseling.
OFFICER, BOARD, AND COMMISSION REPORTS

Please see www.lcms.org/spm for additional description. Operational highlights of the past triennium include the following:

Specialized Pastoral Ministry (SPM)

1. Ecclesiastical Endorsements
   - 11 SPM (10 institutional chaplains; 1 pastoral counselor)
   - 3 ESC
   - 7 time-limited (one-year)
   - Started conducting endorsements consultations online via Zoom.

2. SPM Educational Events
   - Six offered around the country with average attendance of 41

3. Board for National Mission Calls

4. Recruitment
   - Self-Assessment Inventory is on the unit’s webpage at www.lcms.org/spm

5. Disaster Response Chaplaincy Deployment—upon request by district president
   - March 2018—Wateska, IL, flood
   - February 2018—Marathon, FL, hurricane
   - November 2018—Panama City, FL, hurricane

6. Training Scholarships
   - 4 grants in 2016, totaling $1,950
   - 5 grants in 2017, totaling $2,450
   - 5 grants in 2018, totaling $2,600

7. Prison and Jail Ministry
   - District Coordinators’ Conference
   - Synod Prison and Jail Ministry Conference co-sponsored with SID Prison and Jail Ministry Task Force
   - Prison Ministry Handbook updated
   - Eight “jump started” grants were issued from SID with support from Synod’s coordinator

8. Electronic (Zoom) Clinical Pastoral Education (25 weeks) in conjunction with Lutheran Senior Services CPE Center—three pastors; two deaconesses

9. First Henry F. Wind Award given for outstanding leadership in SPM—Rev. Milton Stohs

10. COP Policy 7.3.3, Endorsement and Specialization Ministry (regarding roster status of workers in SPM): worked with the Synod Secretary to obtain active roster status for those in SPM recognized by district presidents. Consequently, the Council of Presidents has declared that the word “endorsement” as used in Bylaw 2.11.1 (i) shall mean “an ecclesiastical statement acknowledging that the position to be filled is a Word or Word and Sacrament ministry, in which a member of the Synod can actively carry out the ministry for which he (she) has been ordained (commissioned).”

11. Pastoral Care and Mentoring of many colleagues in ministry

12. Informed Synod about ministry outside the walls of the local parish and give examples of vocational opportunities to serve outside of the parish providing “human care in close proximity to Word and Sacrament.” See February 2019 issue of The Lutheran Witness, “More Than a Nicety.”

Worker Wellness

1. In 2017, gave a synodwide needs-assessment survey of ordained and commissioned ministers, with 917 completed and returned surveys for a 95 percent reliability rating.

2. Worker Wellness Action Group (WWAG) formed with seven active partners: ONM, Council of Presidents (COP), Concordia Plan Services, LCEF, LCMS PED, CUS, and Lutheran Federal Credit Union.

3. New webpage launched with resources in eight categories of wellness: Spiritual, emotional, relational, vocational, physical, intellectual, financial, and congregational at www.lcms.org/wellness.

4. Held focus groups (the focus being resources and solutions to improving the care of workers and families) with a projected total of over 250 ordained and commissioned ministers and spouses participating from around the country and representing various ministry contexts. The results will be shared with the partners as well as Synod.

5. Held focus groups with international missionaries and spouses (anticipated participation: 30 missionaries and 30 spouses).

6. COP met in seven break-out focus groups.

7. 52 devotions have been written to address wellness concerns in all eight categories of wellness and have been made available on the web and will be published electronically and in paperback.

8. A theology of well-being was written for each of the eight categories of wellness, and plans are being made for publication.

9. Worker wellness has been promoted in The Reporter as well as on Synod’s website and will be highlighted on the 2019 Convention delegates’ lanyards.
10. Reconstituted Ministerial Care Coalition (MC2): A network of district worker wellness representatives meet regularly to share best practices, advocate for workers and families, and continue their education in ministerial well-being.

**Deaconess Ministry**—Deaconess Grace Rao, Director

The chief role of LCMS Deaconess Ministry is to serve as a catalyst nurturing and strengthening the Synod to identify, plan, encourage, and support the educational and diaconal needs of our Synod, with special support and coordination with the deaconess training programs of the Synod.

Over the past three years, ONM has awarded $187,213 in grants toward developing capacity and strengthening internal resources to meet human care needs, support of deaconess internships, provide financial assistance to international students, and give scholarships for deaconesses attending the annual deaconess gatherings and conferences. We strive to encourage the deaconess programs of the various centers and institutes of the Synod. In support of this work, we are especially thankful for generous contributions from Concordia Lutheran Ministries, LWML, the Schwan Foundation, and a bequest from the estate of Deaconess Stallman, now departed to be with her Lord.

The following tabular data set forth the number of rostered deaconesses in church ministry for the past triennium:

### Table 1
**Deaconesses (2016–18, by Roster Status)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2018</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Active</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Candidates</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Candidates</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emeritus</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>279</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>306</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 2
**Active Deaconesses (2016–18, by Service Context)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2018</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chaplain Institutional</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District Executive Staff</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District Other Staff</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District Missionary/Other</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Synod Missionary</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Ministry/Other</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Staff/Principal</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognized Service Organization</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Serving LCMS Member Congregation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2018</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Serving Nonmember Congregation</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Synod College/Seminary Faculty</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Synod School/College/University/Seminary Faculty/Staff</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Synod Executive/Staff</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waiting to be assigned</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>163*</td>
<td>181**</td>
<td>179***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes:

* Two deaconesses serving two positions = “net total” 163
** Three deaconesses serving in two positions = “net total” 181
*** One deaconess serving in two positions = “net total” 179

### Table 3
**Active Deaconesses (2016–18, by District)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2018</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Atlantic</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>California/Nevada/Hawaii</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Illinois</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Florida-Georgia</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indiana</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iowa East</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iowa West</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kansas</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michigan</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid-South</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minnesota North</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minnesota South</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missouri</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Montana</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nebraska</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New England</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Jersey</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Dakota</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Wisconsin</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Illinois</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northwest</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ohio</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oklahoma</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pacific South West</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Notes:

*Three deaconesses serving in two positions and four waiting for the call.

**One deaconess serving in two positions and four waiting for a call.

**Recognized Service Organizations**—Deaconess

Dorothy Krans, Director

“The granting of recognized service organization 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” (LCMS By-law 6.2.1).

Information and statistics were gathered for the RSO Task Force working in fulfillment of Resolution 4-03B. Research was conducted on the history of social ministry in the LCMS and the progression of a formal recognition status of organizations with the LCMS.

We currently have 186 RSOs providing a diversity of services from conception to end of life. The 186 organizations holding RSO status fall into the following categories: 14 camps, 7 campus ministry, 2 communication, 39 mission agencies, 10 education, and 114 social ministries. These organizations serve nationally and internationally and extend the mission and ministry of the LCMS by providing acts of Mercy, Witness, and Life Together. Since the Synod’s 2016 convention, 85 RSOs have received status, of which 18 were new organizations applying for RSO status and 67 were renewing RSOs. These organizations have continued to build LCMS board membership, and the relationship between the organizations continues to strengthen as we promote our resources. 38 RSOs were either terminated, denied, or were asked to withdraw their applications for RSO status. The services and programs of the RSOs are promoted during presentations and through the quarterly RSO e-newsletter and other LCMS publications. We continue to network the RSOs with other ONM and OIM ministry areas and between the RSOs and other LCMS entities. Grants have been given to RSOs to provide leadership training, board development, assisting with their program areas and purchasing resource material. Bibles, devotional material, and other resource items have been purchased for use in numerous RSOs’ ministry areas.

Association and independent schools sit under the RSO department. There are currently 140 schools holding RSO status, with 18 schools being independent, 6 pan-Lutheran, and 116 being association schools. Seventy-six schools have had their RSO status renewed, and 8 new schools were granted RSO status. Four RSO schools withdrew their RSO status, and 8 RSO schools were dissolved, resulting in the termination of RSO status.

As faith-based organizations, RSOs continue to face challenges with changes in federal and state law. These changes have an impact upon their religious rights of freedom and have a large impact upon their funding of programs and services. RSOs working in aging services are concerned with proposed laws dealing with the legalization of self-assisted suicide and euthanasia. The continued cutting of funding from Medicare and Medicaid has resulted in challenges for the organizations, especially in the areas of aging and disability ministry. The RSOs continue to support aging residents and other clients through benevolent care.

RSOs strive to live out their Lutheran identity showing the mercy and compassion of Christ to the least of these, who are often seen as the undesired among us. RSOs provide a diversity of opportunities for LCMS members to express their love, compassion, and concern in meeting the needs of their neighbors.

**Disaster Response**—Rev. Ross Johnson, Director

Accomplishments over the Past Triennium

During the last three years, we have had the privilege of providing guidance and counsel to congregations and districts following a number of very significant disasters—the largest being Hurricane Harvey in August 2017. We were on the ground within days of landfall, delivering equipment and gift cards and laying the groundwork for what has been our largest response since Hurricane Sandy, and Katrina before that. Our partnership with the Texas District and numerous congregations along the Gulf Coast led to the establishment of volunteer camps in the Corpus Christi area, the Beaumont/Port Arthur area, and two in the greater Houston area. Thousands of volunteers have generously given of their time and talent to help rebuild hundreds of homes in these hard-hit areas. Through January 2019, we have received $3,458,596.73 in donations restricted for Hurricane Harvey—only use and have spent over $3.3 million on Harvey alone. LCMS Disaster Response awarded grants to congregations for volunteer coordinator support, equipment/tool purchases and building supplies and furniture purchases, among other things. We plan to continue partnering with the Texas District and local congregations via additional grants through the summer of 2020 as the work continues.

Other major hurricanes to hit the United States during this time included Irma (Florida, 2017), Florence (the Carolinas, 2018), and Michael (Florida Panhandle, 2018). After each of these disasters, we partnered with the respective districts for appropriate responses, including the coordination of volunteers, provision of equipment/tools, and the distribution of building materials. As of January 2019, our response for these three hurricanes has totaled more than $910,000, and we intend on providing even further support to congregations and districts in response to Florence and Michael.
We also engaged in relatively significant responses to flooding in Baton Rouge, LA, fires in CA, and responded to dozens of other disasters throughout the United States and abroad. Between July of 2017 and January of 2019, we have spent more than $7.19 million in response to natural and man-made disasters throughout the world as well as for preparedness.

In addition to our work in response, we have also had the privilege of leading dozens of different Lutheran Early Response Team (LERT) preparedness trainings throughout multiple LCMS districts. We also led sectionals at numerous church worker conferences, and other conferences, throughout a number of districts. Each year, we host a National Disaster Response Conference. It is an opportunity for all our partners to gather in one place (over 100 in attendance each year!) and learn best practices from each other, and it helps to make each response more efficient than the last.

To assist in our ongoing provision of training, we updated our training materials. We are also in the beginning stages of utilizing a new software program called Volunteer Hub. The software should make it easier for all of our trained trainers and District Disaster Response Coordinators to input and access information from the trainings. This integration will allow for a closer connection between training and response and should further our capacity beyond what it is today.

Many of our other resources continue to “fly off the shelves” as we send them out to individuals and congregations requesting them. New resources since the last convention include a 40 Day Devotional Guide for those going through a disaster, The Mercy of God in the Cross of Christ (a volume of essays on mercy for use by small groups, pastors, and teachers in the classroom), a Spiritual Care Companion for Time of Disaster, and Bringing God’s Comfort and Peace for caregivers, along with a number of other smaller resources like bookmarks and brochures.

All of these great resources (and more) are currently available in English. Moreover, many of these resources have recently been translated into Spanish for use in the United States and across Latin America, and particularly for use by our Spanish-speaking congregations here in the States. Each year, the number of our resources available in Spanish continues to grow.

Plans for the Next Triennium

Over the next three years, we intend to continue hosting yearly National Disaster Response Conferences on disaster preparedness, with the same goal as our previous conferences. We also intend on leading 8–12 LERT (and other) trainings each year and expect our district coordinators to lead approximately 30 additional LERT trainings each year. But training is only a means to an end. The goal is for more and more of our trained volunteers to actually volunteer after a disaster and engage their communities, provide care for others in body and soul, and proclaim the Gospel of Jesus to those who are hurting. We also remain available to teach at church worker conferences and in various other ways at the district/circuit level.

Finally, we will endeavor over the next three years to maintain a rapid engagement of all district and congregational partners throughout the United States (and internationally) on the ground and deploy in-person to disaster sites whenever necessary. Ultimately, our ability to assist in the development and implementation of Disaster Response plans greatly increases our efficiency and ultimately provides for a greater stewardship of the resources available.

Scouting Task Force

Following is the report of the Scouting Task Force, established under the oversight of the ONM by 2016 Convention Resolution 16-06, “To Encourage CTCR and Scouting Task Force to Move Quickly in Providing Guidance Concerning Scouting.”

Many families and individuals have been blessed by participating in scouting programs, which help young people develop confidence, leadership skills, appreciation of God’s creation, and an understanding of being a citizen, and provide family-focused activities. LCMS congregations have been blessed to welcome new families by chartering scouting troops or supporting scout activities. However, culture and legal pressures have had negative effects on scouting organizations and religious organizations which encourage support of young people.

The conversation around scouting generally revolves around these areas:

- LCMS Congregations which promote, invest in, and support scout troops/groups, most strongly seen with scouting programs (e.g., BSA, American Heritage Girls) that create “charters” with churches, schools, and other organizations and allow for them to exert influence or authority in the local program.
- LCMS Congregations which host scouting troops or groups on their property, but may have little connection with the volunteer and participants of the group or troop.
- Individual LCMS Lutherans who participate in a scouting program, regardless if their group is chartered or run by an LCMS organization.

Specific Considerations for Boy Scouts of America

An extended history of the LCMS’ relationship with scouting, specifically Boy Scouts of America (BSA), can be found at the following web locations:

https://www.lcms.org/social-issues/free-to-be-faithful

(see “Youth Development”)


The BSA has dominated the scouting conversation in the last numbers of years. Decreasing number of Scouts, multiple changes to their membership policies, allowing female participants, a name change, lawsuits, and possible bankruptcy have often put them in the news. Although they are not the only scouting organization an LCMS member or congregation may have contact with, they are the most prevalent. We thought it was appropriate to provide an update on BSA and the LCMS.

On July 27, 2015, BSA made the decision to allow for homosexual leaders and staff people. The LCMS rescinded its Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Boy Scouts and no longer could be in a formal, supportive relationship. The LCMS provided guidance on the matter and suggested congregations review their relationship with chartered BSA troops and seek legal counsel. Simply stated, nothing has changed in BSA’s stance or the LCMS’s relationship with the organization.
On a positive side, widespread attacks on troops chartered to religious organizations have not occurred. And, to this point, as stated by the BSA, LCMS congregations have been able to maintain authority over the Christian instruction and selection of volunteers in their chartered organizations. However, LCMS congregations chartering scouting groups should still be vigilant in reviewing their program and deciding if their scouting program is the best avenue for developing faithful Christian young people. If cultural shifts continue in the United States, hosting a BSA, or any scouting troop, can contain risks. Below are some key suggestions, which have been provided in the past.

Recommendations to LCMS Congregations Regarding BSA (and Other Scouting Organizations):

- Review the organization's charter and understand the benefits and risks of membership.
  - Seek local legal review and consult resources such as https://issuu.com/thelcms/docs/lcms-alliance-defending-freedom-leg/22
  - Consult your local BSA council about their thoughts on the membership changes and practices around religious involvement. For example, do they support the authority of the local pastor and congregation in setting and administering Christian instruction connected to the BSA troop?

- Support ministry with and Christian instruction of young people and their development as citizens of God’s kingdom and the civil realm. Evaluate if the scouting program is the best program or resource for this ministry.
  - Have congregations fully utilized resources such as Lutheran or other Christian camps for outdoor activity and education?

- Engagement of the pastor and congregational leadership in a church’s chartered organization is strongly encouraged. This involvement is especially important in selecting, resourcing, and supporting the adult volunteers who are working with the program.

Other Scouting Organizations and Connections

The LCMS has a formal relationship (Memorandum of Understanding) with only one scouting organization, the American Heritage Girls (AHG). This agreement has been in place since 2014. AHG is a Christian scouting organization for girls which charters groups with LCMS congregation and schools and allows for a healthy control over program and leadership. In other documents linked to this report, Trail Life USA (TL) is mentioned as an alternative organization, started out of concern for changes within BSA. No formal agreement has been made with TL.

Programs for Religious Activities with Youth (P.R.A.Y) continues to provide the “Lutheran” religious emblem. P.R.A.Y. is the official religious emblem provider for BSA and AHG and can be used by any “scout” or individual. The curriculum is written to allow for specific LCMS Lutheran teaching to be taught by parents, pastors, or church workers.

Some have asked whether the LCMS would consider running its own scouting program. This is a noble cause, but observing the investment and focus it has taken AHG and TL to get started and seek stability has shown the large amount of resources and staff needed to run a program well in today’s realities. The LCMS is not in a position to launch such a program.

Additional Recommendations

LCMS congregations cherish and give thanks for young people in their congregations. The LCMS can also give thanks for the way God has used scouting to develop Christian relationships, encouraged Christian education, and provided skills and the nurturing of the faith of young Christians. As with so many institutions in our country, cultural forces have led scouting agencies to face difficult realities. Thankfully, Jesus is the Lord of the Church, and His grace does not change. The Church will continue the proclamation of the Gospel, administering of the Sacraments, and teaching of the Word of God with or without scouting programs.

- Unless BSA or other scouting organizations remove the LCMS pastor of congregation as the authority for moral and religious education, no additional official action needs to be taken at this time.
- The only Memo of Understanding with a scouting organization (AHG) encourages LCMS congregations to teach the truth of God’s Word.
- LCMS congregations find themselves in a changing cultural and religious landscape. Now, as always, is a time for LCMS congregations, schools, and workers to boldly develop and assess resources for young people and their families to grow in the one true faith, enjoy God’s creation, and grow in confidence in their own abilities and gifts. Although the culture may be changing around us, Christian education and opportunities to be in community with others is a gift from God.
- Develop and utilize programs to engage young people in relationships with parents, Christian adults, and church workers.
- Support young people who are in scouting with prayer and words of encouragement, and rejoice with them as they develop skills and increase learning.
- Help them understand vocation as they participate in these groups. Be open to discuss their questions or concerns about what they encounter in scouts or any other school or extra-curricular experiences.

Office of Pastoral Education (PED)—Rev. Dr. James A. Baneck, Executive Director

(See also R4: Pastoral Formation Committee)

The Executive Director of the Office of Pastoral Education is to assist the Synod’s Chief Mission Officer in executing the responsibilities related to seminary education which are assigned to him in the Bylaws of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod: “The Chief Mission Officer shall, on behalf of the President, provide leadership, coordination, and oversight for pre-seminary...
education programs, seminary education, and post-seminary continuing education, and by providing advocacy for pastoral education and health within the Synod” (Bylaw 3.4.3.8, 2016 LCMS Handbook, p. 117).

God promises, “I will give you shepherds after my own heart, who will feed you with knowledge and understanding” (Jer. 3:15). St. Luke writes, “Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the Church of God, which He obtained with His own blood” (Acts 20:28). These words clearly attest to the divinely commanded office of pastor for the life and growth of His Church (2016 Resolution 5–13, fourth ResolveD).

Martin Luther writes, “I foresee, if God does not give us faithful ministers, the devil will tear our church apart through sectarians and he will never cease until he has accomplished it” (AE 51:378). In his Church and Ministry, C. F. W. Walther writes, “The preaching office is not an optional office but one whose establishment has been commanded to the Church and to which the Church is properly bound till the end of time.”

The Church will always sail in hostile waters in this sinful earth. She will also continue to wrestle with differences and difficulties from within. Therefore, outside and internal forces continue to challenge pastoral formation, the Office of the Holy Ministry, and pastoral practice. At its very core, God calls pastors to proclaim His Word, administer His blessed Sacraments, and provide biblical pastoral care to His people. Through the called and ordained pastor, the Holy Spirit creates, nourishes, and sustains saving faith to His people. Therefore, it is incumbent “To Uphold the Scriptural and Confessional Qualifications for the Office of the Holy Ministry” (2016 Convention Resolution 6–02).

The PED serves the Synod by addressing the following:

1. The third Objective in Article III of the Constitution, “The Synod, under the Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions, shall …” under the third objective in Article III of the LCMS Constitution, “… Recruit and train pastors, teachers, and other professional church workers and provide opportunity for their continuing growth.”

2. Serve the seminaries and universities—particularly the universities’ pre-seminary programs—as an agency of Synod (Bylaw 1.2.1.a).

3. Fulfill especially the second and fifth mission priorities for the Synod’s 2016–19 Triennium, “Support and expand theological education,” and “Promote and nurture the spiritual, emotional, financial, and physical well-being of pastors and professional church workers.”

4. Ensure fulfillment of 2016 Convention resolutions specific to pastoral education/formation

2016–19 Accomplishments and Continuing Activity

Pre-Seminary Education

- Completed a comprehensive pre-seminary curriculum comparison within the Concordia University System (2016 Convention Resolution 7–05A). At a September 2018 “Pastoral Formation Summit” (see description below), the seminary presidents commended the Concordia University System for its robust pre-seminary formation. Upon review of the Concordia pre-seminary curriculum, it was noted that students entering the seminaries are strongly proficient in Hebrew, Greek, an immersion in the LCMS culture and ethos, and general liberal arts. There was discussion around the benefits of increased classical studies, including philosophy, Latin, history, ethics, grammar, art, music, speech, rhetoric, debate, and logic.

- Visited one Concordia University per quarter with CUS president and Director of Institutional Research and Integrity. Special interest for pastoral education is meeting with the pre-seminary director, theology department, pre-seminary students, and the university president (2016 Convention Resolution 7–01A).

- Convened two Zoom meetings per year with the Concordia University pre-seminary directors. These meetings give opportunity for dialogue between the pre-seminary directors in discussing curriculum, enrollment, challenges, opportunities, collaboration, and future planning.

Seminary Education

- Completed a comprehensive seminary curriculum comparison of the two seminaries. CTSFW made minor modifications to its MDiv curriculum during 2016–19. CSL, however, rolled out its new MDiv curriculum during this past triennium. The following chart shows the current MDiv curriculum from both seminaries:
### Seminary Curriculum by Four Disciplines

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Seminaries</th>
<th>Exegetical</th>
<th>Historical</th>
<th>Pastoral Ministry and Mission</th>
<th>Systematics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Concordia Theological Seminary Fort Wayne</td>
<td>Hebrew I, Hebrew II, Pentateuch I, Pentateuch II, Major Prophets, The Psalms, Elementary Greek, Gospels I (Hermeneutics, Text Crit, Matthew), Gospels II (Luke and Mark), Gospels III (John and I John), Pauline Epistles, Greek Readings</td>
<td>Church History I (1st–8th Centuries), Church History II (9th–16th Centuries), Church History III (Reformation–Present), Church History IV (Lutheran Churches in America from 17th Century), Seminar: Historical Text, Seminar: Luther Text, History Area Elective</td>
<td>Homiletics I, Homiletics II, Homiletics III, Pastoral Theology I, Pastoral Theology II, Pastoral Counseling, Liturgics I, Liturgics II, Bibliography and Technology (no credit), Field Education (no credit), Confessing Christ in Today’s World, Ministry in Pluralistic Context, Vicarage</td>
<td>Lutheran Confessions I (AC, Apology), Lutheran Confessions II (SC, LC, SA, Treatise), Lutheran Confessions III (FC), Dogmatics I, Dogmatics II, Dogmatics III, Theologia I: Baptism, Theologia II: Preaching, Theologica III: Lord’s Supper</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Credits**
- 35 Credits
- 21 Credits
- 10.5 Credits
- 37 Credits
- 27 Credits
- 21 Credits
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- Convened the Pastoral Formation Committee (see R4: Pastoral Formation Committee) at least once per year (Bylaw 3.10.4; 2016 Convention Resolutions 6–01, 6–02, 6–03, 13–01A).
- Facilitated two meetings per year with the Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, provost and Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, academic dean and vicarage supervisors.
- Attended each seminary’s annual Symposium.
- Planned/facilitated the annual joint seminary board of regents meeting.
- Published annual inserts in The Reporter for both “Pastoral Formation” and “Global Seminary Initiative.”
- Conducted formal visitations of students at each seminary.
- Advocated and wrote MADV letters on behalf of the Joint Seminary Fund.
- Preached 1–2 times per year at each seminary.
- Presented/attended annual LCMS Council of Presidents/seminaries’ faculties meeting.
- Compiled annual statistics from both seminaries, e.g. Call Document Statistical Form, Number of MDiv Diplomas, Grants, Salary and Compensation Survey, Enrollment Report, Class 1 Profile Report, Student Indebtedness Report, and SMP Program data.
- Visited missionaries and partner seminaries concerning international pastoral formation.
- Chaired the Global Seminary Initiative steering committee (2016 Convention Resolution 6–04).

The Global Seminary Initiative is a partnership between the LCMS, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, and Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, designed to (1) provide graduate-level scholarships to international students studying at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, MO, and Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, IN, and (2) provide financial support for sending faculty overseas for temporary teaching assignments (e.g., at partner church seminaries). GSI is significant in forming Lutheran pastors around the world for the ongoing proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

In the 2016–19 triennium, GSI funding included the following: (1) distributive earnings (if available) from Forward in Remembrance endowment, (2) a major foundation matching grant, and (3) LCMS, CSL, and CTSFW collaboratively raised funds. For FY 2018, these funds were raised to match the foundation: (1) CTSFW—$59,703.83; (2) LCMS—$66,257.59; and (3) CSL—$67,538.

Voting members of the GSI steering committee include the executive director of PED (chairman) and the presidents of the two LCMS seminaries. Advisory members include one appointed person from each seminary appointed by each seminary president, the CMO, the OIM and MADV executive directors, and the executive director of LCMS Church Relations.

Continuing Education

- Facilitated the completion of the revised continuing education page in the pastor’s Self-Evaluation Tool (SET) (2016 Convention Resolution 17–01). Pastors now have the capability of tracking their continuing education experiences on their SET in these categories: PALS, courses offered by LCMS seminaries, courses offered by other higher education institutions, and other educational experiences. This continuing education page will be most useful when congregations are calling a pastor. Congregations can readily see the continuing education experiences the pastor had and his areas of interest and study.
- Provided oversight to the Post-Seminary Applied Learning and Support (PALS) program (2016 Convention Resolution 17–01).

PALS is a synodwide program of excellence that is woven into the fabric of the LCMS and mentors pastors and their wives in the transition from the seminary to first call. PALS fosters and enhances pastors’ and wives’ personal, spiritual, and vocational formation. It also helps eliminate the sense of isolation that pastors and wives often experience in the transition from seminary life to parish ministry. PALS continues to be endorsed by Synod in Convention (most recently 2013 and 2016). PALS is also fully endorsed and encouraged by both seminaries.

PALS originated with the Council of Presidents in 1998. PALS is now administrated through the PED and is a partnership of the LCMS, districts, congregations, and PALS pastors/wives. Participating districts contribute $500 per participating pastor, which is matched by the LCMS. District facilitators are chosen by the district president. Facilitators include a pastor and his wife.

PALS facilitators, pastors, and their wives meet six times per year, and thus receive six CEUs per year. A PALS gathering includes (1) worship, (2) study topic, (3) casuistry and mentoring, and (4) fellowship, meals, and sharing. Every PALS group chooses their own course of study topics; however, PALS offers several high-quality curriculum pieces (see descriptions below).

Currently, PALS is being utilized by 28 of Synod’s 35 Districts. In the PALS program, the district president chooses the PALS facilitator in his district. The District President is the ecclesiastical supervisor in his own district, including PALS facilitators, pastors, and congregations. PALS is also producing its curriculum in response to the stated needs of all the districts. Most recent PALS curriculum includes Apt to Teach, The Pastor’s Life of Prayer, and Transitioning to Urban/Rural Context. Prioritized curriculum for the future includes Exegeting Your Community, Shepherding in a Team Ministry, Leadership in the Lutheran Church, and Synod 101. All curriculum is fully Lutheran and meets the standards of doctrinal review.

Other PALS activities include the following:

1. PALS convenes an annual two-day Facilitator Training Conference in St. Louis. PALS is also engaged in Joyfully PALS district conversations. These conversations are video conferences with the LCMS PALS staff, district president, and district facilitators.
2. PALS publishes a monthly E-News piece.
3. PALS produces periodic letters and greetings to PALS facilitators, PALS pastors/wives, PALS congregations, and district presidents.

4. PALS hosts a dinner and presents information on the PALS program to fourth-year seminarians at both seminaries.

5. The PED executive director convenes a biannual PALS steering committee meeting.

Learn more about PALS at www.lcms.org/PALS.

- Provided oversight to the Preach the Word project (2016 Convention Resolution 17–03).

Preach the Word (PTW) originated out of the office the Synod President. PTW will help pastors work together to improve their preaching through video modules with accompanying resources and by interacting with seminary professors and fellow preachers.

Pastors can gather with brother pastors to watch and discuss the modules to enhance their preaching skills. Completed PTW modules include:

1. Module 1—The use of story in preaching by Rev. Dr. David Schmitt
2. Module 2—The use of biblical text in sermon preparation by Rev. Dr. Dean Nadasdy
3. Module 3—Delivering the Gospel live and in person by Rev. Dr. Carl Fickenscher
4. Module 4—Applying God’s Word into people’s lives by Rev. Dr. Glenn Nielsen
5. Module 5—The use of technology in preaching by Rev. Matt Peeples
6. Module 6—Sacramental Preaching by Rev. David Petersen

You can find these PTW resources and upcoming modules at www.lcms.org/preach-the-word.

Other

- Produced inserts for The Reporter for PALS, PTW, and Pastoral Formation.

- Produced and maintained periodic pastoral formation communication: The Forum, Facebook, and Twitter.

- Served as Synod representative at the biennial Theology Professors Conference.


- Explored alternate funding sources apart from federal loans at our universities and seminaries (2016 Convention Resolutions 6–05, 18–03A)

The Future of Pastoral Formation in the LCMS

Possible goals that delegates to the 2019 Convention might carefully consider regarding LCMS pastoral formation:

1. For the Synod to support a comprehensive church-worker student-recruitment initiative that permeates the entire Synod right into every household of the Synod. This initiative should involve the collaboration of the seminaries, universities, high schools, day schools, districts, auxiliaries, International Center, and every layperson in the Synod. The following statistics, in part, demonstrate the need for such an initiative:
   a. 50 percent of the Synod’s clergy are 55 years old and older.
   b. If the current rate of clergy retirement continues, along with the current rate of first-year seminarian matriculation, the LCMS will realize a decrease of active ordained ministries from 6,000 today to 3,000 in fifteen years.
   c. First-year seminary MDiv enrollment in the fall of 2018 was 44 men at CSL and 41 men at CTSFW. Approximately 160 pastors retired per year for the last 17 years. Average age of retirement is approximately 68 years old.
   d. An average of 33 SMP pastors have been placed each year between 2010 and 2017.

2. For the Synod to affirm that pastoral formation begins at infant Baptism and continues in the Christian home and faithful congregation. Lutheran pastors and congregations must identify, pursue, encourage, and support her young boys who display a potential, desire, and aptitude to be parish pastors.

3. For the Synod to support a program of pastoral formation that involves forming the whole man.
   a. Spiritual development—embraces a thorough knowledge of Holy Scripture, a father-confessor/pastor, a godly family, immersion in the liturgical life of the church, reception of the Lord’s Supper, and daily prayer.
   b. Character development—embraces a baptismal faith and life. This baptismal, sanctified life includes daily repentance, the fruits of the Spirit, integrity, virtue, manhood, manners, and civility.
   c. Confessional development—embraces a thorough immersion and understanding of the Lutheran Confessions (The Book of Concord), the ability to rightly divide Law and Gospel, the ability to distinguish orthodoxy from heterodoxy, Christology, Lutheran ethos, and the Lutheran biblical hermeneutic.
   d. Physical and emotional development—embraces Apostles’ Creed First Article categories, including healthy choices and living, exercise, a healthy diet, an understanding of self, interpersonal relationships, and the capacity to navigate physical and emotional issues.
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e. Synod development—encompasses a thorough understanding of Synod structure, the LCMS Handbook, ecclesiastical supervision, the call process, Synod and district conventions, convention resolutions, and church-worker conferences.

f. Intellectual development—encompasses general liberal arts, a well-rounded curriculum, quality instruction, practical experience, thinking skills, reasoning skills, verbal skills, philosophy, music, art, knowing the world, and a desire for the immersion in continuing education.

4. For the Synod to affirm that the “most complete means of preparing a man for the general responsibilities of the pastoral office and a lifetime of service is the Master of Divinity (MDiv) route at our two seminaries” and that “this full residential experience has always been our ‘gold standard’ for pastoral formation” (2016 Resolution 6–03).

5. For the Synod to re-evaluate all “Particular Ministry Contexts” routes to ordination in relation to the divinely mandated call into the holy ministry, biblical qualifications, the pastoral care of souls for their eternal salvation, and the satanic and worldly pressures of a culture at enmity with Christianity. This re-evaluation should take into consideration: biblical languages, the Lutheran Confessions, catechesis, and homiletics. Please refer to the chart below from the March 2019 Reporter Insert.

6. For the Synod to evaluate and consider consolidating her pre-seminary programs at select universities within her Concordia System. The Synod should consider such issues as stewardship of financial resources, quantity of men and quality of a peer cohort, and geographical location.

7. For the Synod to strongly encourage her seminaries to develop specialized contextual programs within her MDiv routes to ordination.

8. For the Synod to develop a comprehensive Blueprint for Pastoral Formation for the remainder of the 21st century. This Blueprint might encompass:
   a. A theology and practice of the church
   b. A theology and practice of the Office of the Public Ministry
   c. A theology and practice of the divine call and ordination
   d. A theology and practice of pastoral duties and responsibilities
   e. A thorough examination of the current context of the church and culture
   f. A unified practice of pastoral formation in the Lutheran Church to include pre-seminary, seminary, and post-seminary formation
   g. A constructive dialogue and resolution to issues surrounding current conversation, including contextualization, distance learning, missional formation, pastor/leadership emphasis, multi-point parishes, technology, global pastoral formation, eligible inactive pastors, lay training, and identification of candidates for the pastoral office
   h. An analysis and unified resolution concerning the two seminaries, the relationship of the two seminaries, Synod Inc. and seminaries relationship, Synod support of the seminaries, and seminary governance

Some Final Thoughts

As we are “joined together” (Bylaw 1.3.1), pastoral formation in the LCMS will be more greatly strengthened and unified when all 35 districts participate in the PALS program. The PALS office is continually striving to work collaboratively and cooperatively with all 35 districts in maintaining an excellent unified pastorate throughout our Synod. For more information about PALS, go to lcms.org/PALS.

The LCMS is a strong biblical, confessional, Christian force in the world. When it comes to pastoral formation, our seminaries, and the Office of the Public Ministry, we are not at war against each other; Satan is at war against us!

Pastoral formation is vital and central to the Church—this one mandated ordained office of the Gospel and Jesus Christ. The Church must resist the evil one and put her full energy into the formation of pastors—a formation that is robust, complete, comprehensive, and faithful.

God has called us for this time to proclaim the pure, unadulterated Gospel that promises eternal life to all who believe in Jesus Christ. How will we continue to take up the charge to form pastors for a time such as this? We will raise up men for the holy ministry. We will maintain our high standards of biblical and doctrinal integrity for all those charged with pastoring with the Gospel. We will support our seminaries as a highest priority in the life of the church with our prayers and our resources. We will hold the Office of the Holy Ministry as a noble calling from God as we hear the words of Christ from our pastors’ called and ordained lips for our eternal salvation.

ADDENDUM: LCMS 2016 Convention Resolution 6–05

“Resolved, That the administrations of the seminaries, LCEF, and LFCU gather sufficient information and meet to
determine the feasibility of privatizing student lending at the seminaries; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the preferred lender for student loans at the seminaries be a synodwide corporate entity; and be it finally

RESOLVED, That if this group identifies a reasonable alternative and lenders are willing to participate, the seminaries be encouraged to withdraw from the Title IV Student Financial Aid Program.”

Student Lending Task Force
Randy Boehm (Consultant)
Kevin Tilden (CFO, Concordia Irvine)
Rev. Ben Haupt (Asst. Professor, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis/LCEF Board)
Rev. Mark Sheafker (Financial Aid Director, Concordia Seminary, Fort Wayne)
Gerald Kirk (CCO, LCEF)
Larry Crume (VP National Lending, LCEF)
Tim Ramberger (VP Compliance, LCEF)
Rev. Ken Krueger (President, LFCU)
Jennifer Rutherford (VP, LFCU)

Task Force Goal
Evaluate the feasibility of creating a Lutheran student loan program through LCEF/LFCU in lieu of the Federal Student Loan Program.

Prominent Issues
• What are the legal and regulatory issues?
• Must create a product that competes in the marketplace.
• Feasibility of all students at all CUS institutions and seminaries will be considered by the Task Force (market potential).

What Prompted the Task Force?
Potential government intervention, namely:
• California SB 1146
• Title IV (Higher Education Act)
• Title IX compliance

Legal Issues
LFCU
• LFCU can only lend to LCMS members, based on the authorized LFCU field of membership
• Per NCUA, LFCU can only have a certain percentage of unsecured loans on its books
LCEF
• LCEF can only lend to rostered church workers, per its charter
• Changes to bylaws would require
  o IRS letter agreement
  o Synod approval as well as bylaw changes at convention

Conclusion
The task force determined that creating an alternative to the federal loan program was not feasible for the following reasons:
• LFCU can only lend to LCMS members, based on the authorized LFCU field of membership.
• LCEF is limited to lending to rostered church workers, based on current charter.
• Voluntary withdrawal from Title IV by the Concordias could have a material impact on our seminaries and universities.

LCEF and LFCU cannot afford to replace the federal student loan program to accommodate Concordia students, nor does it make sense to create a new unsecured loan product for a very small potential market at the seminaries.

Mission Advancement (MADV)—Mr. Mark Hofman, Executive Director
This unit report begins with a sincere “thank you” to all who gave of themselves to the national and international work of the LCMS from the 2016 Convention to this one. Beyond the generosity shown to congregations, local agencies, district-level and regional work, you—the people of the LCMS—were God’s instruments for advancing our mission to vigorously make known the love of Jesus in our churches, communities, and the world.

MADV’s purpose is to facilitate each person’s joyful response to the Gospel made visible in the form of charitable contributions motivated by the Holy Spirit. MADV exists to serve those who desire to deliver the Gospel of Christ to others in word and deed by supporting the work of the LCMS. Over the past triennium, our MADV team has heightened its sensitivity to the importance of listening to contributors, learning and connecting God’s people to the opportunities He is providing. It worked—and continues to work—in concert with the CMO and others to favorably influence and shape the organization’s culture when it comes to philanthropy and stewardship.

Please note: This MADV unit report speaks only from the financial perspective of annual revenues (income), which God supplies primarily through His baptized disciples in Synod congrega-
tions. The stewardship of those contributions, from an expenditure reporting standpoint, resides in the aegis of the Board of Directors acting through the Operations Team (CMO, CAO, CFO) and the Office of the President. MADV has no oversight of organizational expenditure practices beyond its own departmental budget.

2016 Resolutions Update

Delegates to the 2016 Convention handed corporate Synod four resolutions where MADV played a role.

Resolution 13–06—The “Mustache” Campaign

A directive to MADV was to provide an opportunity—in concert with LCMS COMMS—for God’s people to give in support of scholarships at LCMS colleges, universities, and seminaries with a goal of raising/receiving $2 million by December 31, 2016. The strategy was to count each $1 in contributions as “votes” designated by the donor for the best mustache between Synod President Matthew Harrison and Montana District President Terry Forke. A total of $22,632 in “votes” was received, with President Forke receiving the majority ($13,187.46). President Harrison’s mustache was shaved off at the January 2017 LCMS Campus Ministry Conference, only after President Forke voluntarily shaved off his as a “tribute” (reference blogs.lcms.org/2017/mustache-resolution-winner/).

In the wake of the 2016 Convention, people in the LCMS contributed a total of $161,020 to fund the development of this resource. Distribution of resources is by Concordia Publishing House. A progress report covering Every One His Witness is found in the report produced by the ONM.

Resolution 1–01—Every One His Witness

The resolution authorized synodwide offerings for the purpose of creating and distributing print, digital, and other resources in multiple languages for the Every One His Witness evangelism program.

The LCMS opened a designated (restricted) account to receive such offerings, with the account number A14130-26A130 (Every One His Witness: A Simple Way Evangelism Program). MADV and LCMS COMMS created options for those with a desire to support this effort (reference https://www.lcms.org/projectcatalog#). Between the conclusion of the 2016 Convention and December 31, 2018, a total of $195,850 in contributions was received to help produce and distribute re:Vitality resources to any LCMS congregation who desires them.

Resolution 1–03—re:Vitality

The resolution authorized synodwide offerings to support the creation and distribution of print, digital, and other resources for the re:Vitality congregation revitalization program.

The LCMS opened a designated (restricted) account to receive such offerings, with the account number A14130-26A131 (re:Vitality). The LCMS MADV and COMMS units created options for those with a desire to support this effort (reference https://www.lcms.org/projectcatalog#).

Resolution 9–04A—Transparency

The primary expectation laid out in 2016 Resolution 9–04A was to “Improve Disclosures Related to Financial Gifts from God’s Stewards for Special Appeals.” It contained two specific directives:

Resolved … improve processes of reporting and work to provide clear, timely, and transparent accounting for all funding and special appeals; and

Resolved … [LCMS] Board of Directors and national leadership team to pursue all reasonable avenues to enhance such reporting through its varied communication channels, including
the dissemination of an official Synod annual report (in addition to the annual “State of the Synod” issue of The Lutheran Witness).

A number of issues presented challenges—and continue to present challenges—to the full fulfillment of this expectation. The meaning of certain words (clear, timely, and transparent) or phrases (“special appeals”) is largely subjective. Without a definition, the meaning of certain words is observer-relative. Definitions of these terms in the resolution were absent, leaving the interpretation of them open to the reader and to the personnel expected to act on the resolution. For this reason, an unplanned outcome of this resolution and corporate Synod’s could actually be greater frustration and dissatisfaction. The question of transparency and accountability exists on or below a layer of apathy and disconnectedness. It is not known precisely how large of an issue accountability and transparency is at the level of the individual congregant, compared to the voices calling for improvements in transparency and accountability. Is transparency a broad concern, or a narrowly focused one?

A second challenge to the fulfillment of 9–04A is that the resolution did not specify where or how the desired reporting on special appeals was to be located, disseminated, or disclosed other than speak to “its [corporate Synod’s] varied communication channels.” Without a solid grasp of where concerned individuals actually go when trying to find this kind of information, the risk of missing the target audience through incorrect channel selection increases and the cost of using all available channels is disproportionate to the size of the group seeking information.

A third challenge is that the expectation for transparency and accountability is different across the range of individuals, groups, and organizations within the Synod itself. What might be satisfactory for one can simultaneously be unsatisfactory for a different person apart from some objective, independent benchmark against which the Synod can be compared.

MADV received broad support from other departments and employees in compiling the information necessary to satisfy one broadly accepted benchmark of consumer protection: the Better Business Bureau/Wise Giving Alliance. Its twenty performance standards for nonprofit accountability exemplify objectivity with an eye to the protection of contributor interests. In a week-long dialogue with the BBB auditing team, the LCMS demonstrated and documented its commitment to each of the standards, resulting in it the BBB awarding the LCMS Accredited Charity Status.

MADV collaborated with LCMS COMMS and others to create a user-friendly online portal to additional transparency and accountability resources, lcms.org/giving/transparency. The reader is encouraged to access that portal to assess whether it helps satisfy the intent of Resolution 9–04A.

Transparency regarding the average annual cost to the LCMS of engaging contributors, soliciting funds, and administering gifts is disclosed in a public “Statement of Gift Utilization.” The ratio of annual expenditures by MADV to overall Synod spending is disclosed in the audited financial statements. In 2016, the board enacted a policy placing a limit on how much of charitable revenue can be allocated to cover fundraising and donor-care costs, essentially guaranteeing an acceptable percentage passed on for program and ministry. Contributors can see these limits disclosed on the Synod website. The LCMS performs under the defined limits for “prudent” specified by the Better Business Bureau, Guidestar, and Charity Navigator. The absence of a board-determined method for financing MADV (or prior fundraising operations) was one contributing factor to the LCMS having an undesignated net asset deficit (internal borrowing). And while progress is being made on that front, advancement expenses are still not fully funded by allocations of contributed revenues.

Transparency with regard to “special appeals” began in the form of periodic website-hosted financial statements covering contributions received and expended in the wake of major disasters. These reports continue to be supplied; they have shifted from event-specific reports to regular fiscal year period reports and final fiscal year summaries after observing that once disaster events begin to overlap, reports become increasingly confusing, complex, and difficult to prepare. In 2019, MADV publicly posted a report disclosing performance statistics on all of its core and special direct mail appeals conducted in the Synod’s fiscal year 2018.

Resolution 9–04A specifically referenced the production of an LCMS annual report, which was released in November 2018 (reference https://files.lcms.org/wl?id=Zx6yskW1AqVHJsL20EaETMnnCoKnOCHM). First distributed as an insert in the annual “State of the Synod” issue of the Lutheran Witness, the LCMS made an enhanced version available online, and the print version further disseminated in the winter 2018–19 issue of Lutherans Engage. The delay from the 2016 Convention to a 2018 release is attributable to a long list of challenges and puzzles too granular to describe in this workbook.

MADV continues to document Synod’s fundraising and contributor care policies, procedures, and processes, in an effort to further protect donors and serve them well. It discloses the staff Code of Ethics and the Donor Bill or Rights, defining the relationship between the LCMS, fundraising staff, and the contributor for the purpose of protecting donors from abuse. It also subjected one program, the LCMS Joint Seminary Fund, to an internal auditing process after hearing rumors that the LCMS was misappropriating or misrepresenting those restricted gifts for other purposes. The audit convincingly showed that these rumors had no merit whatsoever. The results of the Joint Seminary Fund audit are publicly accessible on the transparency portal and include a recommendation to produce a publicly accessible operations manual. The now-available Joint Seminary Fund operations manual is serving as a model for the production of similar documents for other fundraising programs, such as the Christ’s Care for Children child-sponsorship program and Project 24’s at-risk childcare centers in Kenya. The MADV unit continues to periodically update and disseminate a “white paper” about the development, need for, and impact of the Network Supported Missionary model, a document which is also publicly available online at no cost.

MADV and the LCMS are also being publicly transparent about Mission Central in Iowa and its relationship to the Synod’s organizational structure. Mission Central is an extension of MADV, and thus an important extension of the LCMS.
It operates under the nonprofit exemption granted to the LCMS by the International Revenue Service. The staff at Mission Central are salaried or hourly wage employees of the LCMS, and valued members of the MADV team. Contributor engagement and communication efforts are coordinated with the team at the International Center. The International Center receives all contributions given to support LCMS national and international mission efforts and maintains the official records for all contributions received for national or international mission work. The promises made to contributors by Mission Central are the same promises made to contributors by LCMS MADV.

In March 2019, LCMS executive leadership implemented a succinct section in The Reporter, monthly newspaper, seeking to address important questions regarding Synod’s finances and fiscal management practices as stewards of God’s blessings. Answers point readers to an easily accessed LCMS website location containing additional information that is always available for further exploration and conversation.

Truthfulness and transparency dictate a need to state that executives and staff within the International Center were already working to increase transparency efforts prior to the overtures received ahead of the 2016 Convention. Budget documents and audited financial statements have been posted publicly online going back several years (reference lcms.org/bod). Strides toward satisfactory levels of transparency have been made. Still more work lies ahead, despite certain risks. Publicly disclosing information could feed a temptation outside the LCMS to misuse disclosed information for self-serving purposes. Sensitivities to the risks along international lines and within the Synod must be respected. It will be most helpful for delegates and floor committees to provide clear, objective, unambiguous definitions for words and phrases when it comes to the fulfillment or extension of 2016 Resolution 9–04A should the issue of transparency come before the 2019 Convention.

Contributions Trends—2015 to 2018
The following table summarizes the financial impact of voluntary giving, including the undesignated funding joyfully supplied by congregations through their respective district budget.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONTRIBUTION INFORMATION</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2018</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fiscal Year</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undesignated</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Receipts from worship offerings</td>
<td>14,805,353</td>
<td>14,794,601</td>
<td>14,366,882</td>
<td>13,931,383</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gifts, grants, and bequests</td>
<td>3,179,020</td>
<td>3,669,929</td>
<td>3,666,674</td>
<td>4,724,165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donor-designated</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multi-department funds*</td>
<td>6,708,062</td>
<td>6,709,755</td>
<td>5,695,753</td>
<td>5,772,902</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Mission (w/missionaries)</td>
<td>18,655,554</td>
<td>17,784,187</td>
<td>17,890,193</td>
<td>20,738,566</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Mission (w/missionaries)</td>
<td>1,561,496</td>
<td>979,808</td>
<td>1,442,548</td>
<td>1,354,807</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disasters/Disaster Response</td>
<td>749,271</td>
<td>1,246,878</td>
<td>1,665,777</td>
<td>10,237,458</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support of seminaries</td>
<td>2,189,312</td>
<td>1,893,362</td>
<td>2,093,214</td>
<td>2,582,277</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KFUO</td>
<td>1,590,183</td>
<td>1,158,126</td>
<td>647,221</td>
<td>929,725</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other restrictions; agency funds</td>
<td>3,164,393</td>
<td>3,380,717</td>
<td>2,915,239</td>
<td>3,053,718</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Campaigns</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wittenberg Project/Old Latin School</td>
<td>802,106</td>
<td>341,227</td>
<td>496,838</td>
<td>67,996</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lutheran Center for Religious Liberty</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>495,467</td>
<td>294,163</td>
<td>1,000,666</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total contributions revenue (audited)</td>
<td>54,004,750</td>
<td>52,454,057</td>
<td>51,174,402</td>
<td>64,393,663</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Related Financial Information</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MADV budget</td>
<td>7,777,870</td>
<td>7,834,060</td>
<td>6,393,831</td>
<td>5,581,148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MADV expenditures (audited)</td>
<td>6,360,395</td>
<td>6,260,148</td>
<td>5,762,799</td>
<td>5,416,325</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revenues designated to MADV</td>
<td>3,042,722</td>
<td>2,141,774</td>
<td>1,678,105</td>
<td>2,683,249</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Draw on undesignated net assets (deficit)</td>
<td>3,317,673</td>
<td>4,118,374</td>
<td>4,084,694</td>
<td>2,733,076</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fundraising cost ratio (“overhead percentage”—MADV expenditures divided by contributions)</td>
<td>11.78 percent</td>
<td>11.93 percent</td>
<td>11.26 percent</td>
<td>8.41 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fundraising net return per $1 expended by MADV (Contributions minus MADV expenditures divided by MADV expenditures)</td>
<td>$7.49</td>
<td>$7.38</td>
<td>$7.88</td>
<td>$10.89</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Multi-department funds are agile accounts able to support work in more than one mission unit. These include, but are not limited to, the LCMS Global Mission Fund, LCMS World Relief and Human Care (or Mercy), LCMS Disaster Response (general fund), LCMS Life and Health Ministry, etc.
Significant Issues—Contributions and Contributors 2016 to 2019

Undesignated/Unrestricted Trends
We are observing a growing shift or openness among active contributors toward less restricted giving. Revenues to the LCMS from regular worship offerings continue to decline, lessening their impact and influence on the direction of mission and ministry. But this support, through district budgets, remains significant at more than $13 million annually, even in the face of financial pressures impacting district-level work. Counter to that, there appears to be increasing openness among contributors to supply an annual undesignated gift or “where needed most” restricted gift if or when they are presented with that option. Overall, the decline in worship offering revenues is being offset by growing undesignated support from worship offerings and direct charitable gifts. Combined, this important type of support is holding at approximately $18,600,000 per year, or 28 percent of LCMS total budgeted income.

Giving for LCMS Disaster Response Efforts
A rapidly-occurring series of three hurricanes (Harvey, Irma, Maria) in 2018 triggered an inspiringly robust response from the Synod’s contributors. Donations made through the LCMS exceeded $10 million in just five months, an amount supplemented by additional donations sent directly to impacted districts, congregations, and responding Recognized Service Organizations. The LCMS also saw meaningful financial support from contributors outside the Synod attracted to our strategic organizations. The LCMS also saw meaningful financial support from contributors outside the Synod attracted to our strategic approach to disaster response, including a $600,000 three-year pledge made by the Harold C. Smith Foundation. Year-to-year, disaster giving is largely unpredictable and driven by events beyond the control of the LCMS.

The Lutheran Center for Religious Liberty (see also: R17)
MADV and the LCMS established a memorandum of understanding with the Lutheran Center for Religious Liberty (“LCRL”), a separate nonprofit corporation, to provide fundraising and donor-care services until the LCRL is robust enough to conduct fundraising on its own. Throughout the last triennium into the new triennium, the fundraising goal is to build a solid base of contributing constituents joyfully sustaining LCRL efforts over the long haul. The target contributor number is approximately 6,200, regardless of the amount any one donor might contribute. As of this report, the base is nearing 3,000 contributors.

Old Latin School/Wittenberg Project
The LCMS, in a partnership with the SELK (Germany) and Concordia Publishing House, completed renovations to the Old Latin School in Wittenberg, the first phase of “The Wittenberg Project.” Dedicated in May of 2015, well ahead of the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation, the facility now serves as a base of Christian evangelistic outreach and education, and a welcoming center for the thousands of people who visit Luther’s city each year. Fundraising to support the work is transitioning out of LCMS/MADV into a process led and managed by the International Lutheran Council/International Lutheran Society of Wittenberg. Both the work and staffing of the Old Latin School depend entirely on donor-supplied contributions.

Global Seminary Initiative (GSI); Other Pastoral Formation and Care Support
GSI was birthed out of a series of foundation grants, with a vision of raising/granting $4 million annually to support theological education of pastors from partner churches around the world. In 2017, the LCMS and both seminaries sat down to re-evaluate the impact of GSI and the need for funding, as startup grant funding diminishes. Two years of tenuous but collaborative fundraising by the three entities appears to be more effective than any one entity operating in isolation. Matching grant commitments were fulfilled in both 2017 and 2018; however, the driving force still appears to be the availability of foundation matching grant dollars. GSI is the best example of three LCMS entities striving for a common objective, preparing and sending international partner church pastors and leaders into the Lord’s harvest fields.

Concordia International School Shanghai Collaboration
In 2018, Concordia International School Shanghai and the LCMS/MADV agreed to a trial that allows Concordia Shanghai to utilize LCMS fundraising tools to engage constituents and contributors in supporting the school with charitable gifts. Concordia Shanghai is using the LCMS constituent relationship management system (Blackbaud eCRM), and the LCMS has provided online giving opportunities to support Concordia Shanghai through its website. Part of the testing is to determine if two or more separately incorporated entities can share a common database system while keeping confidential constituent information separated and inaccessible by an unauthorized user. If that particular puzzle can be solved, there is a potential for eliminating a great deal of unnecessary system duplication among organizations and groups who maintain records in isolated systems, each with its added costs.

Expansion of Mission Central and Collaborative Efforts with Districts
Mission Central in Mapleton, Iowa, is a great blessing for the LCMS as a whole. As an extension of LCMS MADV (Mission Central is not an independent mission agency), Mission Central maintains healthy connections with thousands of contributors, volunteers, and congregations. In 2016, MADV expanded Mission Central’s capacity for serving the Church by calling Rev. Dr. Brent Smith to serve alongside “Old Missionary Gary” Thies. MADV also signed a letter of understanding with the Kansas District to equip Rev. Dr. Smith to represent the mission work of both the LCMS (national and international mission) and the Kansas District as he meets with congregations and members in the district. Kansas joins similar arrangements with the Nebraska District and Iowa District West.

Introduction of Appreciative Response and Culture Shift
MADV and the CMO initiated a series of staff workshops having the goal of favorably affecting the culture of philanthropy that exists within the LCMS. A greater emphasis on serving those who contribute—and appreciating what those people
mean for LCMS mission and ministry—should replace cultural traits indicative of a money-focused (vs. people-focused) organization. The LCMS partnered with the Center for Leadership Philanthropy to host staff workshops involving personnel from multiple departments and teams.

Connection to and Partnership with the LCMS Foundation (see also: R19)

After relocating certain advancement-critical functions from the LCMS Foundation into LCMS MADV, work continues to appropriately connect people with giving opportunities when a contributor’s goals are best served by the LCMS Foundation. LCMS MADV does not duplicate the special technical skills and services offered to the Church by the LCMS Foundation, so a Christ-pleasing working relationship between both teams is vital. The LCMS continues to deal with complex issues created by the 2010 restructuring process, and periodic meetings take place between the Foundation and MADV staff to find best-practice solutions to those issues.

Looking Forward—2019 and Beyond

Puzzles

MADV and the LCMS International Center face a number of “puzzles” affecting the Synod’s mission and ministry at the national and international levels. We do not have good data regarding the number of households actively worshiping each Sunday. Reports cover baptized and confirmed members of LCMS congregations, but the number of households actively worshiping is a missing key piece of information. Thus, we do not know how widespread support for mission and ministry already is, or if MADV efforts are only scratching the surface. Similarly, among those who actively contribute to LCMS mission and ministry, we know precious little about the human being(s) behind each donation unless a person willingly fills in the gaps. This understanding about the person is vitally important when it comes to meeting the unique needs and expectations of each contributor and effectively stewarding limited financial resources for the sake of our Lord’s mission.

A second puzzle continues to be a deeply embedded organizational culture, especially when it comes to charitable giving and philanthropic engagement. Synod’s philanthropic culture transcends Convention cycles, changes in organizational structures, policies, and even administrations. Attempts to effect positive change or to adapt to changes in the world for the sake of the Gospel can meet stiff internal and external resistance, and MADV work risks becoming increasingly ineffective over time. Entrenched behaviors or perspectives develop slowly over decades, handed from one generation to the next, and gains in positive change won over years can rapidly snap backwards to a previous state because of culture, not individuals. We see this cultural phenomenon play out in unhealthy competition between entities of the church and a focus on dollars (not donors) that constantly strives for “more” than what God supplies. We see it when getting money out of people is more important than meeting the needs, goals, and feelings of those asked to provide financial support. Leading positive change in a deeply entrenched organizational culture, for the sake of Christ’s mission to save the lost, is a puzzle.

The third puzzle is how best to adequately finance mission efforts primarily focused inside the borders of the United States, and to do so in a mutually supportive way that respects the boundaries of congregations, districts, and all the various RSOs and groups within the LCMS. While international mission efforts and pastoral education receive the lion’s share of attention, national mission work seems to have to fend for itself. Attempts to put national mission work in the spotlight risk a backlash from any of the groups or entities who perceive the Synod corporate office going into their defined “space.” Rules and policies and resolutions do not seem to hold the answer to this puzzle; however, recent experience hints at the positive influence ongoing conversation and designed collaboration can have to refocus energy on the common mission of bearing witness to what Christ has done for sinners. When it comes to funding ONM efforts, MADV is placing a greater emphasis on the Global Mission Fund and on giving to World Relief and Human Care accounts able to resource both OIM and ONM work.

Another puzzle is the fostering of an ever-stronger relationship of the Synod headquarters to both LCMS seminaries, particularly when it comes to funding the preparation and sending of new pastors, deaconesses, and other leaders. A phrase oft-repeated is that “Synod does precious little to support its seminaries,” which might be more aptly understood to mean that the Synod’s (e.g., the corporate entity located at the International Center) operating expenditures from unrestricted revenues do precious little in this regard. Yet THE Synod—if the meaning of “Synod” includes the rostered workers, congregations, and the member-congregations of those congregations—is the seminaries’ single largest source of both funding and new or prospective seminary students. It is truly more accurate to say: “Sunday morning worship offerings no longer supply meaningful funding to our seminaries.” Our seminaries, like nearly every other mission (Witness, Mercy, Life Together) endeavor—including corporate Synod—depend almost exclusively on the generosity of individuals, districts, church groups, and other contributors. And while individuals both inside and outside the seminaries may sometimes grumble at the amount of funds passing through the Synod corporate (i.e., “International Center”) budget, the contributors who supply those funds are deserving of encouragement and thanksgiving as they offer up more than $2 million annually for the support of seminary education in the LCMS.

Synod may also be facing a growing puzzle when it comes to worldwide KFUO. Technology changes call into question the level of impact KFUO may have on the church and in the world, even with Internet streaming and podcasting. How many homes turn the living room radio to KFUO each day? How many commuters listen on their vehicle’s AM radio today? How many stream KFUO through their mobile phone, tablet, or laptop, or download programs for later listening? More specifically, the contributors who traditionally champion KFUO through their special gifts appear to be passing from this age into eternity faster than new champions are identified. KFUO received funds in the form of worship offerings passed on from congregations to Synod’s headquarters via district budgets, a stream that is increasingly under pressure along the entire chain. At the same time, would people in the LCMS (and outside of it) tolerate a decision to turn the transmitters and computers and microphones off if for no other reason that insufficient fund-
ing? LCMS MADV is not tasked with the active solicitation of contributions to support Worldwide KFUO; however, the ministry is blessed with qualified advancement staff members and program directors doing what they can to resource a ministry capable of bringing the Good News into the very darkest corners of the world.

Along the lines of international work is the puzzle of balancing the need to fund both missionaries and the projects, programs, and engagement work they oversee. Support for LCMS missionaries through donor-designated gifts is at record high, in amounts that surpass what the Synod headquarters receives from regular worship offerings. We love our missionaries! In the field, however, they are hard pressed for resources that undergird the work and funding to support coordination, accountability, and missionary care services is a constant source of anxiety, distraction, and uncertainty. Has the goal of doubling the number of LCMS missionaries deployed around the world over-taxied the people of the LCMS? Conversely, is it possible to achieve an appropriate balance of personnel and resources sufficient to return our missionaries a laser-like, joyful focus on sharing Jesus with the world?

**Joys**

In the face of puzzles and sometimes daunting challenges, the MADV staff are privileged to be at the nexus of activities and actions that truly capture a great joy among Christ’s disciples in the Synod, and even some who worship Jesus Christ in other church bodies yet contribute personally to LCMS-managed mission and ministry work.

The members of the MADV team are not caricatures of corporate or government bureaucrats. Each person, if you were to meet them, embraces and performs his or her work in a manner truly worth of the Savior we serve. The LCMS is blessed with individuals, some of whom are not Lutheran, who daily overcome challenges and frustrations to serve each contributor to the best of their ability. More important, they know they are serving Christ Jesus, their Savior who died for them and forgives their sins daily. These individuals are a joy to work with and alongside.

The LCMS is seeing a revitalization of generosity toward human care (mercy) work as the number of contributors choosing LCMS World Relief and Human Care grows. Restructuring and rebranding between 2010 and 2016 resulted in a significant contraction of both donors and dollars. By God’s grace, this appears to be making a turn for the better in 2019, and the LCMS is once again producing and mailing its *Sharing* newsletter.

Perhaps the most energizing joy more recently is the growing wave of contributors joyfully willing to supply an undesignated, unrestricted gift. The growth in unrestricted direct giving, combined with undesignated bequests received, offset declines in worship offering funding in each of the past two fiscal years. And because unrestricted gifts are the least costly to administer, they are boosting the level of available net assets for ministry.

The people of the LCMS, quite literally, formed an army of support several times in the past triennium in the wake of disasters large and small. Most stunning was a $10 million outpouring of support for people living in Texas, Florida, and Puerto Rico following the fall 2017 hurricane season. Inspired by lead commitments from LCEF, Thrivent, and others, congregations and individuals demonstrated just what this church body can accomplish when people rally around a single issue. The advancement staff could barely keep up! Meanwhile, in the same time frame, contributions for the support of missionaries reached record levels while unrestricted giving gained more traction. Truly, “a rising tide floats all boats.”

Joyful opportunities abound. We see opportunities to raise awareness of LCMS mission and ministry done on behalf of Synod’s member congregations, and to refresh that awareness among those who are personally invested in sharing Jesus with neighbors next door and very far away. Preliminary steps are underway to recruit and resource a cadre of LCMS ambassadors who, while not directly seeking donations, are joyfully willing to help tell the story of what God’s people in the LCMS are already doing for the sake of the Gospel. Such a group will influence those who may be the next generation of pastors, teachers, deaconesses, missionaries, and other servants.

We see mission opportunities inspired by the Holy Spirit when a person feels someone in the church has truly heard what matters most to them. Listening is an increasingly lost art in American society, and the church—especially those connecting with contributors—must spend much more time listening to God’s people than we do talking or writing about ourselves. There is a real river of joy flowing just beneath the surface in our church body. Are we truly hearing it flow (or is it being overpowered by a cacophony of voices, often negative, all trying to scream at once)?

We see opportunity in the difficult and challenging process of eliminating debt. The Synod, through the LCMS annual budget, is carrying unproductive debt (not all of it self-incurred) that siphons energy away from Gospel proclamation, church-worker formation, and humanitarian care that connects broken people to Christ, especially as He comes to us through font, altar, and pulpit. More than $1 million annually—instead of being used merely to pay interest and pay down principal on accumulated debt—could be going to missionaries, mission projects/programs, seminary and other church worker education, and human care work. Debt will not go away by itself.

We see opportunities in lifting up endowment as a means by which God’s people can fuel mission and ministry beyond their own brief lifespan. LCMS Concordia University System institutions and LCMS seminaries are far ahead of the Synod in seizing this opportunity to bring stability, predictability, and donor-energy to the mission of the church.

We see opportunities as those in the pew come to understand how critical they are in the mission of the church, and that their Sunday morning worship offerings are absolutely indispensable for bringing others to hear the Good News. They (you) recruit, educate, and keep pastors in pulpits, not “corporate Synod.” They (you) recruit, prepare, send and keep missionaries in the field, not “corporate Synod.” They (you) provide children and young people with Christ-centered Lutheran schools and colleges. They (you) decide the direction of the LCMS, not “corporate Synod.” They (you) fuel mission and ministry, not “corporate Synod.” And there is JOY in that awareness.

We see more opportunities in collaboration efforts than we do when organizations within the Synod compete with one another. Competition places the needs of the contributor behind the needs of any one organization. Competition fails to see the talents, gifts, and expertise God has given across the entire spectrum of the LCMS. Competition is sometimes rooted in fear.
or feelings about the need for direct control. Competition risks sending mixed messages to church and world about what is truly important to all of us: Jesus.

We see opportunities to strengthen international pastoral formation and church planting. The Gospel, Luther said, falls upon the earth like rain. It moves on. Building the internal capacities of partner churches plants seeds that will one day bear fruit, perhaps even in our own country as the repression of Christianity and the free proclamation of the Gospel comes under increased pressure. One day, the missionaries we know may not be ours; they may be walking our streets, having come from another country here to tell the Good News.

We see opportunities in the gift of technology. Today, a missionary in Asia or Africa can speak directly to a congregation in South Dakota via video conferencing, and words of encouragement pass from that congregation to a missionary or a seminarian or a future teacher by email, text messages, and social media. Technology opens doors and windows to see mission—the Gospel—alive and active in the world.

We see opportunities in the simple truth of living joyfully as Christians, confident that our salvation is already secure, and we are free to be vigorous and bold with the Good News. Letting go of the fears, frustrations, and anxieties of today—and tomorrow—there is opportunity in being who God has already made us to be: “Joyfully Lutheran.” The world is waiting to receive what we already have been given.

**Communications (COMMS)—Mr. David Strand, Executive Director**

One could say the past triennium peaked with the Synod’s year-long celebration of its spiritual heritage in the 500th anniversary observance of the Protestant Reformation. Certainly, this occasion is a fitting place to start this report, because it showcases how nearly all of LCMS COMMS’s assets played a role in the historic commemoration. This exemplifies the breadth of services we offer and the multifaceted, multimedia approach we take in many of our communication endeavors.

Consider this sampling of what COMMS did either on its own or in concert with others to highlight “Reformation 500”:

- Devoted the expanded October 2016 *Lutheran Witness* to Reformation themes and what became a very popular “Reformation Timeline.”
- In collaboration with Concordia Publishing House (CPH), continually updated the *lutheranreformation.org* website, major components being the “Reformation Celebration Congregation Kit,” “Faces of the Reformation,” and a Bible-study series.
- A “virtual tour”—20 separate videos hosted by President Harrison—of the Minneapolis Institute of Art’s outstanding “Treasures of the Reformation” exhibit.
- A two-part video—“The Luther Mile: President Harrison Traces Martin Luther’s Footsteps”—shot in Wittenberg, Germany, and also featuring Bishop Hans-Jörg Voigt, head of our partner church in Germany. (More on these videos below under “Video Services.”)
- An online gallery of Concordia Historical Institute’s most prized Reformation images: personalities, maps and towns, events, and objects.
- A lively two-year blog on Reformation topics.
- A steady stream of social media postings on celebration news and activities throughout the Synod and around the world.

Following are brief descriptions of the areas in our department and summaries of key accomplishments in producing our own resources and serving the communication needs of our ministry partners. It’s worth noting that many projects involved a team approach, with combinations of Editorial, Graphic Design, Web, Photography, Video, Social Media, and Production contributing to a job’s success.

**Editorial**

The news and information of the Synod, involving its many ministries, auxiliaries, partners, and Recognized Service Organizations, provides a constant flow of content for a variety of audiences delivered through the following media outlets:

* Reporter (print and online) reporter.lcms.org
  - The official newspaper of the LCMS.
  - News and actions of Synod offices, boards, ministries, and task forces.
  - Mailing list: professional church workers, lay leaders, convention delegates, subscribers, and others.
  - Monthly circulation: 34,000.
  - Website redesigned in 2018.
  - Email newsletter subscriptions: more than 5,000.
  - Most-read stories this triennium (on Reporter Online):
    - “Luther film to air on PBS Sept. 12.” Views: 16,376.
    - “President Harrison provides a Lutheran view of church and state.” Views: 18,504.
    - Supreme Court delivers landmark ruling in favor of LCMS church preschool. Views: 16,376.
    - “Reversing the LCMS membership decline: not just by having more children.” Views: 14,019.

* The Lutheran Witness (subscribe to print and digital issues at *cph.org/witness*) and online (find highlights from the print magazine plus web-exclusive content free at *witness.lcms.org*):
  - The official magazine of the LCMS—now in its 138th year of continuous publication, making it one of the longest-running periodicals in America.
OFFICER, BOARD, AND COMMISSION REPORTS

- Monthly paid circulation: approximately 100,000, with a “pass-around rate” about double that. CPH continues to be our publisher and business manager.

- Thirteen LCMS districts, as well as LCMS Armed Forces Ministry, publish stitched-in district inserts in the national body of the Witness.

- *Lutheran Witness* Facebook fans: 11,000-plus, up more than 40 percent over the past triennium.

- Twitter followers: 1,300-plus, up more than 60 percent.

The aim of *The Lutheran Witness* is to provide LCMS laypeople with articles on faith and life, theology, and culture that help them “interpret the contemporary world from a Lutheran Christian perspective.” To this end, the magazine also seeks to educate readers on biblical theology and Lutheran history, cultivate a sense of community and “life together,” and raise awareness for the national and international activities of the LCMS.

The magazine’s lay-friendly, theologically rich blend of content regularly includes the following:

- Pastoral reflections from President Harrison and other LCMS leaders.

- Lutheran commentary on major national and international news stories.

- Interviews, profiles, and human-interest features spotlighting LCMS people and activities.

- Informative essays on topics relating to Lutheran theology and history.

- First-person narratives and personal stories about life and faith.

- Thoughtfully written opinion pieces on key issues.

- Infographics, how-to articles, and “listicles” exploring various aspects of Lutheran life and theology in a practical way.

- Reproducible, classroom-ready Bible studies.

- Official church notices, including convention updates, statistical reports, obituaries, and milestone events.

- Web-exclusive articles from expert bloggers expand the reach of the magazine on social media, while KFUO Radio and *Issues, Etc.* interviews bring LW-related conversations to listeners over the airwaves.

**Lutherans Engage the World** (print and online) *engage.lcms.org*

- Quarterly magazine for LCMS donors, rostered workers, and missionaries.

- Launched its own website in 2016; online views: 70,000.

- Mission statement: “Engaging the church in the work of witness and mercy throughout the world in our life together as The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.”

**Aim of publication:** to share uplifting stories about the church’s work in the world, while also providing accountability on how financial gifts given to the LCMS are being spent.

**Content:** stories on national and international ministries and projects presented in print and online—the digital version featuring multimedia elements like maps, videos, photo galleries, and audio clips.

**Circulation:** the number fluctuates, but generally around 75,000, plus another 7,500 sent as free bulk subscriptions to congregations.


- Online theological journal, done in collaboration with LCMS Church Relations, published at varying intervals throughout the year and focusing on the theology of mission.

**Global Content Feed** blogs.lcms.org

- A central, online collection of several news and information sources, including *Reporter, The Lutheran Witness*, other ministry resources, video, and audio.

- Online views: more than 3 million since 2016.

**“Life Together”**

- A monthly digital-news digest from the Synod President.

- A subscription-based online compendium of the top stories and other highlights from multiple communications outlets of the church; includes stories, photos, videos, new resources, links to KFUO Radio programming, etc.

- Subscribers: 3,854.

**Pressroom** https://blogs.lcms.org/category/statements

- Online source for official communications and statements, often from the Office of the President.

- Press releases.

**Church Information Center** lcms.org/cic

- Year-round call center and email responses to questions, concerns, and requests for information coming into the International Center.

- More than 44,000 queries answered through November 2018 in the current triennium:
  - 61 percent laity queries.
  - 15 percent clergy queries.
  - 11 percent church or school staff queries.
  - 13 percent from others.

**Production**

Our Production Unit is at the center of about 1,000 projects or pieces each year (or 3,000 per triennium), orchestrating
everything from missionary prayer cards to training materials to event support to special campaigns to the preparation and publication of full-length books.

Here is a small but representative listing of prominent projects since mid-2016:

• Helping to stage and/or produce promotional materials for the Life Conferences and Marches for Life in Washington, D.C., and other cities; LCMS Campus Ministry Conferences; LCMS Disaster Response Conferences; and others.

• Bolstering the “Preach the Word” (PTW) emphasis through the production of video modules and activity guides and the creation of the PTW website. Other ministries supported by video modules and assorted resources have been PALS—Post-Seminary Applied Learning and Support—and the Every One His Witness evangelism outreach program. For the filmed elements of “PTW” and PALS, our Video team was instrumental in the pre-production process and entirely responsible for the production and post-production phases.

• Creating the substantial District Visitation Packet for use by President Harrison and other members of the Praesidium.

• Creating all manner of pieces relating to the work of the ONM as well as other program units and offices.

• Providing missionary support in the form of prayer cards, online giving pages, tools and templates for missionary fundraising, and other ongoing forms of communications training (this training involving the expertise of others in the department). Speaking of missionaries, the May 2017 Reporter carried an insert encouraging prayer for our missionaries and the mission of the church, supporting our missionaries, and hosting missionary visits. Meanwhile, the entire summer 2017 issue of Lutheran Engage the World held up our missionaries and their work.

• Arranging LCMS exhibit displays at Synod conventions, the National Youth Gathering, and the national convention of the Lutheran Women’s Missionary League.

• Producing the “Stewardship Basics” Bible study, various reports of the Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR), and—again, in concert with Video staff—10 licensed lay deacon videos as well as updates on 11 LERT (Lutheran Early Response Team) videos.

• Producing President Harrison’s “Joy:fully Lutheran” white paper along with an array of “Joy:fully Lutheran” resources.

• Publishing the Sharing newsletter (brought back by popular demand and coinciding with the return of the venerable LCMS World Relief and Human Care brand).

• Supporting numerous events and producing their associated resources: Armed Forces Sunday, Lutheran Youth Fellowship Leadership Training, National Volunteer Appreciation Month, the Theology Professors Conference, and National Lutheran Schools Week.

• Overseeing the production of newsletters, brochures, posters, guidebooks, infographics, scrolling web tiles, and Reporter inserts.

• Preparing for publication (along with Editorial and Graphic Design) the annual booklet of chapel talks for Lutheran schools as well as the 160-page Lutheran Television: Glory Years.

Web Services

In cooperation with the offices, ministries, and mission regions of the Synod, we create, manage and update more than 1,500 webpages on lcms.org, which have been viewed nearly 8.5 million times during the past triennium by a global and growing audience. Content includes:

• Ministry information

• News

• Resources

• Giving pages

• Locators

Major projects addressed by the Web team in the past triennium:

• The launch of Apple News (Reporter and Lutherans Engage the World)—allowing Apple users to follow Reporter and Engage through Apple news.

• Google News (Reporter), allowing Google users to follow Reporter through Google News on their smart phones, tablets, etc.

• “School-to-School”—a site designed for LCMS schools to list their needs after a disaster.

• lcms.org “responsive design”—enabling the site’s design and features to respond and function properly no matter what device or screen size is being used.

• E1HW—online context-module website for Every One His Witness.

• KFUO website redesigned.

• Blogs redesigned.

• “Joy:fully Lutheran” companion website launched offering stories and resources.

• International Mission website launched—an outlet for the OIM to share mission-field stories and project updates.

• calendar.lcms.org redesigned.

And coming soon: an independent website for The Lutheran Witness, the Synod’s flagship magazine.

Graphic Design

We like to think of our design-services division as “branding from the inside out.” Toward that end, Graphic Design:
• Created the look and feel for the 2019 Convention theme, “Joy:fully Lutheran.” Rather than creating graphics just for the convention, we wanted Synod employees, congregation members, and visitors to see and be familiar with a variety of visuals reflecting the triennium theme before the convention.

• Created a unique vision for LCMS Life Ministry and the March for Life events. Through our “Eyes of Life” branding, we lead with a winsome and intriguing campaign. Now in its third year and ever-evolving, “Eyes of Life” continues to be a positive declaration of the sanctity of life.

• Created the look and branding of the Lutheran Young Adult Corps. By creating graphics and branding for this group, we are contributing to reaching a demographic that the church desperately wants to retain—young adults who all too often leave the church as they are less influenced by their families and churches and more influenced by secular culture.

• Created the “Free to Be Faithful” branding, enabling us to show how Lutherans need to be aware of the many ways our freedoms are being challenged by a secular culture bent on an aggressive agenda. Our newsletter and other communications contributed to the Lutheran Center for Religious Liberty being created and gave us a way to keep our members informed and interested in freedom-of-religion issues.

• Created “You Get to Tell Them,” the branding statement for missionary recruitment, which has enabled us to quickly and memorably reach those who may be considering becoming missionaries. Colorful displays and ads with a simple, heartfelt statement bring the viewer to the reason he or she might consider becoming a missionary.

• Created infographics as a way for the Synod to break down complicated or misunderstood issues: “Steps to the Mission Field,” “How Disaster Dollars Are Used,” “Steps to Specialized Pastoral Recruitment,” and the restructuring of the Synod’s relationship with Recognized Service Organizations.

Our graphics people design the publications that are the official voices of the LCMS. Design doesn’t stand still. The monthly Lutheran Witness and Reporter, and the quarterly Lutherans Engage the World, are opportunities to create and strengthen bonds with our target audiences to deepen their resolve and heighten their experience.

We’ve also branched into work with the CTCR’s publications. Finally, we work with Web and Social Media to bring powerful visuals and design to strengthen our voice and image to our audiences.

Public Relations/Media Management/Marketing

Promote the Synod’s work and stances on societal issues by fostering positive public and media relations through the following means:

• Press management.

• Media training and coaching for ministry leaders.

• Press releases.

• Marketing of key initiatives and ministry efforts to the public.

• Exhibit creation and presentation (in collaboration with our Production Unit) at Synod and district events.

Social Media

By far and away, social media continues to be the most immediate and far-reaching tool to disseminate news and information and discover audience opinions and trends. It’s also very economical. LCMS COMMS constantly monitors our presence on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, even as we research and consider new platforms where we might reach more people with the church’s messages.

Facebook—facebook.com/thelcms

• We have a global audience of 147,000-plus followers. In terms of “page likes,” the Synod has the largest Lutheran denominational presence on Facebook.

• More than 25,000 of those followers come from countries outside the United States, with the Philippines, Brazil, India, and Indonesia rounding out the top five, as well as significant followings in non-Christian countries like Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Vietnam, and Malaysia.

• Our most popular post reached more than 2 million viewers and was shared 20,000 times.

• Our most requested and helpful content is the prayers of the church and weekend church-service posts we create each week. Dozens of congregations and individuals share these posts to encourage fellow members in the faith.

Twitter—twitter.com/thelcms

• Twitter as a platform has stagnated and struggled to grow. Nonetheless, we maintain a robust presence there and continue to be one of the largest Lutheran denominational accounts.

Instagram—instagram.com/thelcms

• As a storytelling platform for sharing the work we are doing around the world, Instagram is unparalleled. Since the last convention, our account following has grown by 400 percent, and while a following of 8,800 does not seem like a lot compared with our Facebook numbers, the quality of engagement is much higher.

Other Services Provided

Photojournalism—photo.lcms.org/#!/index

Since adding an award-winning professional photojournalist to our staff in late 2013, we have visually shaped the national and international Witness, Mercy, and Life Together mission work of the LCMS through documentary photographic storytelling in some 28 countries and commonwealths and 36 states.
Further, we have amplified, through compelling imagery, our disaster, mercy, and international ministry work centered on the mission priorities of the LCMS; created a robust infrastructure of archived photography; and continued to teach new missionaries visual literacy for their ongoing work in the mission field.

Over the past two triennia, we have photographically documented several hundred stories from America and around the world in our multiple publications. Today, our photo archive contains more than 20,000 color-corrected, high-resolution, curated photographs for our publications and other purposes.

**Video Services** (videos now available on the Global Content Feed, YouTube and Vimeo—[https://blogs.lcms.org/category/resources/multimedia/video/](https://blogs.lcms.org/category/resources/multimedia/video/))

As alluded to earlier, by producing stunning mini-documentaries, we celebrated the 500th anniversary of the Reformation in ways that enhanced national and global awareness of Martin Luther and the Reformation and helped the LCMS expand its audience. Using museum pieces from “Martin Luther: Art and the Reformation,” President Harrison shared thought-provoking and important facts about the Reformation contained within 20 video episodes.

In addition, our two-person video team produced a two-part documentary titled “The Luther Mile,” in which President Harrison narrated a tour of historic Reformation sites. Along with historical facts, he provided informative anecdotes during this fascinating walking tour of Lutherstadt, Wittenberg, Germany.

Our Reformation video content garnered more than 300,000 individual views.

On multiple occasions, our video team provided disaster video news coverage that included the use of our 4K aerial drone flown by our FAA-certified remote pilot/cinematographer.

Working with ministry leaders and in collaboration with the department’s Production Unit and others, Video Services wrote, edited, designed, and produced comprehensive video content involving video modules, printed and digital manuals, and PowerPoint slides. Examples include “Preach the Word,” PALS, and exclusive video content for the online edition of Lutherans Engage the World. Further, the team prepared the monthly video content for the “Life Together Digest.”

**Expanded Video Archive**—[video.lcms.org](http://video.lcms.org)

Since 2016, our video team, led by an experienced broadcast television producer/director, has gathered video footage from across the globe to produce all manner of videos—documentaries, live-streaming, webinars, missionary biographies, disaster response, marketing, curriculum, training, interviews, and news—that help to shape and tell the stories of our collective work, making a strong case for its support.

- 141 video productions, exceeding 3,000 minutes, or 50-plus hours, have been produced and uploaded to our YouTube, Vimeo, and Facebook channels since July 2016.
- Combined “viewing time” exceeds 10,000 hours.
- Our strongest demographic is men aged 25–34, an encouraging and desirable core of young viewership.
- Our top five viewing countries: United States, United Kingdom, Canada, India, Germany.

New resource development: In mid-2018, the video team moved into a larger and much more efficient studio space in the International Center.

**Support for MADV, Donors, and Disaster Response**

The COMMS department, while not housing a distinct area (like Video or Editorial, for example) for the support of MADV, donors, and disaster response, nevertheless contributes importantly to the fundraising and disaster-response efforts of the church.

In terms of donor support, we, in collaboration with MADV:

- Encourage positive donor responses and relationships, not least through the publication of Lutherans Engage the World, which highlights witness and mercy projects accomplished through the generosity of donor gifts.
- Assist in the writing and editing of appeal letters and e-blasts.
- Create materials (brochures, fliers, bulletin inserts, case statements, photos, videos, infographics, posters, social media postings) that promote special projects.

As for disaster response—helping to raise mercy dollars for those stricken by calamities—we work with LCMS Disaster Response and MADV to:

- Tell the stories of the Synod’s response to these catastrophes, which were legion during the past triennium: floods, wildfires, hurricanes, tornadoes, earthquakes, volcanoes, mudslides, church fires, and roof collapses.
- Send members of our staff to disaster zones and debris fields to gather assets for our reporting: story content, interviews, photos, videos, audio, and live postings on social media.

**Future Plans**

**Build a network of LCMS communicators**

In an era of fast-evolving communication technologies and the growing challenge of being heard amid the cacophony of other media stimuli, we aim to intentionally connect with communicators in LCMS districts, colleges and universities, seminaries, and partner church bodies to foster a network that shares and encourages best practices through:

- Direct and regular contact and consultation, the exchange of story ideas and, if financially feasible, by ...
- Hosting a biennial communicators’ conference for district, schools, and partner church communicators to collectively strengthen and sharpen our skills and effectiveness. It makes sense for communicators throughout the Synod to work more collaboratively.

**Multimedia-shareable stories**

No longer is it enough, in many cases, to provide a single
photo and story of running text. Today’s audiences demand vigorous storytelling that includes audio, visual imagery, infographics, and text. As we were doing in 2016 and will still be doing in 2022, we continually investigate and strategize the best ways to present our collective Witness, Mercy, and Life Together work in multimedia storytelling formats for easy viewing and online sharing.

**Social media advancement**

Social media is an always-changing world of many-sided communication. The ability to connect in the moment, share a photo, video, thought, or experience with thousands across the globe, and receive their reaction in an instant makes it a powerful tool.

What we said in 2016 remains the case today: Almost daily, new options for social media appear. What is the best use of these communication outlets for the church? How can we share the faith and direct people to Lutheran altars and pulpits where they can experience Life Together in the family of God? How do we wisely engage the culture and speak the truth in love? These are questions we regularly ask and work to answer. In the coming triennium, we intend to:

- Employ new outlets where people gather online.
- Increase our use of social media analytics to inform content creation and posting.
- Be more strategic in using social media to increase followers and their engagement with our content.
- Redouble our efforts to help our congregations and ministries use these tools well and consistently according to our confession of faith.

**Challenges**

Our challenges are perpetual as we explore new ways to meet them. Chief among these are:

- Reaching more LCMS households directly through online and other forms of engagement.
- Reaching a greater number of LCMS members under the age of 30. This is imperative for the future life of the church, and we are collaborating with our Youth, Young Adult, and campus-ministry leaders to meet this challenge.
- Increasing the trust level of parish pastors so they feel confident in sharing our communications with their members. This can be accomplished only through first-rate, worthwhile communications—content that is faithful to the Word of God and the Lutheran Confessions—delivered via an array of media outlets.
- Handling a heavy number of project requests from ministry areas. The demands for services sometimes tax our finite group of communicators and force us to plan more carefully and seek more efficient ways of engaging our audiences.
- Being wise stewards of our resources while keeping up with the pace of communication technology in ways that serve the church well.

**Opportunities**

- Continue creating a strong, confessional Lutheran voice worldwide through joint communications efforts with our 37 (at this writing) partner church bodies.
- Collaborate (following the lead of the President’s Office, Church Relations, and the CTCR) with counterparts in the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod and Evangelical Lutheran Synod to raise the confessional Lutheran voice in the United States.
- Continue to grow interest—both within and outside the Synod—in our online venues of communication. Over the past triennium, as mentioned above, total page-visits to the Synod’s website and its various domains numbered 8.5 million. In the not-so-distant future, under God’s blessing, we hope to crack 10 million … 12 million … and beyond.

LCMS COMM is dedicated to telling the marvelous stories of our Synod’s endeavors in the most compelling ways. As confessing Lutherans, we are heirs of the Reformation, truth is on our lips, and the Good News of salvation in Christ Jesus is at the core of all we do. Blessed to possess such grand and eternally important messages, we have no choice but to be relentless in finding new and better ways to propel these stories out to the world, positioning them in multiple places in print and online, where they can edify the reader or viewer who discovers them.

**CMO—CONCLUSION**

Finally, a brief word of doxology, a portion of what I shared with the Synod Board of Directors this past February—praise and thanksgiving for what God has so abundantly given us for our work together in the Synod, based on this passage from St. Paul’s epistle to the Ephesians:

But God, being rich in mercy, because of his great love with which he loved us, even us, when we were dead in our trespasses, **God made alive together with Christ**—by grace you have been saved! (Ephesians 2:4–5, my emphasis).

**Thanksgiving for God’s grace made manifest in one another,** **the baptized faithful.** Look around. The diversity of gifts and years and experience and wisdom within our church body is simply stunning. It is no less so across the peoples and lands and churches in which the Missouri Synod is present and active with the Gospel.

**Thanksgiving for a church body today that is** “on the move”—up and out and into the world with this Gospel. The Bavarian pastor Wilhelm Lohe (1844) reflected on an essential characteristic of the Church with these oft-quoted words:

The church of the New Testament is … a church of all people, a church which has its children in all lands and gathers them from every nation. It is the one flock of the one shepherd, called out of many flocks (John 10:16), the universal—the truly catholic—church which flows through all time and into which all people pour. … This is the thought which must permeate the mission of the church or it will not know what it is or what it should do. For **mission is nothing but the**
one church of God in motion, the actualization of the one universal, catholic church. … Mission is the life of the catholic church. … The catholic church and mission—these two no one can separate without killing both, and that is impossible.

No matter where you might look, the church of God in the LCMS is on the move. In mission (a single mission—as Paul would go on to say to the Ephesians, one mission in “… one body and one Spirit … hope that belongs to your call—one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all” Ephesians 4:4-6.) There is good reason why we don’t call them the LCMS Office of National “Missions” or the Office of International “Missions,” (as if there were many and not one “Mission”) and why my job title at the International Center is Chief Mission Officer, not Chief “Missions” Officer. In its simplest terms, our singular “mission” is to extend the gift of righteousness and forgiveness to the world through the preaching of the Word and administration of the Sacraments. With purpose and resolve. Rejoicing in over seventeen different program ministries serving thirty-five districts and over six thousand congregations just here alone in the U.S. A clarion voice within the culture, now made wider and deeper than ever before through the Lutheran Center for Religious Liberty. Together with Christ in supporting over one hundred twenty missionaries and their families around the globe, situated in over forty countries. And two hundred LCMS military chaplains serving the men and women of this country’s armed forces as they protect us in some of the most dangerous places on the planet.

Thanksgiving for the cross that we bear together with Christ, with patience. Don’t kid yourself about this earthly life. We are not theologians of glory for prosperity, health, wealth, and success. We are theologians of the cross. We preach Christ crucified. “Jesus told his disciples, ‘If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me’ ” (Matthew 16:24). Mission program initiatives and budgets and leadership in the church undoubtedly have their place in the stewardship of the abundant blessings that God grants, but they are not the end.

Going forward in faith, our thanksgiving and attention is turned to the work that we’ve been given to do. So often, it is hard and lengthy. Jesus said: “You will be brought before kings and governors for my name’s sake” (Luke 21:12). We’ve seen that across centuries and generations.

And so finally—a word of encouragement at a time when the devil is doing his utmost to discourage us who have been made alive together with Christ. We wield, as St. Paul would note later on in his epistle to the Church at Ephesus, “the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.” Satan doesn’t stand a chance! If there is anything that I’ve learned during my time at the International Center, it’s that the Gospel is infinitely robust and unstoppable. It needs continually to be brought out of hiding, boldly and unashamedly. It will never break. This Word enters into the messiest of situations, the most challenging of mission fields, smack dab into the middle of the war zones of the lives of sinners the likes of you and me—and though we may indeed falter and fail, and we will, God’s Word never does and never will. He said, “For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it” (Isaiah 55:10-11).

We live in that promise, in His time and reality. This is what it is to be made “Joy:fully Alive,” in body and soul, together … because His life-bestowing Word is for life together. This is what it is to be “Joy:fully Lutheran”!

Rev. Kevin D. Robson, Chief Mission Officer

R1.3

Church Relations

Perhaps at no time in the history of the Missouri Synod there been greater opportunities to have a significant impact upon world Lutheranism. For almost as Lutheranism has existed in a distinct form from Roman Catholicism (after the Reformation and the presentation of the Augsburg Confession), there have been two forms of Lutheranism: (1) an inclusive form that did not emphasize doctrinal agreement and tended toward unionism, and (2) an exclusive form that required agreement in all doctrine for fellowship. The Prussian Union in 1817 marked a significant cleavage between inclusive and exclusive Lutheranism, while the formation of the Lutheran World Federation signified the final break for these two types of Lutheranism. The Missouri Synod was founded as an exclusive Lutheran church that required agreement in doctrine and practice for fellowship. Consequently, the Missouri Synod never had the number of church partners or even mission starts in as many places as other church bodies that had looser requirements for fellowship. Because these Lutheran church bodies, such as the national churches in Scandinavian and Germany, did not hold to biblical inspiration and inerrancy or to the Book of Concord as the Missouri Synod and her partners, they drifted further and further from the biblical message to embrace a progressive, secular agenda such as justice issues, climate justice, and gender justice. While the Western Lutheran churches drifted further from the Scriptures, the Lutheran Churches of the Global South still held to the Holy Scriptures, even if some errors from Western churches were introduced. This situation created the perfect storm for these church bodies to seek out the Missouri Synod, her partners, and the International Lutheran Council (reported on below). As a result, many church bodies, particularly from the Global South are seeking the LCMS due to her biblical and confessional teaching. This does not mean the LCMS can enter fellowship with all of them, but at the same time the Missouri Synod has a duty to proclaim the truth and shine light into the darkness. During the past triennium, the Missouri Synod has had relationships with 96 Lutheran church bodies around the world. Many of them are seeking the Missouri Synod because of the direction the church bodies that first brought the Gospel to them have taken. Now is a tremendous moment to bear witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the world.

The Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CCTR) report describes several church fellowship requests, working agreements and discussions with other church bodies that will not be repeated here. Some highlights appear below.
India

Substantial progress has been made in our tireless effort to assist our first daughter church, the India Evangelical Lutheran Church (IELC), with its anti-corruption reforms. Numerous court verdicts in favor of the honest, legitimate administration have been handed down, and the legitimate officers are now legally established and recognized and have a court-appointed administrator to assist them in putting the affairs of the church in order. As a result, stability is slowly beginning to return to the administration, though much work remains to be done to undo the effects of decades of corruption. The IELC’s seminary, Concordia Theological Seminary, Nagercoil, continues to be a bright spot. Its administration has been improving dramatically with LCMS support. The campus is presently undergoing major renovation work with LCMS support.

Sri Lanka

The Office of Church Relations supported an initiative by the Office of International Mission to re-constitute the defunct Lanka Lutheran Church (LLC) as a new and legal church body called the Ceylon Evangelical Lutheran Church (CELC), which applied for and was inducted into International Lutheran Council (ILC) membership in 2018. The CELC will apply for official partner church status with the LCMS in the near future. An overture to remove the defunct LLC from the list of LCMS partner churches is before this convention.

Taiwan

Great strides have been made with church relations in Taiwan. In addition to the LCMS partner China Evangelical Lutheran Church, there are six other Lutheran church bodies in Taiwan with which the LCMS had previously had little or no contact. Within the last triennium, the Office of Church Relations reached out and met with each of these Lutheran church bodies multiple times, resulting in the establishment of warm and friendly relations with each of them. Now they are in routine contact with the LCMS and occasionally receive and accept invitations to LCMS-sponsored events in Taiwan such as theological conferences. One of the six has already joined the International Lutheran Council, and more are expected to join in the future.

Inter-Church Relationships of the LCMS

The Inter-Church relationships of the LCMS have continued to grow by leaps and bounds in the last triennium. In addition to our growing family of official “Partner Church” bodies with which the LCMS is in altar and pulpit fellowship, the LCMS also has a growing number of “Allied Church” bodies with which we collaborate in various ways but with which we do not yet have altar and pulpit fellowship. We presently have 35 official partnerships that have already been recognized by the LCMS in convention and an additional two partnerships to be considered for solemnizing by this convention, as well as good relationships with an additional 42 allied church bodies, many of which are in various stages of fellowship talks with the LCMS.

In addition, the LCMS also has 17 “Emerging Relationships” with Lutheran church bodies that we are getting to know but with which we do not yet have a formal relationship. Most of these have approached the LCMS out of a desire to share our solid, biblical theology.

These various relationships make for a total of 96 Lutheran church relationships in a total of 76 countries! This represents a substantial increase in relationships over this last triennium.

Lastly, the LCMS also has a growing number of “Ecumenical Relationships” with non-Lutheran church bodies for the sake of dialogue and cooperatio in externis.

Partner Churches (already recognized by the LCMS in convention)

1. Evangelical Lutheran Church of Argentina
2. Evangelical Lutheran Church of Brazil
3. Lutheran Church—Canada
4. Confessional Lutheran Church of Chile
5. Evangelical Lutheran Church—Synod of France
6. Independent Evangelical Lutheran Church (Germany)
7. Evangelical Lutheran Church of Ghana
8. Lutheran Church in Guatemala
9. Evangelical Lutheran Church of Haiti
10. Lutheran Church—Hong Kong Synod
11. India Evangelical Lutheran Church
12. Japan Lutheran Church
13. Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kazakhstan
14. Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya
15. Lutheran Church in Korea
16. Evangelical Lutheran Church of Latvia
17. Evangelical Lutheran Church of Liberia
18. Evangelical Lutheran Church in Lithuania
19. Lutheran Synod of Mexico
20. Lutheran Church of Nigeria
21. Lutheran Church in Norway
22. Gutnius Lutheran Church (Papua New Guinea)
23. Evangelical Lutheran Church of Paraguay
24. Lutheran Church in the Philippines
25. Evangelical Lutheran Church of Ingria (Russia)
26. Siberian Evangelical Lutheran Church (Russia)
27. Lutheran Church in Southern Africa (South Africa)
28. Free Evangelical Lutheran Synod in South Africa
29. Lanka Lutheran Church (Sri Lanka)
30. China Evangelical Lutheran Church (Taiwan)
31. Lutheran Church of Togo
32. Evangelical Lutheran Church of England
33. The American Association of Lutheran Churches (USA)
34. Lutheran Church of Uruguay
35. Lutheran Church of Venezuela

**Partner Churches to Be Received at This Convention**

1. Evangelical Lutheran Church in Belgium
2. Portuguese Evangelical Lutheran Church

**Allied Churches**

1. Lutheran Church of Australia
2. Lutheran Church in Africa—Synod of Benin
3. Evangelical Christian Lutheran Church of Bolivia
4. Evangelical Lutheran Church of Burkina Faso
5. Lutheran Church in Africa—Synod of Burundi
6. Evangelical Lutheran Church of Cambodia
7. Evangelical Lutheran Church in The Congo
8. Evangelical Lutheran Community in East Congo
9. Evangelical Lutheran Confessional Church in The Congo
10. Lutheran Church in Africa—Synod of Côte D’Ivoire
11. Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in the Czech Republic
12. Silesian Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession (Czech Republic)
13. Evangelical Lutheran Free Church in Denmark
14. Evangelical Lutheran Church in Eritrea
15. Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus
16. Evangelical Lutheran Mission Diocese of Finland
17. Lutheran Church of The Gambia
18. Evangelical Lutheran Church in Guinea
19. Manipur Evangelical Lutheran Church (India)
20. Indonesian Lutheran Christian Church
21. West Japan Evangelical Lutheran Church
22. Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Republic of Kazakhstan
23. Lutheran Church Concordia (Kyrgyzstan)
24. Malagasy Lutheran Church (Madagascar)
25. Confessional Lutheran Church—Malawi Synod
26. Evangelical Lutheran Church in Malaysia
27. Lutheran Church Synod of Nicaragua
28. Evangelical Lutheran Diocese in Norway
29. Evangelical Lutheran Church of Panama
30. Evangelical Lutheran Church—Peru
31. Lutheran Mission in Africa—Synod of Thousand Hills (Rwanda)
32. Christ Evangelical Lutheran Church—Sierra Leone
33. Confessional Lutheran Church of South Africa
34. South Sudan Evangelical Lutheran Church
35. Spanish Evangelical Lutheran Church
36. Ceylon Evangelical Lutheran Church (Sri Lanka)
37. Mission Province in Sweden
38. Lutheran Church of East Africa (Tanzania)
39. Istanbul Lutheran Church (Turkey)
40. Lutheran Church of Uganda
41. Evangelical Lutheran Church of Ukraine
42. The Lutheran Ministerium and Synod—USA

**Emerging Relationships**

1. Bangladesh Northern Evangelical Lutheran Church
2. Independent Evangelical Lutheran Church in Belarus
3. Confessional Lutheran Church of Colombia
4. Evangelical Church of the Lutheran Confession in Cuba
5. Charismatic Anglican Church of Ecuador (has adopted Lutheranism; name to be changed)
6. Ethiopian Evangelical Lutheran Church
7. Himalayan Evangelical Lutheran Fellowship (Nepal)
8. Evangelical Lutheran Church Society (Norway)
9. Norwegian Lutheran Mission
10. Independent Evangelical Lutheran Church in Rwanda
11. Lutheran Church of Rwanda
12. Lutheran Church in Singapore
13. Evangelical Lutheran Church in Sudan and South Sudan
14. Lutheran Church of South Sudan
15. Confessional Lutheran Church in Switzerland
16. Lutheran Church of the Republic of China (Taiwan)
17. Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania

**Ecumenical Relationships**

1. Roman Catholic Church (The Vatican)

   Albert B. Collver, *Director of Church Relations*

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**International Lutheran Council Report (ilcouncil.org)**

**Background**

The International Lutheran Council (ILC) celebrated its 25th anniversary as a council in September 2018. The ILC came into existence on September 8, 1993, when 23 Lutheran church leaders from around the world unanimously adopted the ILC Constitution in Antigua, Guatemala. The Lutheran Church—
Missouri Synod (LCMS) formally joined the ILC at the 1995 Synod Convention with Resolution 3-03A. The LCMS’s involvement with the ILC did not begin in 1993 but goes back at least 60 years to when President Behnken gathered delegates from the mission churches of the Missouri Synod and a number of free churches in the ancient Hanseatic city of Uelzen, Germany, from August 6–10, 1952. These people who met in Uelzen had just finished attending the second world assembly of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF). For a variety of reasons, the founders of the proto-ILC did not believe they could join the Lutheran World Federation in good conscience. This first meeting resulted in a number of free conferences being held and the creation of the International Lutheran Theological Conference. In 1975, the International Theological Conference changed its name to the International Lutheran Conference, and, in 1993, “Conference” was replaced by “Council.” The ILC’s roots reach back even into the 19th century, emerging from church bodies involved in the General Evangelical Lutheran Conference (Allgemeine evangelisch-lutherische Konferenz—AELK) of 1868 and the Synodical Conference. For a more detailed history of the International Lutheran Council please visit: http://bit.ly/2t92qRQ.

The ILC, during the 20th century, has graduated from an informal organization that held free conferences together to an informal organization that held conferences to an organization with a constitution. Each step took place with the desire to better serve Lutheran church bodies that believed the Holy Scriptures are the inerrant, inspired Word of God and who held firm commitments to the Lutheran Confessions. Since the LCMS’s convention in 2016, the ILC has taken another significant organizational step. In 2018, the ILC became incorporated as a non-profit organization to better serve the member church bodies and to better meet the growing needs of Lutheran church bodies in the 21st century. During this same period, the ILC increased in membership with 17 new members for a total of 54 members around the world in September 2018. (For more information, see: http://bit.ly/2GoW9j.) Most recently, the East of Lake Victoria Diocese—Evangelical Lutheran Church of Tanzania (ELVD-ELCT) joined the ILC as an observer. The significant factor in the ILC’s growth has been the ongoing realignment of world Lutheranism.

The Christian Church over the past two millennia has experienced a number of heresies, as well as a number of schisms. The first great schism of the Church occurred in AD 1054, when the Eastern churches under Constantinople and the Western churches under Rome split. The second great schism of the Church happened at the Reformation in 1517, causing a split within the Roman Catholic Church that produced not only the Lutheran Church but the legion of Protestant church bodies in existence today. The Church in the 21st century may well be on the third great division, caused by an ethical split over abortion, euthanasia, and homosexuality. As the mainline Protestant church bodies and some members of the Lutheran World Federation embrace same-sex marriage and the ordination of practicing homosexual clergy, there is a realignment of churches, particularly in the Global South. Churches in the Global South, whose historic partners have embraced unscriptural positions on various ethical matters are seeking churches that hold to the traditional, scriptural position of the Christian Church. As part of this realignment, many Lutheran church bodies—as well as some non-Lutheran church bodies—have approached the ILC. Although the churches from the North have provided aid and support to the churches of the Global South for the last couple of centuries, the day is rapidly approaching when the churches of the Global South might lend aid by providing pastors and missionaries to a Western world which has drifted into darkness.

Over the past three years, the ILC has been involved in an informal dialogue involving the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity (PCPCU), a unit of The Vatican. This informal dialogue has involved discussions between theologians of both the Lutheran and Roman Catholic traditions. The majority of the ILC-PCPCU’s discussions have taken place in Germany. After discussing a variety of topics, the ILC and PCPCU are expecting to release a final report in 2019.

In 2019, the ILC began the Lutheran Leadership Development Program (see http://bit.ly/2TCLsH9q), which seeks to help train future Lutheran leaders in theology and in practical skills such as budgeting and strategic planning. Each cohort will consist of 12 men, and there will be one cohort in each of the next five years. The Lutheran Leadership Development Program is done in partnership with Concordia Publishing House and Concordia Theological Seminary in Fort Wayne. In partnership with CPH, the ILC also published its first book, Breath of God, Yet Work of Man (see http://bit.ly/2TESK3j), in the Lutheran Leadership Development Program series.

Over the past 25 years, the Lord has greatly blessed the ILC. The LCMS has played a crucial role, both in the development of and the support of the ILC. The LCMS’s membership in the ILC has been a blessing, and the ILC and its members have been a blessing to the LCMS. Many, but not all, of the ILC’s members are in altar and pulpit fellowship with the LCMS. It is important to remember that the ILC is not a communion or fellowship of church bodies but rather an association of churches which share a desire to strengthen world Lutheranism by holding to the inspired, inerrant Word of God and to the Book of Concord. The goals of the ILC include (1) to further a united witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ and strengthen its witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ and strengthen its unity by mediating member disputes. The ILC is thankful for the LCMS’s membership, support, and leadership in world Lutheranism and prays for another 25 years of blessings from the Lord.

Albert B. Collver, General Secretary

R1.4

KFUO

KFUO is the worldwide broadcasting and webcasting voice of the LCMS. With our AM 850 radio station in St. Louis, Missouri, and our Internet audio, KFUO reaches the cities, countryside, and to the outermost parts of the earth with the word of Christ.

KFUO Heard around the Globe

God has blessed us with the technologies to reach out to

KFUO continues to make great strides with our radio broadcast, live streaming, and podcast. We are heard by listeners in all 50 states and over 130 countries. Our KFUO-produced radio programs are downloaded over 171,000 times each month, with listeners hearing the word of Christ on a variety of devices such as smart phones, which can be blue-toothed into car radios and speaker systems at home or businesses. Many listeners hear us on smart-speaker systems like Alexa. We also have people listening to KFUO on Wi-Fi radios, tablets, computers, and a variety of other devices for live radio streaming and on-demand listening. Our social media reach—including Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram—has grown from 4,000 to 8,528 people in the past 3 years.

Transitions of the Leadership Team

Gary Duncan, Director of Broadcast Services, and Andy Bates, Director of Programming, continue in their leadership roles. Joan Harwell retired as the Director of Development in 2016, and the position of Operations Director was eliminated in 2017, with those duties being distributed to other staff members. The two new leadership changes include Mary Schmidt, who has moved up from Development Assistant to Development Director after Joan's retirement, and Sarah Gulseth, who joined our leadership team as Digital Media Specialist in 2018.

KFUO Revenue Streams

The majority of the KFUO funding comes directly from our listeners, with additional revenue from underwriters, endowments, bequests, purchased air-time, and tower rent.

KFUO Radio Programming

Worldwide KFUO reaches the nations with the Good News of Jesus Christ anywhere there is Internet availability. We reach places where it is too dangerous to send missionaries. Our KFUO talk and music programs focus on proclaiming the Word of Christ, reaching people globally and speaking biblical truth to those who are spiritually dead, that by hearing the Word of God, they might be made alive in Christ. Also, as the radio and webcast voice of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, we share the message of our church by promoting, informing, and teaching what the LCMS is doing in reaching out in Witness, Mercy, and Life Together.

Gary Duncan, Executive Director of Broadcast Services

R2

First Vice-President

The vice-presidents of the Synod are elected to advise the President of the Synod, to serve as voting members of the Council of Presidents, and to form, under the President, the Praesidium of the Synod. Upon his request or as provided by the Synod, the vice-presidents assist the President in carrying out his responsibilities and represent him as needed.

The First Vice-President serves as a full-time executive and a non-voting member of the Synod's Board of Directors. He is responsible at all times to the President of the Synod for the performance of his duties.

During the triennium, the undersigned has been blessed with the opportunity to work with many individuals and groups throughout the Synod. Tasks done include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Worked with the President of the Synod and his staff as a member of the President’s team
- Worked with the Secretary of the Synod
- Served on the Council of Presidents
- Worked with the Board of Directors of the Synod
- Was an ex officio member of the Commission on Theology and Church Relations
- Participated in Administrative Staff Meetings
- Served as Chairman of the Colloquy Committees of the Synod
- With the help of a committee appointed by the COP (Presidents Paul Linnemann, Derek Lecakes, and Roger Paavola), prepared the policy manual outlining the process to implement 2016 Res. 13-02A, regularizing the licensed lay deacons serving as de facto pastors
- Chaired the regional colloquy committees formed under Res. 13-02A to interview licensed lay deacons applying for colloquy to the Specific Ministry Pastor roster (see Report of the Colloquy Committee for details—100+ regional interviews)
- Coordinated “seminary intensive” courses for licensed lay deacons applying for SMP colloquy, per Res. 13-02A
- Worked with members of Chinese Lutherans in Mission Building (CLiMB) toward a Chinese colloquy program
- Coordinated the responses of the Office of the President to the 2017 revision of the Explanation to Luther’s Small Catechism and helped with subsequent editing
- Participated in meetings with the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod and the Evangelical Lutheran Synod
- Helped with the Convention Planning Committee
- Helped in choosing members of Convention Floor Committees
- Coordinated preparation of theological essays for the 2019 Synod Convention
- Continued to lead the Koinonia Project, working especially with the Council of Presidents, also several pastors’ retreats for the Koinonia Project
- Assisted the President with the orientation of new district presidents
- Assisted with the orientation of new district president administrative assistants
- Functioned as secretary of the Praesidium
- Worked with the editor of the circuit winkel Bible study series sponsored by the Praesidium
• Spoke at several pastoral conferences
• Represented the President at various district conventions and district visitations
• Gave counsel to many district presidents regarding ecclesiastical supervision
• Participated in regional meetings of the district presidents
• Served as a member of the PALS Steering Committee
• Participated in the Synod Prison Ministry Conference
• Preached in various congregations around the Synod
• Conducted various installations at the International Center
• Was instrumental in facilitating a DOXOLOGY retreat for the Council of Presidents in February 2019

The Praesidium, which includes the President and First Vice-President of the Synod, together with the five regional vice-presidents, met regularly for prayer, Bible study, and discussion of Synod matters, usually in conjunction with a meeting of the Council of Presidents. The Praesidium gave counsel on a variety of matters as requested by the President of the Synod, district presidents, and others.

The First Vice-President serves as chairman of both the Colloquy Committee for the Pastoral Ministry and the Colloquy Committee for the Commissioned Ministry, the reports of which follow in this Convention Workbook. By means of colloquy, the Lord of the Church provides for the congregations of the Synod many qualified commissioned ministers and ordained pastors.

The President and his staff often consult with me or ask me to work with individuals or groups requesting information regarding ecclesiastical supervision issues in the districts. We always seek to help and support the district presidents in their necessary work. The undersigned managed the process of providing for circuit exceptions in the preparations for the 2019 Synod Convention.

To speak personally, it has been both a privilege and a joy to serve with President Matthew Harrison, together with the Praesidium, other Synod officers, and the Council of Presidents. I speak in the past tense here because, after 40 years of active ministry, I intend, God willing, to retire from active service at the end of this present term, August 31, 2019. Gospel ministry is always a team effort, but to thank appropriately everyone with whom I have served would be impossible. God is very gracious and often shows that grace through brothers and sisters in Christ. I looked forward to each day to serve the Lord with them and for you, the members of the Synod, in this capacity. The President and all the members of his staff, especially my executive assistant, Mrs. Karen Dowbniak (who followed Mrs. Brenda Schreder after she retired), are all gifts of God and have been a pleasure to work with. None of the colloquy work, both general colloquy and the special SMP colloquy of licensed lay deacons, would have been possible without Karen's efficient and dedicated service. The Lord Jesus blesses our beloved Synod with rich resources and faithful servants.

Herbert C. Mueller Jr, First Vice-President

R2.1

**Colloquy Committee for Pastoral Ministry**

The Colloquy Committee for the Pastoral Ministry includes the First Vice-President of the Synod as chairman *ex officio* (the undersigned), the presidents of the two seminaries (or their representatives), and one district president elected by the Council of Presidents. Committee membership was stable this triennium: Dr. Lawrence Rast, President of Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne (often represented by Dr. Detlev Schulz); Dr. Dale Meyer, President of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis (often represented by Dr. Wallace Becker or Dr. Glenn Nielsen); President Timothy Scharr of the Southern Illinois District, re-elected by the Council of Presidents. All served faithfully the entire triennium.

The Bylaws of the Synod (2016 Handbook 3.10.2) provide the basic outline of the Pastoral Colloquy Program. Most of the policy details are included in two policy manuals (one for regular colloquy and one for the special process for licensed lay deacons to colloquize to the Specific Ministry Pastor roster). Both manuals are easily accessible on the Synod website at http://www.lcms.org/page.aspx?pid=1106. Electronic versions of both colloquy application forms are available at the same location.

There are three categories of men eligible to apply for colloquy to the "general" ministerium of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod: (1) ordained pastors with sufficient education who are presently actively serving a congregation of another synod, who desire to colloquize into the LCMS (normally, we seek to have them bring their congregation along with them into the Synod, but that is not always possible); (2) men who are graduates of a seminary program of sufficient academic standards leading to ordination who have been members of LCMS congregations for at least two years (often, these are men who have resigned from pastoral positions in congregations of other synods and have subsequently joined LCMS congregations); and (3) licensed deacons of the Synod’s districts who have served in the full Word and Sacrament ministry of an LCMS congregation under license for at least 10 years. The congregation he is serving must also certify that it desires to call the individual once he is certified. The Colloquy Committee is empowered by the Bylaws and the policy manual, at the request of the sponsoring district president, to make some exceptions to the minimum requirements in categories 2 and 3. All others, including commissioned ministers of the Synod, are directed to the alternate-route programs at one of our Synod’s seminaries. A fourth special category was created by the 2016 Synod Convention for licensed lay deacons functioning as pastors to apply for colloquy to the SMP roster (see below).

During the course of the triennium, the Colloquy Committee met five times per year to examine applications, conduct interviews with applicants (no applicant is ever certified without a personal interview), and to transact business monitoring the progress of the various applicants. In the work of interviewing applicants, the committee often draws upon other ordained men from the staff of the Synod for help. Several Spanish-speaking pastors assist with Hispanic applicants. The Korean Ministry Pastoral Conference, an informal group of Korean-speaking LCMS pastors, together with Dr. Shang Ik Moon of Concor-
dia University, Irvine, conducts classes in Lutheran theology for Korean speakers ordained elsewhere who wish to colloquize into the Synod. These men are interviewed every January by the Chairman of the Colloquy Committee, together with Dr. Moon and others, and then presented to the full committee at a subsequent meeting. During the triennium now ending, 10 men were certified through this Korean colloquy program. In addition, as of this writing, a total of 41 men were certified by the normal process July 2016 through the end of 2018, for a total of 51 men certified for call and placement as “general” pastors of the Synod during that time frame. As will be seen below, the past two years, however, have been anything but typical.

The 2016 Convention of the Synod adopted Res. 13-02A, “To Regularize Status of Licensed Lay Deacons Involved in Word and Sacrament Ministry.” Pertinent sections of this resolution state,

Resolved. That the Colloquy Committee for the Pastoral Ministry establish and implement an expanded regional colloquy program (with appropriate regional colloquy committees) to regularize the status of current licensed lay deacons (LLDs) who are 50 years of age or older and who have been preaching the Gospel and/or administering the Sacraments publicly on behalf of the church for the past two years (de facto pastors), so that these servants of Christ can be called and ordained according to the order of the LCMS and be rostered as pastors with SMP status; and be it further

Resolved. That exceptions to the SMP colloquy requirements with respect to age and years of service for LLDs may be granted by the appropriate regional colloquy committee with the approval of the respective district president and the plenary of the Council of Presidents; and be it further

Resolved. That until Jan. 1, 2018, district presidents may train and annually license lay deacons to preach publicly and to administer the Sacraments. Beyond that date in exceptional cases, as defined in (1) and (2) below, the appropriate district president may annually grant licensure with the consent of the plenary of the Council of Presidents and the Colloquy Committee for the Pastoral Ministry:

1. The deacon serves under the direct supervision of an ordained pastor and is currently enrolled in or preparing for one of the LCMS training tracks for the Office of Public Ministry and participates in the public ministry as an aspect of his training (e.g., in preparation for SMP, EIIT, etc.); or

2. The deacon serves in distinctive aspects of the Office of Public Ministry (that is, preaching or administration of the Sacraments) only during times of emergency or extraordinary need (when there is no ordained pastor available or able to serve), only on a temporary or occasional basis, and under the direct supervision of an ordained pastor;

and be it further

Resolved. That those deacons currently licensed and serving in Word and Sacrament Ministry (that is, publicly preaching and administering the Sacraments) shall have until July 1, 2018, to:

1. apply to one of our seminaries for admission into an alternate route program;

2. apply for entrance into an SMP program; or

3. apply to the regional colloquy committee for admission to the SMP roster, unless granted a waiver by his district president, the plenary of the Council of Presidents, and the appropriate regional colloquy committee; (2016 Synod Convention Proceedings, pp. 237–239).

In essence, this resolution applied to all licensed lay deacons who were functioning as de facto pastors, that is, preaching and presiding on a consistent and continuing basis, and for whom there is a congregation desiring to call and ordain them. Such men were given several choices: (1) enter a seminary program (MDiv, alternate route, seminary SMP, EIIT, CHS, etc.); (2) apply for colloquy through a regional colloquy committee working under the Synod Colloquy Committee; or (3) cease ministry by July 1, 2018 (unless he has applied for one of the above programs). In addition, as referenced above, Res. 13-02A allows congregations to apply to the Colloquy Committee and the Council of Presidents for a one-year waiver to continue to be served by a licensed lay deacon after July 1, 2018. Implementation of this resolution required a significant investment of time by both the undersigned and the Colloquy Committee for the Pastoral Ministry. Steps in this process included

1. Preparation of a detailed policy manual by the chairman, together with a committee of district presidents appointed by the Council of Presidents (Presidents Paul Linnemann, Derek Lecakes, and Roger Paavola).

2. One-week seminary intensive courses taught by seminary professors held for licensed lay deacons in four places: Memphis, TN, Portland, OR, Fort Wayne, IN, and Irvine, CA.

3. Receiving the applications and assigning them to regional colloquy interview committees.

4. Interviews with regional colloquy committees made up of the First Vice-President as Chair, the local district president, a seminary representative, a representative of the local district board of directors, and a pastor experienced in supervising licensed lay deacons.

5. Recommendations of the regional committees were ratified by the Synod’s Colloquy Committee for the Pastoral Ministry.

The significant investment of both time and resources entailed by the implementation of Res. 13-02A can be illustrated by the numbers of men brought through both processes since January 1, 2018.
Applications for Colloquy to the “General” Pastor Roster

- Applications from 25 ordained men were accepted for consideration (Categories 1 & 2) for “general” colloquy.
- Applications were received from 16 licensed lay deacons serving in Word and Sacrament ministry for at least 10 years (Category 3) for “general” colloquy.
- 7 Korean pastors applied through a process under the Korean Ministry Pastoral Conference.
- Thus a total of 48 “general” applications were accepted in this period.
- Of these applications accepted in this period, 29 men in total were certified:
  - 11 men ordained in other church bodies were certified (Categories 1 & 2).
  - 12 licensed lay deacons were certified for the “general” pastor roster (Category 3).
  - 6 Korean pastors were certified.
- A number of men were either declined or are still “in process” including:
  - 13 men were declined or withdrew from the process.
  - 20 men were given further assignments to complete.
  - 18 men, as of January 31, 2019, had unfinished assignments (including several who received their assignments in 2017).

Licensed Lay Deacons in the 13-02A Regional Process to Colloquize to the SMP Roster

(over and above the men in the “general” process listed above)

- There are, as of this writing, 178 men for whom 2016 Res. 13-02A somehow applied (they were preaching and presiding on a consistent and continuing basis). Of these men:
  - 94 men have been certified for call and placement on the SMP roster through the regional colloquy process established by Res. 13-02A.
  - 10 men were declined or withdrew from the process.
  - 16 men applied for “general” colloquy (as of this writing, 4 are still in process with assignments not yet complete).
  - 8 men are still at some point in the process (more regional interviews are scheduled as of February 20, 2019).
  - 40 congregations have been granted exceptions by the Council of Presidents to be served temporarily by licensed lay deacons (one year at a time, per Res. 13-02A).

Survey of the members of the COP in February 2019 shows perhaps 10 more men who will need to apply for this process.

The Colloquy Committee is very thankful for the spirit of collaboration and cooperation shown by all the members of the Council of Presidents and other district officers in the application and interview process as we worked with these additional 178 men. This process has also been facilitated by the efficient and diligent work of Mrs. Karen Dowbnia, the executive assistant of the First Vice-President. Thanks be to God!

As we look to the future, there will be more men coming from a wide variety of backgrounds, both within our country and from around the world. Colloquy has always been a part of our life together as a Synod and will always be a necessary and valued route to the pastoral office in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. Many men who apply for colloquy do come from other Lutheran churches here and abroad. Others were ordained in churches of other confessions but have been attracted to the truth of the confession our Synod holds. All are thoroughly examined and, where necessary, given more work to do to prepare for service in our Synod (often including further interviews and examination), so that when the Colloquy Committee for the Pastoral Ministry certifies them for call and placement, to the best of our knowledge, they are fully ready to serve in our midst as faithful Lutheran pastors. We thank God for these gifts to His church, many of whom have come to us at great personal cost. Even though they may have been trained in another church body, they come because they are convinced by the Scriptures of the truth of our confession and are willing to commit themselves to that confession in order to carry out ministry in our midst as faithful Lutheran pastors.

Finally, we thank God for the significant opportunity to serve the Synod in the implementation of Res. 13-02A. He provides everything necessary to do His will. To God be the glory!

Herbert C. Mueller Jr., First Vice-President, Chairman

R2.2

Colloquy Committee for Commissioned Ministry

The 2016 Handbook of the Synod provides for the following representatives on the Colloquy Committee for Commissioned Ministry:

1. The First Vice-President of the Synod as chairman (the undersigned).
2. A representative of the Concordia University System (Dr. Paul Philp).
3. Two college/university presidents appointed by the President of the Synod (Rev. Dr. Brian Friedrich and Rev. Dr. Patrick Ferry).
4. Two Concordia University System (CUS) faculty involved in colloquy appointed by the president of the Concordia University System (Dr. Kevin Borchers; Dr. Rebecca Peters began the triennium on the committee but retired from her teaching position. She was not replaced on the committee.)
5. One representative from CUEnet (Dr. Heather Stueve).

The Colloquy Committee for Commissioned Ministry met several times by telephone, Zoom, or email. A face-to-face meeting was not deemed necessary during this triennium. The normal day-to-day work of colloquy for commissioned ministry takes place at the districts. The individual institutions of theCUS, and CUEnet, though every application for commissioned ministry colloquy must pass through the office of the First Vice-President for his signature.

When the committee meets, it is generally to consider requests for exceptions to the general requirements to apply for colloquy. The committee also spent considerable time reviewing the version of the policy manual prepared in the previous triennium and making several small but necessary editorial changes. The full policy manual may be accessed on the Synod website at http://www.lcms.org/colloquy-ministers-of-religion-commissioned.

The Concordia University System (CUS) provides for the preparation of candidates for certification for call and placement as Ministers of Religion—Commissioned. CUEnet is the organization within the CUS national office authorized to deliver instruction for colloquy. All approvals come from the academic institution. The committee oversees the colloquy process, but most of the actual work is handled by CUEnet and the CUS. The committee itself deals with policies as well as exceptions and difficult cases.

How many people are involved in colloquy to the commissioned minister roster through CUEnet? As of early 2019, approximately 300 people were enrolled in CUEnet colloquy courses. In any given month, we average between 60–70 students taking a class. Between 90–120 teachers are interviewed each year (not all teachers who take the course work choose to undergo the colloquy interview). Over 2,100 men and women have completed colloquy courses through CUEnet since its inception in 2001. Currently, there are approximately 11,000 rostered teachers in our schools—early childhood, elementary, and secondary schools (about 50 percent are LCMS members). There is therefore a great need for the efforts of CUEnet.

We are thankful for CUEnet and for the people who oversee the program and teach the courses, particularly its director, Dr. Heather Stueve, but most of all we are thankful for the people who have been presented to the Church as commissioned ministers, gifts of Christ, by this process. It is a pleasure to serve the Synod by chairing this committee and working with these people. To God be the glory!

Herbert C. Mueller Jr., First Vice-President, Chairman

R3

Praesidium

The vice-presidents of the Synod are elected to advise the President of the Synod, to serve as voting members of the Council of Presidents, and to form, under the President, the Praesidium of the Synod. The First Vice-President is nominated by the congregations of the Synod and elected by the Synod in convention to serve full-time as an assistant to the President. Vice-presidents two through six are nominated within the regions of the Synod, but are elected by the whole Synod in convention to serve part-time. At the present time, the Praesidium includes the following men:

- President Matthew C. Harrison, St. Louis, MO.
- First Vice-President Herbert C. Mueller Jr., Waterloo, IL.
- Second Vice-President Dr. Scott R. Murray, Houston, TX, representing the West-Southwest Region.
- Third Vice-President Nabil S. Nour, Sioux Falls, SD, representing the Great Plains Region.
- Fourth Vice-President Dr. John C. Wohlrabe Jr., Milwaukee, WI, representing the Great Lakes Region.
- Fifth Vice-President Daniel Preus, St. Louis, MO, representing the Central Region.
- Sixth Vice-President Christopher S. Esget, Alexandria, VA, representing the East-Southeast Region.

Upon his request or as provided by the Synod, the vice-presidents assist the President in carrying out his responsibilities and represent him as needed. The Praesidium as such met regularly (generally in conjunction with a meeting of the Council of Presidents) for prayer, Bible study, discussion of Synod matters, and to give counsel on a variety of issues as requested by the President of the Synod, district presidents, and others. The undersigned serves as secretary of the Praesidium.

During the triennium, the vice-presidents helped with the visitation of the Concordia University System, advised the President and First Vice-President on the Koinonia Project, assisted in making sure a representative of the Synod was present for all of the 35 district conventions, and provided consultation to the President regarding nominations for the Commission on Constitutional Matters.

A major effort involving the members of the Praesidium is the ongoing visitation process mandated by 2013 Res. 7-01A. We are engaged in the second round of visiting district presidents, district boards of directors, and circuit visitors. The President or First Vice-President, together with the regional vice-president (where possible), have conversation with the district president and district vice-presidents about spiritual conditions in the district. We make presentations and have discussion with the district boards of directors and/or circuit visitors of the district. Our purpose in visiting is to hear the leaders of the districts describe the blessings, opportunities, and challenges God has given to each district. We also brought information from the national office and discussed matters of mutual concern (one focus this triennium has been on communion practices). Though they involve a significant investment of time and resources, the visits have been universally well received and beneficial for all concerned.

The Praesidium is responsible for a series of Bible studies prepared for circuit pastoral conferences. The theme for 2018–2019 is “Refreshing the Gifts of the Spirit for the Pastoral Ministry,” encompassing a study of the pastoral epistles. In the previous year, the focus was on the recent edition of Walther’s Pastoral Theology. These studies, funded by payments made each year by the districts, are available for free download at http://www.lcms.org/resources/worship/biblestudies/winkel. Pastor Mark Love of Trinity Lutheran Church in Toledo, Ohio, is the general editor.
It is both a pleasure and a privilege to serve the people of the Synod with the members of the Synod Praesidium. God be praised!

Herbert C. Mueller Jr., First Vice-President

R4

Pastoral Formation Committee

(See also R1.2: Chief Mission Officer, “Office of Pastoral Education”)

The Pastoral Formation Committee (PFC) was established at the preceding LCMS Convention by 2016 Res. 6-01. The PFC exists to ensure that the Synod’s objective of training pastors is fulfilled consistently and to foster excellence in coordination and collaboration between the Synod and our two seminaries, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis (CSL) and Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne (CTSFW), with respect to LCMS pastoral formation for all non-colloquy routes leading to ordination. The PFC’s charter includes intentional consideration of and facilitation of discussion over the long-term strategic direction of pastoral formation within the Synod. 2016 Res. 6-01 also provided for amendment of the LCMS Bylaws, specifically the inclusion of a new Bylaw 3.10.4—Pastoral Formation Committee.

The PFC is comprised of the LCMS Chief Mission Officer (chairman) and the presidents of the seminaries as voting members, and the executive director of the LCMS Office of Pastoral Education (PED) as a non-voting advisory member. The PFC meets at least once per year and reports on its work at the annual joint meeting of the two seminary boards of regents.

The following was discussed and/or accomplished by the PFC in the 2016–19 triennium:

- During the past triennium, the seminaries, in consultation with the PFC, brought forward no new routes leading to ordination in the Synod. Thus the PFC is not recommending any new routes to ordination to the 2019 Convention for approval by Convention resolution.
- In January 2017, the PFC welcomed the newly onboarded PED executive director, the Rev. Dr. James Baneck.
- Members of the PFC continued fruitful discussion of the relationship between Synod and the seminaries, considering the seminaries as agencies of Synod (Bylaw 1.2.1), the fostering of coordination and collaboration by the PFC (Bylaw 3.10.4), and the governance of the seminaries by their respective board of regents (3.10.5).
- At the behest of the PFC, the PED executive director planned and facilitated a “Pastoral Formation Summit,” which in turn served as the impetus for a proposed, major synodwide church worker student recruitment initiative. This Summit was convened in September 2018 at the LCMS International Center in St. Louis. Participants included Synod President Rev. Dr. Matthew C. Harrison, Rev. Kevin Robson (LCMS Chief Mission Officer), Rev. Dr. Lawrence Rast (CTSFW president), Rev. Dr. Dale Meyer (CSL president), Rev. Dr. Dean Wenthe (Concordia University System president), Rev. Dr. Patrick Ferry (Concordia University Wisconsin president), Rev. Dr. Daniel Vieker (Assist. to President Harrison), and Rev. Dr. Jon Vieker (Assistant to President Harrison). The objectives of this Summit were to: (1) identify and discuss current issues surrounding pastoral formation in the LCMS; (2) seek ways for greater collaboration and cooperation with the Synod in refining our comprehensive, unified, and robust pastoral formation process; and (3) develop an action plan that addresses issues discussed in the summit, including the potential action items relevant to the 2019 LCMS Convention. All of these objectives were met during the course of the Summit.
- The PFC was also fully represented at the annual Joint Board of Regents Meetings on both seminary campuses to discuss seminary cooperation, accreditation, enrollment, tuition, and more.

Kevin D. Robson, Chief Mission Officer and Chairman, Pastoral Formation Committee

R4.1

Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri

Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, is profoundly thankful to the Lord of the church and to you, the people of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, for the countless ways you join us in the mission of our Lord Jesus Christ. As the 21st century brings new challenges, the Lord of the church is raising up a new generation of pastors, deaconesses, and church workers for the unprecedented mission opportunities before us. Because it’s the Lord Jesus who leads His church into the future, Concordia Seminary is sending forth graduates with “confidence and cheerful courage,” as our first president, Dr. C. F. W. Walther, put it so positively. It is indeed a great time to be the Church!

This report shares with you high points of the last triennium. It is arranged according to the four priorities of Concordia Seminary’s Strategic Plan 2018–2020.

Recruit qualified ministry candidates and leaders in sufficient quality to meet the demands of the church in today’s world. Since its founding in 1839, Concordia Seminary has provided more than 12,500 workers for the church. Of last year’s total 570 students, 351 are in the seminary’s pastoral formation programs (Master of Divinity, Residential Alternate Route, Specific Ministry Program [SMP], SMP to General Pastor Certification, Center for Hispanic Studies, and Ethnic Immigrant Institute of Theology). Twelve students are in our Deaconess Studies Program. This enrollment is not sufficient for the needs of the Synod. Recruitment of future church workers is a privilege the Lord of the church has given to us all. Concordia Seminary is striving to create a culture of recruitment throughout the seminary and Synod. We are committed to investing needed resources to ac-
complish this, and we invite you and your congregation to join us. Together we can recruit the pastors to lead our congregations and share the Gospel among those who are lost or have never heard the saving name of Christ, proclaiming His great deeds long after you and I have been taken to heaven. Please encourage potential students to explore enrollment and share names with our admissions team at admissions@csl.edu.

Prepare pastors, missionaries, deaconesses, scholars, and leaders to faithfully serve the church of the 21st century so that its congregations and institutions can boldly bring the Gospel to people. As Dr. Walter A. Maier preached, “A Changeless Christ for a Changing World,” Concordia Seminary forms pastors and deaconesses who will bring the unchanging theology of God’s Word and our confessions to the changed context and challenges of the 21st century. In the last triennium, the faculty instituted a thoroughly revised residential curriculum, the first thorough revision since 1958. This revision was undertaken in response to issues that emerged from the needs of our congregations. The new curriculum continues to form the theological knowledge and skills of future pastors but also attends to their personal well-being (spiritual, emotional, and physical) and teaches them how to become churchmen who support and work positively with one another. Another result of the curriculum revision is shifting the seminary’s academic year from the quarter system to semesters, enabling greater coordination with neighboring universities and the Concordia University System. And it takes into account a pronounced trend in recent decades: assessment. Seminaries must be able to demonstrate to accrediting agencies (for our seminaries, The Association of Theological Schools and The Higher Learning Commission) that we are actually doing what we purport to do. In their own right and because they necessarily reflect regulations of the federal government, accrediting standards we must meet are rigorous, but they are welcome because they help ensure that our seminary has a good reputation with others even as we form pastors and church workers for our Synod’s need in these changed times.

Provide continuing education resources that foster pastors’ lifelong maturation of faith, discipleship, and skill for life and church in the world. This is a burgeoning area of our seminary’s service to church and world. Through advanced degree programs, seminars, lectures, print, and online resources, we make Lutheran theological depth and richness available not only to partner churches around the world but also to Christians of any denomination who desire to learn our biblical and confessional theology. Of 570 total students this last academic year, 191 were enrolled in programs beyond the Master of Divinity. During the last triennium, Concordia Seminary awarded 99 advanced degrees (PhD, STM, MA, DMin, in addition to 148 MDiv degrees). In addition to graduate programs, Concordia Seminary is prolific in its variety of offerings to pastors and laity for continuing education. Concordia Journal, Advent and Lenten sermon series, Lutheran Identity fascicles, lectionary resources, theological and multi-ethnic symposia are increasingly used by pastors for their continuing education and service in ministry. Our online offerings continue to grow (scholar.csl.edu, www.csl.edu/educate, www.concordiatheology.org, www.csl.edu/store, and www.csl.edu/resources/publications). Professors travel throughout our country and world, offering workshops, addressing pastoral conferences, presenting papers at academic guilds, and preaching. Professors continue to be published, not only by Concordia Seminary Academic Press and Concordia Publishing House but by publishers literally around the world. During the last triennium, our professors published 35 books and contributed to over 20 published collections of essays, journals, videos, and the like.

Concordia Seminary will grow its financial resources to sustain its mission of providing theological education for the formation of pastors, missionaries, deaconesses, scholars, and leaders for the LCMS. Unlike most colleges and universities, Concordia Seminary’s needed revenue comes from donations, not from tuition. Sixty-five percent of our needed annual revenue comes from your direct gifts and about 25 percent from deferred gifts received through endowment, meaning 90 percent of our annual revenue comes from the generosity of the people of the church. In 2017, we concluded a five-year fund raising effort, Generations: The Campaign for Concordia Seminary, which raised $204 million for endowments, the complete renovation of the Kristine Kay Hasse Memorial Library, and annual support and scholarship. The goal for our current Generations 20/20 is $66 million by 2020, again for endowment, annual support, and scholarship. By God’s grace and through the generosity of friends and supporters, we hope to have raised $270 million through this comprehensive campaign from 2012 through 2020. Right now, because of the awesome generosity and support of seminary donors, Concordia Seminary is debt free and is able to guarantee financial aid equal to the cost of tuition for all Master of Divinity, Residential Alternate Route, and Deaconess Studies students. We thank you! But as we celebrate and give thanks to our donors for their generous support, it’s important to remember that removing our students’ out-of-pocket tuition expenses can only continue and get even better with the ongoing support of our partners and donors. We must be in partnership in this!

It would be impossible for Concordia Seminary to fulfill its mission without significant collaboration with our LCMS partners in ministry. The seminary strives to model churchmanship as we work with partners and constituencies and seek efficiencies in fulfilling the mission and goals of the seminary. Our collaborations with LCMS entities are too numerous to list, but some must be highlighted. In this past triennium, the Lutheran Women’s Missionary League has moved its national offices to the seminary’s campus, raising student awareness of the valuable service and mission of this auxiliary. Concordia Plan Services has deployed a counselor to both seminary campuses to give financial counseling to students. As a result, student debt has markedly declined. Our professors collaborate with the LCMS Office of International Mission and are contributing theologians on the Commission on Theology and Church Relations. Faculty members, 34 in number this last academic year, are regularly invited to participate in Pastoral Ministry Post-Seminary Applied Learning and Support (PALS) mentoring gatherings. Our faculty, administration, and Board of Regents are in regular conversation with our counterparts at Concordia Theological Seminary. And, again in gratitude, it is collaboration with all our partners and constituencies that has allowed Concordia Seminary to provide 100 percent financial aid for residential students.

It is a joyous time to be the church of our Lord Jesus! “We will tell to the coming generation the glorious deeds of the Lord, and his might, and the wonders that he has done” (Psalm 78:4).

Dale A. Meyer, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis President
Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Indiana

Concordia Theological Seminary exists to form servants in Jesus Christ who teach the faithful, reach the lost, and care for all. We rejoice and give thanks to our Lord and Savior, who continues to bless CTSFW richly through the faithful support of alumni, friends, and donors who have enabled the seminary to carry out this mission for the sake of the church and the world. Among the many blessings your seminary has experienced over the past three years:

- Strong leadership with Dr. Lawrence R. Rast Jr. serving in his second term as president of CTSFW.
- A key component to that leadership is a laser focus and commitment to implement the seminary's strategic plan. This triennium has focused on fully aligning the seminary's budget to the plan and engaging the full seminary community in its implementation. This has freed CTSFW to embrace new opportunities and challenges and build on what it means to be distinctively Lutheran, community-oriented, and committed to excellence.
- 100 percent tuition guarantee for all pastoral and diaconal residential students. This would have been impossible without our Lord's gracious provision and the incredible, outpouring of support received from His people.
- Doubling of the seminary’s endowment. The student aid endowment at CTSFW has more than doubled since President Rast first took office. “We as a seminary and as a church must continue to do all we can to reduce the burden on our students so they can enter the ministry to which God has called them unencumbered by overwhelming material concerns. Your partnership in this is essential, and we thank you for it, as well as for all your ongoing support of our future pastors and deaconesses.” (President Lawrence R. Rast Jr.)
- Financial health and transparent stewardship of resources. CTSFW is committed to transparency, equality, and consistency in all business practices. This has led the independent auditor to remark: “The Seminary’s overall financial health is strong and thriving as reflected by their Composite Financial Index score and when compared to other Christian higher education institutions. The Seminary has stable operating results and a healthy balance sheet and is currently positioned to deploy its resources to achieve its mission and be financially sustainable over the long-term.” (Adam Smith, BKD, 2018)
- Faithful, caring, mission-minded students from all areas of the United States and around the world. Our students exhibit a mission zeal to bring Jesus to a hurting world in need of His saving Word. The seminary is deeply grateful for God’s abundant blessings of stable enrollment and generous support through his people. The seminary will, under God’s grace, continue to faithfully fulfill its mission.
- Strong recruiting of students has led to stable residential enrollment during a period when many seminaries are experiencing sharp declines. CTSFW looks forward to partnering with the Synod and CUS to identify and encourage future church workers.
- Continued emphasis on residential pastoral formation through rigorous Master of Divinity and Alternate Route programs. The curriculum is regularly updated to ensure our students are adequately prepared to serve in the unique ministry contexts in which they are placed.
- Development of a PhD in Theological Studies degree in addition to the strong PhD in Missiology program that draws students from around the globe.
- Continued growth in the number of deaconesses formed for service through both residential and distance tracks (the distance track is a combination of online courses and campus intensive courses).
- A reworking of the contextual learning experience in an effort to provide consistent opportunities for pastoral ministry formation in the fieldwork and vicarage contexts. A wide variety of summer vicarage experiences are available in addition to targeted module learning experiences.
- Continued growth in the Doctor of Ministry program that combines academic and pastoral excellence, distance and residential learning components, yet is very affordable.
- Partnership with Seminario Luterano El Reformador in the Dominican Republic and the Office of International Mission to provide pastoral and diaconal formation in Spanish for the countries of Latin America.
- The establishment of the Wakefield-Kroemer Director’s Chair in Library and Information Services and the appointment of Prof. Robert Roethemeyer as the first holder of this chair.
- Development of a 25-year deferred maintenance schedule. The students and the seminary community are already benefiting from updates to the two lecture halls, the classrooms, heating and cooling systems, lighting, and railings.
- Completion of furnishing and room dedications of the Wayne and Barbara Kroemer Library.
- Expanded financial education and counseling for students has resulted in a decrease in the amount of educational loans taken out by CTSFW students.
- An outstanding faculty with rich pastoral ministry experience as well as the highest academic credentials from such outstanding universities as Harvard, Yale, Michigan, Vanderbilt, Notre Dame, Wisconsin, Durham, Marquette, and Basel.
- Significant leadership from CTSFW on the LCMS Commission on Theology and Church Relations (the
The continued publication of *Concordia Theological Quarterly*, praised internationally as a very significant journal for fostering confessional Lutheranism.

Accreditation for all of its academic programs through the Association of Theological Schools (ATS) and the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools. This year, CTSFW is engaged again in a significant self-study in preparation for its next accreditation visit in 2020.

CTSFW has served the Synod faithfully by making the blessings of the church available to a world in need of Christ’s salvation. We rejoice that our Lord has redeemed us with His precious blood. We pray for our Synod, our seminary, and for those who do not yet know Jesus. Finally, we give thanks—for you!—and for the myriad ways we have been “blest through endless ages” (*LSB* 433).

We invite you to get to know CTSFW. Visit our website at www.ctsfw.edu or our campus where you will find a vibrant, Christ-centered theological community that engages and resources the church and world, domestically and internationally, with distinctively Lutheran teaching, practice, and worship. Join with CTSFW bringing the saving Gospel into all the world by forming servants in Jesus Christ who will teach the faithful, reach the lost, and care for all.

Lawrence R. Rast Jr., *President*

### Secretary

**Duties and Responsibilities**

The Office of the Secretary is a constitutional office of the Synod and, with the Department of Rosters, Statistics, and Research Services (reporting to the Secretary) and the Department of Archives and History (on whose board the Secretary serves *ex officio*), a significant portion of its “organ of recording and recollection.” This organ, along with the grace of God and the labor of many, is necessary to the continued success of what was and remains a bold endeavor of a common faith, a synodical union that is confessional and constitutional. First, every member “accepts without reservation” the Scriptures as “the only rule and norm of faith and of practice” and the Lutheran Confessions as an “unadulterated statement and exposition of the Word of God” (*Constitution*, Art. II 1–2). Second, the Constitution of the Synod establishes the congregations’ means of governance for shared institutions and the basic means by which the congregations’ fundamental needs are to be met—for themselves and their pastors and teachers to be held honestly to the standards of their confession in all aspects of faith and practice, for the raising up of pastors and teachers, etc., and for the use of “the diversities of gifts … for the common profit” (Preamble). The many and varied activities of the Office of the Secretary have as their common aim the upholding of every aspect of the congregations’ confessional and constitutional commitments and objectives and the maintenance of orderly governance in service of the same, and we implore Christ’s continued help in what is an enormous and complicated task.

The Secretary of the Synod serves *ex officio* on the Board of Directors and the Concordia Historical Institute Board of Governors and with the CCM and Commission on Handbook, assists the Council of Presidents, and is involved in many task forces and other efforts; as these are reported on elsewhere and by others, these activities are not reported here.

### Rosters, Statistics, and Research Services

The Department of Rosters, Statistics, and Research Services, assigned to the Office of the Secretary in the 2013–2016 triennium, provides the core “organ of recollection and administration” for roster, leadership, contact, and statistical information related to congregations, individual members, schools, districts, and other agencies and affiliated entities of the Synod. Some of this information is published in *The Lutheran Annual* or to the Synod webpage; some is utilized by districts and others in the Synod for administrative and research purposes.

The triennium now concluding has been a period of significant transition for the department, both in terms of personnel and in terms of technology and scope of work. Senior Director Gene Weeke retired in October 2018, passing the baton to Scott Kostencki. Technologically, the department

- brought online for the Council of Presidents a new “Commissioned Minister Information Form” (CMIF) system designed to provide information on the education, capabilities, interests, and service records of commissioned ministers and to enhance the access of districts, congregations, schools, and other calling entities to this information as they carry out critical call and ecclesiastical supervision tasks.
- transitioned, with significant work by LCMS Information Technology, from the Oracle-based and design-limited LCMS Rosters and Statistics System (LRSS) to a new SQL-based LCMS Information Support Network (LISN), deployed in 2018, a new core system designed with best-in-class interfaces to improve operational efficiencies and to accommodate incorporation of primarily online services to congregations, individual members, districts, and other stakeholders.
- developed the concept of a “single-login model,” built up around LISN, to enable those who interact with Synod data and official processes to do so in a more consistent, confident, and convenient manner.
- implemented “Church Worker Update” and the annual congregational statistics gathering process in the new “single-login model,” with “sanity-checked” direct updating to LISN, reducing departmental labor, improving district communication, and improving the ease of entry and assurance of data entered.
- strove, with great assistance from district offices, for unanimous participation in congregational statistics gathering (*Bylaw* 1.3.4.3), which was achieved in two districts for the 2019 edition of *The Lutheran Annual*, and developed new processes to support the congre-
gations and districts more effectively in building on that success.

- supported the Office of the Secretary in developing and improving critical nominations and elections processes and data processing systems for the 2019 LCMS convention, including a new nomination information tracking database in support of the Committee for Convention Nominations and the process and associated system for registration of presidential election voters.

- has very recently been asked by the Council of Presidents to initiate the project, in coordination with many other contributors, of developing, on the basis of LISN and on the model of CMIF, a “unified, online-interactive roster and notice management system.” This will be a major project to consolidate activities presently requiring several distinct systems, volumes of paperwork, and no insubstantial amount of labor, into a coherent system that will support and guide the basic processes surrounding call, roster, and ecclesiastical supervision of members. The department is excited by the prospect of significantly improving its level of service to the districts and membership of the Synod, and looks forward to delivering, with the input of many experienced partners, a system that is not only more efficient but also more effective—a system that does not simply improve data storage and retrieval, but advances the way we carry out administrative tasks together as a Synod and facilitates a better and fuller and more connected “life together.”

Research Services provides a full range of research and analysis services for the Synod and its agencies. Key reports delivered in the past triennium include studies of youth and retention, worker wellness, and changing Synod demographics. Close integration of Research Services with Rosters and Statistics and the Office of the Secretary, as well as close interaction with ministry units at the International Center and with the Council of Presidents, have proven fruitful in exploration of new approaches and fields of study with real potential to impact the present and future ministry of the Synod and its constituents; the same connections will be increasingly so as core technologies and access to analyzable data continue to be enhanced.

Nominations and Elections

The Office of the Secretary supports the nomination and election processes of the Synod convention (Bylaw 3.12), performing the preliminary and final work for the Committee on Convention Nominations (CCN) as well as the administration of the processes for nomination of the President and his election and for the nomination of the vice-presidents of the Synod—these latter nomination processes being ballot-based and numerical. The 2016 convention transferred regional board positions from ballot-based, numerical processes to the CCN, a decision that seems to have proven wise, although the addition of these offices to the committee’s responsibilities did not result in an increase in the number of nominations submitted. A total of 347 individuals were nominated (291 new and 56 incumbent) for at least one of the 70 offices to be filled by the convention; 265 of the individuals nominated agreed to nomination for at least one position, and 147 of them, having been selected by the committee in its January meeting, will appear on ballots.

Statistics on participation in nomination and election processes for the President and vice-presidents of the Synod are not available at the time of writing. The accustomed, relatively low level of participation in these processes—both the relative dearth of nominations received by the CCN for some positions and a relatively low level of participation in numerical, ballot-based nomination processes, is of concern for the Synod. By widespread inaction, the Synod is not made aware of talent that might be offered in service to the greater good. Even more concerning is that decreasing participation in numerical, ballot-based processes can render them susceptible to disproportionate influence by relatively small but highly organized political efforts.

The stream of postcards, emails, and other communications issuing from the Office of the Secretary is intended to ensure that no congregation or individual, as appropriate, that desires to participate is left out. I would plead, though, in addition, with all congregations and members of the Synod, that—mindful of the bold endeavor of common faith and the investment of gifts made and to be made for the common welfare and mission of the church—they would, through these mechanisms and through submission of overtures and sending of delegates, zealously guard and eagerly advance Synod’s life together. The most natural safeguard of the integrity of these processes, more fundamental than all the significant effort my office exerts in the interest of their integrity, is full participation.

These nomination and election processes result in intense labor for the Office of the Secretary and for others, and the office intends to continue technological developments to improve efficiency and the ease of congregations and individuals participating in the processes in proper and timely manners.

Facilitation of Appointment Processes, Vacancy and Regular

The office facilitates appointment processes for positions elected by the convention that become vacant mid-term and for positions appointed by the Board of Directors and Council of Presidents. Annual appointments include Concordia Plan Services, the Lutheran Church Extension Fund Board of Members, and the National Housing Support Corporation; triennial appointments, the Concordia University System Council of Members, LCMS Foundation, and CCM and Commission on Handbook. This triennium has seen additional vacancy appointments to the National Housing Support Corporation, Concordia Historical Institute, Concordia University Nebraska, Concordia University—Portland, and Concordia Seminary (twice). District boards of directors and others often have the opportunity to participate in the nomination processes, and their input is generally low in volume but greatly appreciated.

Dispute Resolution and Expulsion Processes

The Office of the Secretary administers the Synod’s processes of dispute resolution and expulsion, provides associated training, and has a key practical role, with the CCM and Council of Presidents, in maintaining the processes’ Standard Operating Procedure Manuals. The triennium now drawing to a close saw the conclusion of hearing panel proceedings as follows: one
contested excommunication under Bylaw 1.10 and expulsion proceedings for one ordained minister under Bylaw 2.14, two ordained ministers under Bylaw 2.17, and two congregations under Bylaw 2.14. Other disputes and expulsion proceedings proceeded nearly to the point of convening a panel but were resolved by agreement or resignation. Appeals from panel decisions were requested in the contested excommunication and in the three expulsion proceedings, but no review hearings were granted by an appeal panel.

Conclusion

It has been a challenge and a joy in the Lord to serve the congregations of the Synod as their Secretary. I am deeply appreciative of the orderly and respected state in which the office was left by Dr. Hartwig, and for the invaluable assistance of Mrs. Pam Weeke, who has faithfully and tirelessly assisted me as she assisted him.

John W. Sias, Secretary

R6

Board of Directors

The Constitution of the Synod conveys the responsibility and authority that the Synod gives to the Board of Directors:

The Board of Directors is the legal representative of the Synod. It is the custodian of all of the property of the Synod, directly or by its delegation of such authority to an agency of the Synod. It shall exercise supervision over all the property and business affairs of the Synod except in those areas where it has delegated such authority to an agency of the Synod or where the voting members of the Synod through the adoption of bylaws or by other convention action have assigned specific areas of responsibility to separate corporate or trust entities, and as to those the Board of Directors shall have general oversight responsibility as set forth in the Bylaws. (Art. XI E 2)

Legal, property, and business matters are included in its responsibility and have been given attention throughout the past triennium.

Board Actions

The board continued to make strides in efficiency and effectiveness over the past three years. Improvements in the construction of meeting agendas, committee meetings prior to board meetings, and the use of electronic media for board dockets, and information gathering and sharing have had a dramatic impact on the ease of conducting the Board’s business. Additionally, since in the past triennium, the board engaged in a self-evaluation process to re-examine its collective and individual performance and identify plans for improvement; the board continued forward in that process.

Synod’s operating environment has changed over the past years. Long-term donor trend is flat, and operating costs, mainly employment-related expenses and other overheads, have increased due to inflationary pressures. These factors have shown us that our work toward increased efficiency is necessary. The BOD has teamed with Concordia Plans Services, the LCMS Foundation, and LCEF to explore opportunities to become more efficient and create win-win opportunities for all.

During the past triennium, we have collaborated in six areas, identified as opportunities: Information Technology; Facility Management; Accounting; Human Resources; Risk Management; and Purchasing. Most of these areas have either been completed or are in process. Any remaining will be completed by the end of 2019.

All of these processes have resulted in improved performance, increased efficiencies, and closer collaboration with Synod entities. Sharing services between entities and utilizing third-party contractors have resulted in substantial savings to Synod and the entities involved.

The Board of Directors is dedicated to continuing this self-examination to increase efficiency, increase collaboration with our Synod entities, and effect savings in the cost to operate.

Other actions by the board were to appoint a new member to fill a vacancy caused by the resignation of one of the members. The Rev. Josemon Hoem, Murphysboro, IL, was appointed to fill the vacancy. Also, Mr. Frank Simek was hired as the new Chief Administrative Officer.

Overtures Submitted by the Board of Directors

The board has submitted three overtures to the 2019 convention. The first is to Amend Bylaw 3.1.8 To No Longer Require Publication of Delegate Mailing Addresses. The second is to Amend Bylaws to Change the Board of Directors’ Means of Representation on Synodwide Corporate Entity Boards of Directors, and third is to Add Bylaw 3.3.4.10 to Clarify Access by the Board of Directors to Information of Synod Agencies.

Financial Condition of the Synod

The Chief Financial Officer has reported that during the triennium, support from congregations, passed to Synod, through the 35 Districts has continued a more-than-25-year decline. This type of financial support for Synod is used where needed most. Its continued decline reduces Synod’s financial flexibility to respond quickly to events and activities that could not be reasonably foreseen, as it increases Synod’s reliance on restricted revenue streams, which may or may not match the needs of the ministries carried on by Synod. The Chief Financial Officer also reported that LCMS Synod, Inc. finished the 2015–16 fiscal year with a decrease in unrestricted, undesignated net assets of about $3.4 million dollars. The Chief Financial Officer reported that at the end of the 2016–17 fiscal year, the total assets of the Synod had decreased by approximately $20.6 million, accompanied by a decrease in liabilities of $17.6 million. Total revenues were $72.1 million and expenses totaled $74.4 million, resulting in a year-end deficit of $2.3 million. The FY 2018–2019 budget was reduced to under $70 million. Financial benefits, from the assessments and reorganization mentioned above, in several departments will be realized going forward. This, coupled with continuing deficit reduction efforts, is beginning to show positive impact for the months and years to come. More detailed information is provided in the report of the Chief Financial Officer of the Synod, below.

The board approved the distribution of the $607,000 surplus funds from those budgeted for the 2016 LCMS conven-
tion. Of that surplus total, the board designated $250,000 to be retained as a contingency account to meet unanticipated costs arising in connection with future conventions, $153,000 for distribution back to LCMS districts, and the remainder toward funding the cost of convention-mandated task forces, study groups, and convention-mandated activities.

National Office Compensation

The Board of Directors is responsible for determining the compensation of the employees of corporate Synod. In 2006, the board adopted a compensation philosophy that states: “At the International Center of the LCMS, our compensation philosophy is simple: In striving to be good stewards of the dollars entrusted to us, we shall pay fair salaries in a fashion which rewards performance in order to be able to attract, motivate, and retain employees.” Since that time, all positions are reviewed on an annual basis. Compensation may change from one year to the next based on position classification and performance. Corporate entities at the International Center (LCMS, LCMS Foundation, Lutheran Church Extension Fund, and Concordia Plan Services) use the same salary scale. The board approves the individual salaries of Synod officers as well as a salary pool for the corporate Synod staff each year, as appropriate.

Minutes of the Board of Directors

The minutes of the meetings of the Board of Directors are available on the Synod’s website. The board does hold open meetings, although parts of each meeting are conducted in executive session. Some items of business (e.g., legal, personnel) are, for obvious reasons, conducted with only the members of the board involved. Thus, the minutes of these executive sessions are confidential.

The members of the Board of Directors express their sincere thanks to the Synod for the special privilege afforded them to serve the Lord and The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

Michael Kumm, Chairman

R6.1 1

Report of the Chief Administrative Officer

The preponderance of the business, legal, and administrative responsibilities of the Board of Directors are carried out by the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO). During this past triennium, the Board of Directors appointed a new CAO whose 3-year appointment commenced in October 2017. In addition to the day-to-day business and management of other administrative responsibilities, the Board of Directors identified two main areas of strategic importance for the CAO: (1) develop strong working relationships with the International Center entity presidents, and (2) identify and implement efficiency opportunities.

1. Develop strong working relationships. The LCMS is a strong organization, but it is even stronger when the working relationships with other entities are leveraged. Over the past 18 months, there has been a concerted effort to build trusted relationships with those entities that share common work space and services with the LCMS, namely Concordia Plans Services (CPS), Lutheran Church Extension Fund (LCEF), and the Foundation. The leaders of these entities meet on a regular basis to discuss human resource topics, building maintenance items, and other issues that are affecting their respective entities. These discussions are very open, honest, and confidential. One result of these meetings is the obligation for the entities to collaborate in areas that overlap with the objective to become more efficient.

2. Identify and implement efficiency opportunities. The purpose of conducting independent evaluations is to find opportunities to become more efficient, which include reducing costs, providing existing services on a timelier basis, or providing new services or information. All of this is done with the objective of providing the necessary tools for doing a better job of managing the business affairs of the LCMS. Evaluations have successfully been completed in the areas of Information Technology (IT), building operations, and the mail/copy center.

- The IT evaluation resulted in a truly collaborative effort with Concordia Plan Services (CPS). Independent third-party consultants were engaged to review the processes, procedures, strengths, and weaknesses of both the LCMS and CPS IT departments. The result was to form a small shared service team who is responsible for managing the IT infrastructure, help desk, and project management that are common to the LCMS and CPS. This shared service team reports to the CAO and a CPS executive. In addition, each entity retains the sole responsibility for managing the software applications that are unique to their respective operations. These changes provide significant cost savings to both the LCMS and CPS.
- Building operations includes not only the day-to-day maintenance of the International Center but also the planning and implementation of capital improvements to the property. The review of the building operations was a combined effort of the Facilities Management Committee, who evaluated three candidates to understand the costs and benefits of outsourcing this responsibility. It was a unanimous decision to award this work to Cushman and Wakefield.
- The operational expertise of Cushman-Wakefield was leveraged to review the mail and copy center. The result of this independent review was that these activities were being managed efficiently, so there was not need for any changes.
- In addition to these areas, accounting and human resources are undergoing evaluations.

Other Significant Areas

Establishment of Foreign Entities. In order to execute our global mission strategy, it is important to have the right legal presence in foreign countries. This is accomplished by registering the LCMS in foreign countries or creating separate legal entities in foreign countries to carry out our ministries. The CAO coordinates this work with the Office of International Mission, LCMS general counsel, and local (in-country) legal counsel, as necessary. This strategy focuses on supporting the work of our international missionaries while protecting the interests of the LCMS.

Operations Team. Bylaw 3.5.2 establishes an Operations Team which “shall assist the President and the Board of Direc-
tors of the Synod in carrying out their respective responsibilities for oversight supervision management, and coordination of the operations of the national office and according to the triennial emphases adopted by the convention of the Synod. The Operations Team shall consist of the Chief Mission Officer, the Chief Administrative Officer, and the Chief Financial Officer and shall be convened by the Chief Administrative Officer.” The Operations Team meets monthly along with selected subject-matter experts to coordinate and support the ministries of the Synod. This has resulted in better coordination of the ministry initiatives, more efficient processes, and growing cross-unit support within the national office.

Administrative Team. Bylaw 3.5.1 establishes an Administrative Team, which “shall assist the President and the Board of Directors of the Synod in carrying out their respective responsibilities for oversight, supervision, management, and coordination as set forth in the Constitution, Bylaws, and resolutions of the Synod and according to the triennial emphases adopted by conventions of the Synod. The Administrative Team shall consist of the President, the First Vice-President, the Secretary, the Chief Financial Officer, the Chief Mission Officer, and the Chief Administrative Officer and shall be under the leadership of the President.” The Administrative Team meets monthly to coordinate and support the ministries of the Synod. During these meetings, the Chief Administrative Officer gives a summary of the actions and topics discussed by the Operations Team. This ensures clear communication and coordination within the Administrative Team.

Other Functional Areas. The Chief Administrative Officer is responsible for several service units, which are composed of dedicated individuals whose service to the Synod is more than often measured in decades that in years of service. These areas include human resources, operations and event planning. A brief overview of the responsibilities and activities follows.

R6.1 2 Convention, Conference, and Event Planning

The Convention, Conference, and Event Planning Group provides exemplary event planning services, including hotel negotiation, travel, housing, transportation, and conference needs for all LCMS organizations, resulting in enormous cost savings and more efficient event planning. The services are provided for events across the country, including the Synod Convention, National Youth Gatherings, and a variety of organizational needs. Since the 2016 LCMS Convention, this department has planned or assisted with more than 900 offsite events, accommodating an estimated 200,000 people. In addition, this department supported more than 15,000 meetings and activities at the International Center building during the same period.

Lynne Marvin, Senior Director, Events and Procurement

R6.1 3 Report of the Human Resources Department

“Joyfully Lutheran” service in support of ministry and mission is the goal of the Department of Human Resources. We are blessed with this amazing challenge as we deliver the core human resources functions to the Synod and the corporate entities. The department is consummately focused on maintaining a caring and supportive work environment so that over 650 employees, both domestic and internationally deployed, may give their most effective service to the Lord.

The Department of Human Resources coordinates the development and administration of personnel policies, procedures, and supporting systems within and between boards, commissions, departments, entities and agencies of the Synod. The last triennium presented opportunity to concentrate on the delivery of service to the corporate entities. The department played an instrumental role in the restructuring of Corporate Synod’s service areas, which led to more efficient staffing levels. In response to an initiative to foster better collaboration amongst the corporate entities, the department assisted with the analysis and workforce planning that led to better alignment with business processes and procedures.

In compliance with the Synod’s Board of Directors’ philosophy to be “good stewards of the dollars entrusted to us, pay fair salaries, and reward performance in order to be able to attract, motivate, and retain employees,” the department worked with Concordia Plan Services administrators to conduct a comprehensive review of the health care options. We analyzed and selected health care options that provide comprehensive coverage in a cost-effective manner. Another area of success was recruiting executive-level talent with key hires, including the President of LCEF and the LCMS Chief Administrative Officer.

The Department of Human Resources is well positioned to execute on the strategy for the next triennium. Our objectives are: continue to create a learning culture with the specific goal to develop leaders; create development, retention, and succession plans; provide support and education for employees that assists them in all stages of their vocational life cycle; and implement a new Human Resources Information System that will lead to more centralized HR services to the corporate entities. Accomplishment of these objectives will lead to enhanced services to the boards, commissions, agencies, departments, and corporate entities we support so that they can concentrate on their mission.

Val Rhoden-Kimbrough, Executive Director

R6.1 4 Operations Support Services Department

At the direction of the LCMS Board of Directors, the Service Departments under the Chief Administrative Officer underwent external reviews to ensure these services were being provided in the most efficient and cost-effective way. The overall mission remains the same, and that is to provide services that support the mission and ministry of the LCMS. The creation
of the following service units is a result of the recommendations from these reviews: Operations Service Coordination, Technology Application Group, Mail and Print Services, Reception and Meeting Services, Facilities Management Services, and Information Technology Desktop and Infrastructure Support Services. In addition, the LCMS Technology Steering Committee (TSC) was formed in December 2018 to act as an advisory/strategic body to provide oversight to the IT function. The role of the TSC is to better align technology and the efforts of the various IT-related groups with the goals and direction of the organization. The primary function of the TSC includes review of projects to assess their benefit to the organization and help prioritize them. The chair of the TSC will then present these recommendations as necessary to the Operations Team for final approval. Other functions of the TSC include advising on proposed policy changes or additions, foster positive communications throughout the LCMS organization, and review of periodic assessments and reports from the various IT-related groups.

**Operations Service Coordination (OSC)**

Operations Service Coordination provides the communication and coordination link between the Operations Department and the departments of the LCMS. Operations Service Coordination also ensures that policies and procedures are in place to ensure Operations Services are delivered in a timely and efficient manner. Through regular communication, Service Coordination will make sure that the needs of the departments are being met.

**Technology Applications Group (TAG)**

The Technology Applications Group is dedicated to the Application of Technology solutions that enable the ministry and business functions of LCMS to operate in the most innovative and cost-effective manner possible. The Technology Application Group provides technical support to the major LCMS Business Applications: Banner Accounting, UltiPro Human Resources Information System, LCMS Information Support Network (LISN; formerly LRSS), Blackbaud Constituent Resource Management System (BBCRM), SharePoint Sites, and LCMS websites. The Technology Application Group also provides technical support to many other department-specific tools: Genetec Security Camera, Pinnacle Badge System, Office365 Applications, and others. The application of technology solutions are as prioritized by the LCMS Technology Steering Committee, with OSS providing technical expertise to approved projects.

**IT Desktop and Infrastructure Support Services**

As a result of the Information Technology review, LCMS, in collaboration with Concordia Plan Services, outsourced the helpdesk and infrastructure-support functions to Dalechek Technology Group. Dalechek now provides support to both the LCMS and CPS, which resulted in financial savings for the LCMS.

**Mail and Print Services (MPS)**

Mail Services handles all mailing (standard mail, express mail, and packages) from the IC properties, including USPS, UPS, FedEx, and DHL. The MPS staff also provide the following special services: preparation of bulk mailings, address labeling, folding, envelope/mailer inserting, bulk paper delivery (for copiers/printers), and manages overnight package mailing needs.

Print Services provides full-service printing to not only the departments of the LCMS but also to Concordia Plan Services and the LCMS Foundation. Print Services include: full-color and black/white printing, folding, cutting, GBC plastic comb binding, booklet making, padding, three-hole punching, lamination, photocopying, as well as personal printing services for our employees.

**Reception and Meeting Services (RMS)**

Reception and Meeting Services is responsible for coordinating meetings and events that take place at the International Center. This includes assistance with room scheduling and set-up, as well as any event catering needs. Meeting and Reception Services provides Front Desk services, ensuring that all guests are greeted in a friendly and professional manner. The Front Desk also ensures all building entry security policies and procedures are followed.

**Facilities Management Services (FMS)**

In August 2018, and as a result of the facilities management review, the International Center facility management was transitioned to Cushman and Wakefield. Cushman and Wakefield manage numerous properties in the St. Louis metro area and was selected from three submitted proposals. Cushman’s expertise in property management will help ensure the LCMS is adhering to industry best practices. The mission of Facilities Management Services is to ensure a safe, healthy, and Christian work environment for employees at the International Center.

A few other significant items that were accomplished include: (1) Upgraded the video surveillance system at the International Center; (2) Using a grant from AMEREN UE all fluorescent bulbs at the International Center were replaced at no cost with high efficiency LED bulbs; (3) In collaboration with Concordia Plan Services and the LCMS Foundation, migrated from our aging analog phone system to an IP-based phone system; (4) Implemented a comprehensive cyber awareness training program for employees; (5) Transitioned all LCMS missionary email accounts from Gmail to the LCMS Office365 platform; and (6) Working with Rosters and Statistics, developed the LCMS Information Support Network (LISN), which replaces LRSS.

Joel Rivers, Executive Director, Operations Support Services

**R6.2 Report of the Chief Financial Officer**

It is truly a joy to work on your behalf in the spreading of the Gospel, through tasks of Witness, Mercy, and sharing our Life Together. From our perspective, the task seems endless, and the resources dwindling; yet we are confident that the task will be accomplished in God’s own time, in accordance with His plan, through the resources He showers upon His people.

Over the past triennium, the decline in the amount of support from congregations for the mission and ministry work of districts and Synod has continued (see chart, below), while total
Our continuing goal is to support the program areas of Synod in as efficient a way as possible, so that the maximum amount of available resources may be used in those program areas.

The Accounting Department serves Synod by accurately recording the receipt and expenditure of restricted and unrestricted resources entrusted to us by congregation members, districts, and other donors. This involves oversight of the annual budget preparation for the Board of Directors and preparation of monthly financial statements. The department provides various accounting and payroll services for multiple LCMS entities. The Congregational Treasurer’s Manual is a resource that is updated annually; it provides important guidance in the areas of accounting, payroll for both rostered and non-rostered church workers; federal and state tax matters; incorporating, administering and dissolving congregations; receiving donations and disbursing them; financial reporting; and risk and insurance matters. This document is provided to each district for distribution to local congregations.

The Internal Audit Department serves Synod’s boards, commissions, service departments, and agencies as requested by their governing boards or as directed by the Synod’s Board of Directors. The Internal Audit Department (1) performs financial statement audits in accordance with generally accepted auditing standards established by the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants; (2) helps to reduce overall audit costs by assisting external auditors who perform financial statement audits of the various synodical corporate and trust entities; (3) examines and evaluates corporate and individual compliance with LCMS Board of Directors policies and recommends ways to improve internal controls, operations, and organizational structures to make them more effective and efficient; and (4) investigates allegations of suspected financial and organizational misconduct in accordance with Synod policy.

The Risk Management and Insurance Department serves Synod by analyzing the risk exposures of each entity/agency, marketing and procuring the appropriate insurance policies, negotiating sufficient policy limits to address exposures, administering and settling claims, and assisting Synod entities with procedural policies, disaster recovery, and disaster/emergency response plans. Further, the department assists each entity/agency of the Synod with contractual review as well as state and federal compliance requirements. The department utilizes various risk management methods to treat, reduce, or address risk exposure, including self-insurance, risk retention, and risk-sharing arrangements such as large deductible plans and Loss Funds (if cost effective and warranted), contractual risk transfer, and insurance. Exposures of the Synod entities/agencies are continually monitored to ensure any of the risk management methods are appropriate and are modified to conform to changing markets and operations. The department promotes risk awareness through continual education, communication, and recommendations for actions to protect the people and assets of the LCMS and its related entities. The department provides training and recommendations to Synod’s boards, commissions, service departments, and any Synod entity/agency in the areas of risk management, insurance policy analysis, loss control and safety compliance, and employment issues through consultation, numerous quarterly and annual reports, reference materi-

In 1976, Total Contributions to Congregations were $351,619,466. Of that amount, 16.65 percent, or $58,542,200, was used for “Work-at-Large” by our congregations (this includes support for District and Synod mission and ministries, and other mission and ministry work outside congregations). Of the Work-at-Large amount, 6.13 percent, or $21,556,309, was received by Synod to support its worldwide mission and ministries.

In 2016, Total Contributions to Congregations were $1,431,379,355. Of that amount, 8.84 percent, or $126,563,332, was used for “Work-at-Large” by our congregations (this includes support for District and Synod mission and ministries, and other mission and ministry work outside congregations). Of the Work-at-Large amount, 1.03 percent, or $14,703,651, was received by Synod to support its worldwide mission and ministries.

So, from 1976 to 2016, total contributions received by congregations grew by more than 300 percent, while Work-at-Large budgets grew by about 116 percent; but congregational support of Synod (through districts) has actually decreased about 32 percent.

In the face of continued declining unrestricted revenues, Synod, Inc. has been working to become more efficient through adopting newer technologies; reviewing and reassigning positions, where possible, as positions become vacant; and evaluating the need to continue or discontinue certain programs, especially whenever new needs for mission and ministry are identified.

Each of the units that support our program areas has been reviewed for ways to operate more efficiently and effectively, including the units that report to me. In some cases, positions were eliminated and tasks redistributed among continuing employees. In other cases, better ways to accomplish our daily tasks have been developed, while in another case, an entire function has been reassigned to another organization.

Our continuing goal is to support the program areas of Synod; and other mission and ministry work outside congregations).
als, and presentations to LCMS entities, districts, and congregations.

Yes, financial challenges facing our beloved Synod still persist; but it is with a joyful heart that we continue to serve God and our neighbors throughout the world as the Good News of salvation through Jesus the Christ is proclaimed. Let us join together, with joy, to thank our God for allowing us to bear witness to His love for all mankind, throughout the world.

Let us lift up, before the throne of grace, our beloved district and Synod officers and workers, giving thanks, with great joy, that we are not alone in this task.

I am “Joy:fully Lutheran,” and I joyfully thank God for His children, my partners in the spreading of the Gospel, who report administratively to me. They are competent and dedicated employees whose support for Synod operations is vital.

May our work together be a blessing to those whom we serve, and bring glory and honor to our triune God.

Jerald C. Wulf, Chief Financial Officer

R7

Board for National Mission

Greetings from your Board for National Mission as it seeks to support and encourage the congregations and schools of the LCMS through their districts to remain “Joy:fully Lutheran” in their mission and ministry.

According to the LCMS Handbook, the Board for National Mission (the BNM) is charged with “developing and determining policies for the coordination of and in support of district ministries which support congregations and schools” (Bylaw 1.2.1 [ml]). These policies shall embrace and apply the mission and ministry emphases adopted by the national convention” (Bylaw 3.8.2). In response to this directive, the BNM has spent this past triennium reworking the policies which give direction to the Office of National Mission as it seeks to carry out its responsibilities for the various domestic missions that serve congregations and schools through the districts of the Synod (see Bylaw 3.8.2.3). The Board has organized its policies under the seven “Mission Priorities” (six originally adopted by the Synod in her 2013 convention [Res. 3-06A] and reaffirmed at the 2016 convention and a seventh established at the 2016 convention [Res. 4-02A]). These mission priorities include:

- Plant, sustain, and revitalize Lutheran churches
- Support and expand theological education
- Perform human care in close proximity to Word and Sacrament ministries
- Collaborate with the Synod’s members and partners to enhance mission effectiveness
- Promote and nurture the spiritual, emotional, and physical well-being of pastors and professional church workers
- Enhance early childhood, elementary and secondary education, and youth ministry
- Strengthen and support the Lutheran family in living out God’s design

Besides developing and determining policies to guide the Office of National Mission in carrying out its mission responsibilities, the Handbook further charges the BNM to “have oversight of the implementation of policies adopted by the board and implemented by the Office of National Mission...” (Bylaw 3.8.2.1). Therefore, as part of its monitoring responsibility, the BNM, at its regularly scheduled board meetings, hears verbal reports from the various program directors and solicits suggestions from the directors for policy improvement. These programs include black ministry, campus ministry, church planting and revitalization, Hispanic ministry, national missionaries, recognized service organizations, rural and small-town mission, stewardship, urban and inner-city mission, witness and outreach, youth and adults.

The board also continues to set aside time for theological presentations that the board believes are necessary to keep itself focused on the mission of the Church. The theological presentations the board heard since the last report included presentations by Rev. Dr. Joel Lehenbauer, Exec. Dir., LCMS Commission on Theology and Church Relations; Dr. Daniel Harmelink, Exec. Dir., Concordia Historical Institute; Rev. Micah Glenn, LCMS Domestic Missionary; and Rev. Michael Meyer, LCMS Disaster Response Manager.

The BNM was authorized at the 2013 convention (Res. 2-05B) in Saint Louis to “serve as a calling agency for institutional and agency chaplains and other non-foreign specialized ministers...” (Bylaw 3.8.2). As such, the BNM has called three Specialized Pastoral Ministers, providing a Divine Call into their ministry so that they might serve the Church with the confidence that they are doing so in accord with the Lutheran Church’s confessional commitment that “no one shall publicly preach or teach without a regular call” (Augsburg Confession XIV).

The board was surprised and saddened by the resignation of the Rev. Bart Day from the Office of National Mission as he moved into a new area of service with the Lutheran Church Extension Fund. Rev. Day provided critical direction and leadership as the BNM wrestled with adapting to the new structure adopted by Synod in 2010. The board thanks God for Rev. Day’s humble service and believes God will continue to use Rev. Day in service to His Church. God always provides faithful workers for His Church, and He has done so once again in giving the Office of National Mission a new executive, the Rev. Robert Zagore. Pr. Zagore has served in the parish ministry since his ordination in 1990 and, like Rev. Day, brings a pastoral heart to the Office of National Ministry. He was installed as the ONM executive director on May 30, 2018, and has proven to be a gift to the BNM as he provides a calm and pastoral heart to the board’s work in developing the policies so critical to the national mission and ministry of the LCMS. The board would also like to express once again its deep appreciation for the guidance provided by the Rev. Kevin Robson, the Chief Mission Officer of the LCMS. Besides his pastoral experience, Rev. Robson’s experience in the business community prior to his seminary training has proven invaluable to the board’s work in developing policies for the Office of National Mission. I must also express the board’s deep appreciation for the humble service of many staff personnel such as Ms. Jeannie Smithson and Ms. Barb Below who regularly attend our board meetings and devote countless hours working behind the scenes, so to speak, helping prepare the board’s agenda and keeping the board on track.
The board also appreciates and thanks God for the theological leadership provided by the President of Synod, the Rev. Matthew Harrison. His enthusiasm for and commitment to our Lutheran doctrine and practice helps keep us focused on who we are and what must be the focus of everything we do as a board—to “conserve and promote the unity of the true faith ... [and] to strengthen congregations and their members in giving bold witness by word and deed to the love and work of God, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit” (Constitution, Art. III).

The BNM lost no members during this past triennium, for which we thank God. This provided the board with a wonderful sense of mutual trust and camaraderie which contributed to open, forthright discussions and debates so critical to the work of a well-functioning board. We thank God that He always provides the men and women necessary to carry out the mission and ministry of His Church.

As we enter another triennium of service to the saints gathered around Word and Sacrament in the congregations of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, the members of the Board for National Mission pray that God may continue to use us to encourage and enable the congregations of the LCMS through their districts to remain “Joyfully Lutheran” as together with one voice and one heart, we “rejoice, pray, and give thanks” to the God and Father of our crucified and risen Lord Jesus.

Steven C. Briel, Chair

R8

Board for International Mission

The theme of “Joyfully Lutheran: Rejoice, Pray, Give Thanks” is wonderful. The members of the Board for International Mission (BIM) are committed church men and women dedicated to our Lord, and they rejoice in Christ’s blood-bought gift of redemption. They are people of prayer, and every meeting is a time of giving thanks and working to see that the Gospel is proclaimed around the world. Current members include Kristine Bruss, John Edson, Magdeli Fajardo, Terence Lung, Carl Rockrohr, Roberto Rojas Jr., David Stechholz, Robert Van Gundy, Allan Voss, James Wolf, and Bernhard Seter.

The board was graced with other wonderful servants of Christ. After the 2016 elections, Lois Peacock, Juan Gonzalez, Jeff Shearier, Jerry Frese, and Butch Almstedt left the board, and in the triennium we lost Sam Cosby as he accepted a call to another district and John Temple, who retired. We also bid farewell to Rev. John Fale, who stepped down as executive director of the Office of International Mission (OIM) to serve in other capacities. We thank God for all of them and their faithfulness.

PRIORITIES, 2016–2019

The BIM is fully aware of the responsibilities that we carry on behalf of the Church, and we believe in accountability and an accounting of our stewardship. The BIM develops policies that implement and maintain the seven mission priorities of the LCMS:

1. Plant, sustain, and revitalize Lutheran churches
2. Support and expand theological education
3. Perform human care in close proximity to Word and Sacrament ministries
4. Collaborate with the Synod’s members and partners to enhance mission effectiveness
5. Promote and nurture the spiritual, emotional, and physical well-being of pastors and professional church workers
6. Enhance early childhood, elementary, and secondary education, and youth ministry
7. Strengthen and support the Lutheran family in living out God’s design

In addition to these priorities, the BIM, guided by its ends policies, is also responsible for strong missional leadership, training of missionaries, safeguarding the rights of partner churches, ministry for civilians and their dependents overseas, international human care, and relationships with colleges, universities, seminaries, military chaplaincy, and international schools.

The board is guided, as well, by convention directives, notably the four resolutions on international witness from the 2016 convention. Those resolutions addressed the topics of thankfulness and support for missionaries, support for our international schools, and a reaffirmation of the free exercise of religion for our military chaplains.

The board addressed all of these items during the 2016–2019 triennium. We’ve included highlights here and refer you to the reports of the Chief Mission Officer and Executive Director of OIM for additional details.

PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT

In the practice of good stewardship of finances, the BIM limits itself to three face-to-face two-day meetings per year. We also hold occasional Zoom video or phone conference meetings, even as we use other forms of electronic communication. This means that our meetings are jam-packed and quite demanding of the attention and full participation of all members. The board has been exemplary in its dedication and participation in debates and discussions at all levels. With that in mind, following are a few outstanding observations that are brought to the church’s attention.

Workers

We on the board wholeheartedly agree with Res. 2-01 and give thanks at every meeting for our faithful missionaries.

Call process. We spend a great deal of time on our primary task of calling missionaries and chaplains and seeing to it that they are trained, protected, and supported through every phase of their engagement, from the day they are recruited until the time they return home from the field. The OIM is constantly working to make sure that those who go into the world to proclaim Christ are nourished by the same saving Word and Sacraments that they wish to share with the world. The emotional and spiritual life and physical safety of “their” people is a high priority of the OIM and a constant concern for the BIM. This triennium, there was a special emphasis in board discussions on understanding the role of CMA (Corelli Meyer Assessment) results in call recommendations, including attention to factors
Missionary support. In keeping with Res. 2-02, we on the BIM encourage one another to faithfully and daily pray to the Lord for our missionaries and military chaplains and their families by name. Several board members have also given presentations on missions in an effort to raise awareness. We would encourage the prayers of our congregations and schools, pastors, commissioned workers, and laity on behalf of these faithful missionaries who proclaim the Gospel in distant lands and give financial support for them, however small or great. We want to thank the Church for the prayers and words of encouragement for those who serve Christ and His people in missions locally or globally, including the faithful volunteers on the BIM.

That being said, when the convention mandates an increase in missionaries, it must provide the means to financially carry out that mandate. We can double the number of missionaries, but without dedicated stewardship, we can only keep them in the field half as long. We would like to remind the congregations and the convention that an increase in the number of missionaries requires an increase in support and financial care as well. Please help the effort by adopting a missionary. Invite others in your church, Bible class, and Sunday School to do so as well.

Military chaplaincy. We applaud the efforts of Chaplain Craig Mueller for his steadfast defense of the right of military chaplains to the free exercise of religion (Res. 2-04). Chaplain Mueller consistently recommends candidates who, in the vetting process, display an ability to remain faithful to their confession-al beliefs while working in challenging, pluralistic environments.

Since this report is developed months before the convention, a full tally of missionaries, GEO’s, and Chaplains will be supplied at the time of the convention.

Missions Policies

Ends policy review. One of the major responsibilities of the Board for International Mission is to create and maintain policies that effectively guide the Synod’s international mission work. In the last triennium, the board undertook a thorough review of its ends policies. In October 2017, the board adopted a revised ends policies document, which includes 24 policies in 16 areas (e.g., missionary training, human care, etc.).

Policy monitoring tool. The Office of International Mission has been working on a policy-monitoring tool to be completed by regional directors and then shared with the BIM. Based on feedback from both the BIM and regional directors, the OIM has modified its original policy-monitoring tool and created a much simpler alternative, which is now being piloted.

International Schools

The board spent considerable time in the past triennium discussing the LCMS’s three international schools (located in Hong Kong, Shanghai, and Hanoi), particularly with respect to two “Whereas” in 2016 convention Res. 2-03:

- Whereas, Each of these international schools holds the potential to provide an effective platform for furthering the mission of the LCMS in their respective countries and regions; and
- Whereas, These international schools were established to advance the Synod’s mission as they pro-

claim the pure Gospel while embodying a vigorous, lively, and winsome Lutheran Christian identity. . .

All three of our international schools are doing very well with respect to academic performance and reputation, finances, enrollment, and expansion opportunities. While these schools—most notably those in Shanghai and Hanoi—are making efforts to realize their potential as “effective platform[s] for furthering” the Church’s mission and to embody “a vigorous, lively and winsome Lutheran Christian identity,” the BIM has noted a number of serious concerns and challenges in the doctrine, governance, staffing, and operation of Hong Kong International School (“HKIS”). HKIS needs to align with the Synod’s mission priorities, to deliver on commitments already spelled out in writing, and boldly to teach the one true Christian faith in a manner consistent with Article II of the LCMS Constitution. We’ve taken several concrete steps aimed at addressing these concerns, including policy revisions and support for the creation of an LCMS international schools advocate position. In the coming triennium, strengthening the Lutheran Christian ethos of our international schools will remain a high priority for the BIM.

The BIM continues to pray and give thanks for all the servants of Christ who, having been captured by His love, wish to share that love with the world. We continue to rejoice in the professionalism and hard work of the OIM. We remind ourselves that the word rejoice is a cognate of the word for grace and wanders off into the realm of “greetings and salutations,” and that we on the BIM delight in God’s grace in Christ and the blood-bought gift of redemption that we have. We work to have the whole world “greeted” with the overwhelming grace of God so that they can rejoice as well. Our missionaries, as ambassadors for Christ, “greet” the world and approach it with joy because of the grace that they have received and that they want to share.

Bernhard Seter, Chairman

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OFFICER, BOARD, AND COMMISSION REPORTS

Commission on Constitutional Matters

The first meeting of the commission was held on October 20–21, 2016, following the reappointment of George Gude and Neely Owen to the commission, and the appointment of Gerald Bode Sr. to replace John Sias, who was elected to the office of Secretary of the Synod, formerly occupied by Ray Hartwig. As Secretary of the Synod, John Sias remains on the commission as an ex officio member of the commission. The other members of the commission are Thomas Deadrick and Larry Peters. At the first meeting, the commission organized itself, with George Gude elected chairman and Neely Owen vice-chairman. The Secretary of the Synod, John Sias, serves as the secretary of the commission, and Larry Peters was elected as acting secretary. George Gude was appointed as the commission member to the Commission on Handbook and to the 2016 Res. 11-10 Task Force on Nominations and Elections Processes. As this report is written, the commission has met 10 times in person during the triennium. These meetings are generally from Friday 8:00–5:00 and Saturday 8:00 until early afternoon, depending on the business. Two of these meetings included a joint meeting with the
Council of Presidents, in accordance with 2013 Res. 6-16A. The commission also had three conference-call meetings and one web-conference meeting.

The responsibilities of the commission are delineated in Bylaws 3.9.2.2–3.9.2.2.3. These responsibilities fall into two main areas. The first area is that the commission is to interpret the Synod's Constitution, Bylaws, and resolutions. A member of the Synod (congregation, ordained or commissioned minister) or an official board, commission, or agency of the Synod may submit a written request for such an opinion.

The second area is that the commission is charged to make sure that the articles of incorporation, bylaws, and policy manuals of all the agencies of the Synod are in harmony with the Constitution, Bylaws, and resolutions of the Synod. To this end, Synod Bylaws require that any agency desiring to change its articles of incorporation or bylaws must receive prior approval from the commission. (Note: Because of their triennial conventions, Bylaw 3.9.2.2.3 [b] provides a process by which district conventions may amend a district bylaw proposal previously submitted and approved by the commission, and have the result take effect upon the commission’s subsequent approval of the amended, adopted proposal.) During the course of the triennium, twenty-nine (29) of the districts made changes to their bylaws after approval by the commission.

Experience has demonstrated that some agencies do not submit proposed changes to their bylaws and articles to the commission, as required by Bylaw 3.9.2.2.3 (a). Any changes that are made to the bylaws of any agency of the Synod cannot go into effect unless and until they are approved by the commission. The definition of an agency of the Synod is found in Bylaw 1.2.1 (a): “Agencies include each board, commission, council, seminary, university, college, district, Concordia Plan Serves, and each synodwide corporate entity.”

The adoption of Res. 9-02A by the 2016 convention of the Synod added Bylaw 1.5.3.6. This bylaw requires certain relationship and disposition language to be in the basic governing documents (which are normally the articles of incorporation) of all agencies of the Synod. The final resolving clause of that resolution stated: “[t]hat the agencies of the Synod shall comply with the requirements of this bylaw change in time for the CCM to report the status of compliance to the 2019 convention of the Synod.” To assist the districts in conforming to the requirements of Bylaw 1.5.3.6 and in satisfying 2016 Res. 9-02A, the commission revised a previously adopted template for district articles of incorporation, which was published in the minutes of the commission. However, not all agencies of the Synod have responded by submitting their articles of incorporation. A listing of those agencies which the commission determined have satisfied the requirements of Bylaw 1.5.3.6 and 2016 Res. 9-02A comes at the conclusion of this report.

Up to this point in the triennium, the commission has received 23 requests for opinions. All opinions issued by the commission are included in the published minutes of the commission. These minutes of the commission are available on the commission’s page of the Synod website. In addition, those opinions judged to be of relatively broader interest or significant impact are also printed in this Workbook as an appendix to this report.

Following each convention, with concurrence with the Council of Presidents, the commission reviews and approves the Standard Operating Procedures Manuals (SOPM) for the Synod dispute resolution processes and the hearing procedures governing expulsion from the Synod under Article XIII. These reviews and revisions of the SOPM are necessary because virtually every convention makes a change of some sort in these processes. While the bylaws include a dispute resolution process for the seminaries, the 2013 convention of the Synod eliminated the corresponding sections of the Handbook for the schools of the Concordia University System. The 2016 convention of the Synod charged the board of regents of each of the universities to develop and adopt such a process. To assist these various boards of regents, the commission has developed a Model Operating Procedures Manual which is available for the various boards of regents to use as they develop such procedures for each of the universities.

Report regarding agency compliance with Bylaw 1.5.3.6 (2016 Res. 9-02A):

**Districts:** Based on material that was submitted this triennium and/or on material already in the files of the Secretary of the Synod, all but eleven of the districts have adopted articles of incorporation which satisfied the requirements of Bylaw 1.5.3.6 by having included the required relationship and dissolution language in their articles. It is assumed by the commission that these changes to the articles of incorporation were filed with the appropriate state. In the event that these were not properly filed with the state, then those districts that have not properly filed their articles would also not be in compliance with Bylaw 1.5.3.6. (Though it attempts to obtain such, the commission does not have a complete record of what has been filed with the states.) Six districts are not in compliance because they have neither the required relationship or dissolution language in their Articles of Incorporation, namely, the Atlantic, English, Rocky Mountain, SELC, South Eastern, and Texas Districts (the last of which has filed a request with the Board of Directors for an exemption under Bylaw 1.5.3.6). Five districts are in partial compliance, having the necessary dissolution language but not the necessary relationship language, namely, the California/Nevada/Hawaii, New England, Nebraska, Northwest, and Southern districts.

**Universities:** Concordia Irvine has proposed changes to include both the required asset-disposition language and the relationship language in its articles. As this report is written, their board of regents has not yet acted on these proposals. None of the other universities of the Concordia University System are in compliance. Concordia St. Paul lacks the relationship language and the asset-disposition language is partial. Concordia Nebraska lacks the relationship language and the asset-disposition language is unclear. Concordia Wisconsin has the asset-disposition language, but the relationship language is unclear. Concordia Chicago lacks both the relationship language and the asset-disposition language. Concordia Portland has the required asset-disposition language, but the relationship language is lacking. Concordia Bronxville lacks both the relationship language and the asset-disposition language. Concordia Texas lacks both the relationship language and the asset-disposition language.

**Seminaries:** Both the St. Louis and Fort Wayne seminaries have language which indicates control by the Synod, but neither has the required asset-disposition language.
Synodwide Corporate Entities: Concordia Historical Institute submitted its Articles of Incorporation to the commission during this triennium and is in compliance. The commission reviewed the Articles of Incorporation which were on file with the office of the Secretary of the Synod and found that the Articles of Incorporation of the Concordia University System, the Lutheran Church Extension Fund, the LCMS Foundation, and Concordia Plan Services contained the required asset-disposition language, and had relationship to the Synod language that was deemed adequate. Concordia Publishing House had the required asset-disposition language and relationship language was implied, but not specifically spelled out.

George J. Gude, Chairman

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Commission on Doctrinal Review

Along with the undersigned, the Commission on Doctrinal Review consists of four additional members: Dr. Paul Raabe (Concordia Seminary, Saint Louis), Dr. Walter A. Maier III (Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne), Dr. Naomichi Masaki (Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne), and Dr. Steven Mueller (Concordia University, Irvine). In this triennium (2016–2019), the Commission has rendered one decision regarding material already in print and three decisions in response to appeals from the authors or publisher. In keeping with the bylaws of Synod, which govern the doctrinal review process, the Commission seeks to ensure that all materials published by the Synod through its official organs and Concordia Publishing House are clearly in agreement with the Holy Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions.

John T. Pless, Chairman

R11

Commission on Handbook

The Commission on Handbook (Bylaws 3.9.4–3.9.4.2) consists of eight individuals: five voting members and three nonvoting advisory members. Three of the voting members are individual members of the Synod (ordained or commissioned ministers) and two of the voting members are attorneys. The three nonvoting advisory members are the Secretary of the Synod, the Chief Administrative Officer of the Synod, and a member of the Commission on Constitutional Matters (CCM). The voting members are appointed by the President of the Synod for six-year, once-renewable terms from nominees provided by district boards of directors and selected as candidates by the Council of Presidents. Names of the members of the Commission on Handbook are listed in the Convention Handbook Directory.

The primary responsibility of the Commission on Handbook is to provide for the ongoing maintenance and management of the Synod Handbook (Constitution, Bylaws, and Articles of Incorporation of the Synod per Bylaw 3.9.4). Specific responsibilities of the commission are detailed in Bylaw 3.9.4.2 as follows: (1) assisting convention floor committees when developing amendment proposals to the Constitution, Bylaws, or Articles of Incorporation of the Synod to determine their agreement in language (terminology) with the existing Handbook; (2) in consultation with the CCM, revising the Handbook of the Synod immediately after each Synod convention in order to bring it into harmony with the resolutions and changes adopted by the convention; (3) maintaining a complete file of succeeding handbooks so comparison can be made between current and preceding provisions; (4) carrying out assignments by Synod conventions relating to the Handbook; and, (5) responding to requests from Synod agencies to propose new provisions to address specific Handbook-related issues that arise between conventions of the Synod.

Following the 2016 convention of the Synod and in consultation with the Commission on Constitutional Matters, the commission finalized work on a number of revisions to the Synod Handbook that were adopted by the convention. In addition, the commission adopted and incorporated a completely redesigned and more user-friendly index. An electronic and continuously updated version of the Handbook was posted in February of 2017 and is available in both Adobe PDF and Microsoft Word formats, as well as in a PDF format that includes red lines noting every change from the 2013 version of the Handbook. The electronic versions of the Handbook are available on the Synod’s website under the “About” menu, then the “Leadership” link, and then the “Commission on Handbook” tab.

Synod Bylaw 7.1.2 provides that in exceptional circumstances and upon the express direction of a convention of the Synod, Bylaw amendments may be made by a two-thirds majority of Synod’s Board of Directors following review by the Commission on Constitutional Matters and the Commission on Handbook. 2016 Res. 12-14 (“Regarding the Right of an Accuser to Appeal When a District President or President of the Synod Fails to Act or Declines to Suspend”) directed that the Bylaw 7.1.2 process be used along with an additional provision for input from the Council of Presidents to develop Bylaw changes “providing mechanisms to implement expulsion processes consistent with and not contradicting the Constitution of the Synod.” Synod’s Board of Directors approved these Bylaw changes in May of 2017, whereupon the finalized 2016 Synod Handbook was printed and distributed.

Since the 2016 convention of the Synod and as part of its Bylaw responsibility for the ongoing maintenance and management of the Handbook, the Commission on Handbook has adopted several minor corrections and non-substantive editorial changes to the Bylaws. These corrections and changes primarily have been to punctuation, format, or terminology, thereby providing greater clarity and consistency throughout the Bylaws. All changes immediately are posted on the electronic version of the Handbook available on the Internet.

Over the course of its meetings this triennium, the commission has received inquiries, recommendations, and input from various Synod agencies, commissions, councils, committees, and task forces concerning certain portions of the Constitution and Bylaws of Synod. In response, the commission has responded both by providing appropriate feedback and by formulating and approving several proposed revisions to the Handbook in the following subject areas: Dispute Resolution Processes, Practical Bylaw Considerations, Call and Roster Matters, Simplifying the Handling of Commissioned Categories; District Convention Representation; Multi-Congregation Parish Representation at Circuit Forums, and Clarification of Certain Bylaw Provisions.

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Each of these subject areas is being submitted in the form of an omnibus overture for consideration by the 2019 convention of the Synod. In each case, action by the convention to adopt the proposed changes will both support and enhance the Synod’s constitutional objectives (Constitution Article III) and bylaw purposes (Bylaw 1.1).

During the course of the triennium, the commission will have met nine times prior to the 2019 convention. Recognizing the importance of good stewardship of time and money, three of the commission’s meetings were held remotely, using electronic means. The minutes of each commission meeting are publicly available on the Synod’s website under the “About” menu, then the “Leadership” link, and then the “Commission on Handbook” tab.

Dale L. Sattgast, Chairman

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Commission on Theology and Church Relations

The Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR) has three primary functions: (1) to “assist the President of the Synod at his request in discharging his constitutional responsibilities for maintaining doctrinal unity within the Synod” and “for maintaining doctrinal integrity as he relates to other church bodies”; (2) to “provide guidance to the Synod in matters of theology and church relations”; and (3) to assist the members of the Synod in their witness regarding “societies, lodges, cults, or any organizations of an unchristian or anti-Christian character” (2016 Bylaws 3.9.5.2 to 3.9.5.4). CTCR responsibility includes responding to expressions of dissent (Bylaw 1.8) and approving church body requests for altar and pulpit fellowship (Bylaw 3.9.5.2.2). It also renders official theological opinions as requested or mandated by Synod bylaws.

The CTCR consists of sixteen voting and four advisory members. Voting members include two parish pastors, one parish teacher, and two laypersons elected by the Synod convention. Appointed members include four Council of Presidents (COP) appointees including two pastors (one of whom is a district president) and two laypersons; four seminary professors, with two from each seminary faculty; and three additional members (one of whom is a Concordia University System professor) appointed by the President of the Synod, in consultation with the vice presidents. The President and First Vice-President of the Synod and the presidents of the two seminaries are advisory members, with no term limits on their service. CTCR members elected in convention serve a six-year term and may be re-elected once. Members appointed by the president or elected by a seminary or the COP serve three-year terms and may be re-appointed twice.

For the sake of efficiency, the Commission operates with an Executive Committee and three working committees. The Executive Committee includes the CTCR’s officers, the chairmen of the three committees, and the executive staff (see below). While not rigidly defined, one committee focuses on matters pertaining to church and ministry (including church relations matters), the second on other doctrinal issues, and the third on social and ethical matters of concern to Christians and the church. All official reports, opinions, or documents of the CTCR are finally approved before their release or publication by the entire Commission meeting in plenary.

Current Commission members and the dates their current terms expire are: Mr. Kenneth Balsters (2019), Rev. Dr. Andrew Bartelt (2019*), Rev. Dr. James Bushur (2019), Rev. Robert Dargatz (2019), Rev. Dr. Thomas Egger (2019*), Rev. Dr. Carl Fickenscher II (2019*), Rev. Dr. Jeffrey Gibbs (2019), Mr. Timothy Hardy (2022), Rev. Dr. Matthew Harrison (advisory), Dr. Jack Kilcrease (2022), Rev. Dr. Dale Meyer (advisory), Rev. Dr. Herbert Mueller Jr. (advisory), Rev. Dr. Jeffrey Oschwald (2019*), Dr. Matthew Phillips (2019), Dr. Andrea Pitkus (2019), Rev. Arlo Pullmann (2022), Rev. Dr. Lawrence Rast (advisory), Rev. Dr. Brian Saunders (2022), Dr. Jesse Yow Jr. (2019*), and Rev. Dr. Roland Ziegler (2019*). (Asterisks signify that this person is not eligible for reappointment or reelection to the commission in 2019, due to bylaw-mandated term limits.) The Rev. Dr. Albert B. Collver III, the assistant to the President for church relations (Director of Church Relations), regularly attends CTCR meetings and reports to the Commission regarding matters of church relations which are under the purview of the President’s office. CTCR officers during the past triennium were Dr. Rast, Chairman; Dr. Bartelt, Vice Chairman; and Dr. Fickenscher, Secretary. At the beginning of this triennium, the Rev. Terry Cripe, President of the Ohio District, served as representative of the Council of Presidents. His service to the CTCR ended in July of 2018 at the conclusion of his final term as district president. In November of 2018, the Rev. Dr. Brian Saunders, president of Iowa District East, was appointed by the Council of Presidents as the district president representative on the CTCR.

The CTCR is currently served by two full-time executive staff members. The Rev. Dr. Joel D. Lehenbauer, who has served on the executive staff of the CTCR since 1991, has been Executive Director since 2009. At its April 2018 meeting, the Commission took action to renew Dr. Lehenbauer’s term for another five years (cf. Bylaw 3.9.5.3[a][3][4]). The Rev. Larry M. Vogel has served as Associate Executive Director since 2009. In addition to facilitating the work of the Commission detailed below in this report, the executive staff also responds to emails, letters, and telephone calls requesting further information about or clarification of the LCMS view of various topics and teachings. In the past triennium, around 400 such requests were addressed by email alone.

From 1991–2007, the CTCR was served by three full-time executive staff members. Since 2008, however, one of those executive staff positions has been continuously vacant, primarily due to Synod budgetary limitations. The Commission expresses its urgent hope that this ongoing executive staff vacancy can be filled in the coming triennium.

I. Theology

Assignments and Reports

(in chronological order with source of the assignment)

The CTCR takes its responsibility to provide theological guidance with great seriousness, seeking to address topics and concerns that impact LCMS churches and their called workers in the ongoing work of Gospel ministry.

2019 Convention Workbook
A. Revision of Synodical Catechism Explanation

**Luther’s Small Catechism with Explanation**
(2013 Res. 3-13A; 2016 Res. 5-12)

A basic, biblical, and orthodox tool for summarizing and applying the truths of the Christian faith is of enormous value to churches and individual Christians. Throughout its history, the Missouri Synod has used Luther’s Small Catechism as such a tool, usually in a form that includes additional explanatory materials, questions and answers, and biblical references. Toward that end, the CTCR was diligently occupied over the past two triennia in preparing the most recent edition of that tool, often referred to in its various editions as “the Synod’s catechism.”

A revision of the Synod’s catechism’s additional explanatory material was proposed in 2013 because of challenges from our rapidly changing culture. Work began in that triennium. In concurrence with the Office of the President, the CTCR oversaw a drafting committee that worked throughout the 2013–2016 triennium on a revision of the 1991 edition of the Synod’s catechism. Members of the drafting committee were Professor Charles Arand (Concordia Seminary), Pastor Wally Arp (Oviedo, FL), Dr. Jan Lohmeyer (Houston, TX), Professor Tom Egger (CTCR), Dr. Joel Lehenbauer (Chairman, Executive Director of the CTCR), Professor John Pless (Concordia Theological Seminary), and Rev. Larry Vogel (Associate Executive Director, CTCR).

A draft version was prepared and field-tested in 2016. After collating and evaluating all responses to the field-test version and consulting with the Office of the President, the drafting committee prepared a completed version and presented it to the CTCR in February 2017. After further emendations and revisions by the plenary commission, the CTCR adopted the final draft at that same meeting. After this, for further consideration to be given to its work, the CTCR submitted the final draft for doctrinal review. Following approval by the reviewers, the work was forwarded to CPH. The book has been in use since Reformation 2017 and has received widespread affirmation and approval. It is available for purchase from CPH in both physical and electronic editions.

B. Completed Reports

1. **Women and Military Service: A Lutheran Perspective** (2013 Res. 2-12A and 2016 Res. 5-11A)

2013 Resolution 2-12A asked the CTCR to “produce a statement” that might be considered by the 2016 convention on the matter of women serving in combat positions. The CTCR began work on the assignment. At its February 2016 meeting, it adopted an outline for the 2016 convention on the matter which, based on the Commission’s work thus far, set forth key principles and concerns. After minor revision, the outline was adopted as Resolution 5-11A by the convention. 2016 Res. 5-11A also urged the CTCR’s continuing work on the matter. The CTCR adopted the report, **Women and Military Service**, in its November 2017 meeting. The report provides additional theological background and support for them from Scripture, the Confessions, and other orthodox sources as it addresses such matters as the order of creation, conscience, and practical matters. It supports those women who choose the option of conscientious objection to service as a combatant and (should the law change regarding the conscription of women) to military service as such. It defends the LCMS resolution’s opposition “to any legal action that forces the compulsory service of women in the military, also called the conscription of women, by mandatory participation in Selective Service registration, a draft, or by any other mechanism.” It also defends the conscientious decisions of women who choose to serve in the military (in any capacity) and urges all Christians “to act according to the Word of God and their consciences in this matter while respecting the consciences of others.” It is included in the Appendix and is available for download at [http://www.lcms.org/ctcr](http://www.lcms.org/ctcr).

2. **Confession and Absolution** (2013 Res. 4-13)

In 2007 (Res. 2-07A), the LCMS resolved to encourage use of individual confession and absolution. The 2013 convention echoed that encouragement, especially for pastors (Res. 4-13). That resolution also asked the CTCR to “provide a document that sets forth our church’s teaching on confession and absolution and offers positive guidance to pastors and congregations in their exercise of the Office of the Keys.” The Commission worked throughout the past two triennia on the report. It examines the biblical and theological foundation for Confession and Absolution, answers objections to the practice, and provides ideas and suggestions to help in implementing it for both pastors and the entire congregation. The CTCR adopted the report **Confession and Absolution** at its April 2018 meeting. It is included in the Appendix and is available for download at [http://www.lcms.org/ctcr](http://www.lcms.org/ctcr).


2007 Res. 1-03 directed the CTCR “to prepare a comprehensive study document which clearly presents the biblical teaching of the royal priesthood and Luther’s teaching on vocation in light of the mission challenges of today.” The CTCR completed its work on this assignment by adopting the report **The Royal Priesthood: Identity and Mission** during its September 2018 meeting. The report provides both the biblical basis of the royal priesthood and a historical overview of how the teaching was first upheld and then neglected. The report then shows the significance Luther gave to the doctrine before offering seven concluding statements on how this teaching may be rightly understood. The report is included in the Appendix and is available for download at [http://www.lcms.org/ctcr](http://www.lcms.org/ctcr).

4. **“An Inexpressible Treasure”**: The Theology and Practice of Holy Baptism (2013 Res. 4-08A)

In 2013, the Synod adopted a resolution encouraging faithful and responsible baptismal practices, affirming the necessity of retaining the words of our Lord from Matthew 28 in Baptism, and directing the CTCR to “provide a study of the theology on Holy Baptism that sets forth the scriptural and confessional teaching on this great sacrament of Christian rebirth and offer positive guidance to pastors and congregations regarding proper baptismal practices.” The Commission completed its work in 2018, adopting the report **“An Inexpressible Treasure”**: The Theology and Practice of Holy Baptism, at its November/December 2018 meeting. The report is firmly grounded in the historical narratives of the Gospels, draws forth the Epistles’...
rich teachings, reaffirms confessional emphases, and answers many practical questions. It is included in the Appendix and is available for download at http://www.lcms.org/ctcr.

5. A Snapshot of Trending Tools: Christians and Social Media (2016 Ov. 5-08)

Omnibus Resolution A of 2016 assigned numerous overtures from the convention to various Synod entities, including the CTCR (see below, “Responses to Overtures”). One of the overtures was “To Provide Suggested Guidelines/Policies for Implementing Social Media.” After due consideration, the CTCR determined that this overture’s concerns could best be addressed by developing a report that would address the general topic of social media: its strengths, weaknesses, temptations, perils, and opportunities. At the CTCR’s February 2019 meeting, the Commission adopted the report A Snapshot of Trending Tools: Christians and Social Media. As should be evident from the name, the report reflects an awareness that the matter of social media is one marked by constant changes and what is relevant to the topic this year may change in the future. Nonetheless, the teachings of Scripture do not change, and the report considers such aspects as how social media relates to community, the risk of falsehoods becoming “viral,” an elevation of opinion over fact, and other temptations. It closes with a focus on how, within our vocations as royal priests, we might use social media in godly ways. The report is intentionally designed in a way that anticipates and can accommodate addressing additional topics of concern in the future. It is available for download at http://www.lcms.org/ctcr.

C. Completed Studies and Responses

In recent years, the Commission has had frequent requests for study materials that could accompany reports. Many believed such study materials would be of special help to lay audiences in more thoroughly engaging the CTCR’s reports.

1. In Christ All Things Hold Together—Bible Study and Discussion Guide (General request)

At the Commission’s May 2016 meeting (its final meeting of the 2013–2016 triennium), the CTCR reviewed and then adopted a study guide intended to accompany its 2015 report, In Christ All Things Hold Together: The Intersection of Science and Christian Theology. The study materials are offered as a supplement to the CTCR document for use as a study aid. It is available for download at http://www.lcms.org/ctcr and is included in the Appendix.

2. Responses to Overtures (2016 Omnibus Res. A)

Omnibus Resolution A of the 2016 convention included ten overtures for referral to the CTCR (and in some cases also to other entities; see 2016 Convention Proceedings, 267–270). At its February 2017 meeting, the Commission approved responses to those who had submitted these overtures, indicating various ways that their concerns were being or would be addressed.

3. Intinction Study Guide (Council of Presidents)

In May 2015, President Terry Cripe (Ohio District), a member of the CTCR, shared a request from the March 2015 meeting of the COP. The Council asked the CTCR to address the practice of intinction (dipping the body of Christ into the cup of His blood to be consumed by the communicant). The request was for a document for the COP to use to study and discuss this practice. Meeting in February of 2017, the CTCR adopted a study document for use by the COP. It is included in the Appendix.

4. Evaluation of the Statement of Faith and Statement of Values of Trail Life USA and American Heritage Girls (2016 Res. 16-06; Scouting Task Force Request)

Two scouting organizations, Trail Life USA (TLUSA) and American Heritage Girls, while distinctive entities, make use of the same Statement of Faith and Statement of Values. 2016 Res. 16-06 asked the CTCR to evaluate the statements from a theological standpoint (the CTCR was not asked to evaluate the organizations themselves). The CTCR’s evaluation was intended for use by the Synod’s Scouting Task Force. The Commission did not endorse the statements as such, but did determine that nothing in them “explicitly contradicts Scripture or Lutheran doctrine.” At the same time, the CTCR stated that “the lack of any Gospel focus in the TLUSA statement of faith serves as an important reminder and caveat that the use of TLUSA materials in a local, congregation-based TLUSA troop and participation in TLUSA events should be approached with care and discernment.” The CTCR forwarded its evaluation for use by the Synod’s Scouting Task Force in compliance with the 2016 resolution. The evaluation is included in the Appendix.

5. He Is Our Righteousness—Bible Study (Leader and Participant Guides) (2016 Res. 5-10)

2016 Res. 5-10 reaffirmed the scriptural and confessional fidelity of the CTCR’s 1983 report Theses on Justification and encouraged its use in studying the doctrine of justification during the 2017 celebration of the Reformation and beyond. In addition, the resolution asked the CTCR to provide additional material for study purposes by members of the Synod. In response, the CTCR began work on four separate studies. He Is Our Righteousness, a study of the Good Samaritan from the perspective of justification, was adopted at the CTCR’s April 2017 meeting. It is included in the Appendix and is available for free download at http://www.lcms.org/ctcr.

6. Justifying Christmas—Bible Study (Leader and Participant Guides) (2016 Res. 5-10)

“Justifying Christmas” helps users “see how the Scriptures connected with the birth of Jesus proclaim the good news of justification by grace through faith.” It was adopted at the CTCR’s September 2017 meeting and is included in the Appendix and is available for free download at http://www.lcms.org/ctcr.

7. Theses on Justification—Bible Study (Theses, PowerPoint for congregational use, and accompanying essay, “Luther and the Doctrine of Justification”) (2016 Res. 5-10)

Also at the September 2017 meeting, the Commission adopted study materials for use by congregations and church workers together with the 1983 Theses on Justification prepared
in a new format. The theses themselves are included, together with a PowerPoint presentation suitable for use in studying them. These materials are accompanied by an essay also adopted by the Commission titled “Luther and the Doctrine of Justification.” This set of materials is also included in the Appendix and is available for free download at http://www.lcms.org/ctcr.

8. Unjustifiable Faiths—Bible Study (Leader and Participant Guides) (2016 Res. 5-10)

At its September 2017 meeting, the CTCR also adopted a third set of materials titled Unjustifiable Faiths. This study examines false or inadequate views of justification and the doctrine of salvation in the light of the Bible’s teaching. This study is included in the Appendix and is available for free download at http://www.lcms.org/ctcr.

9. Subjective and Objective Justification, Justification and Evangelicalism, Ecumenical Discussions on Justification—Bible Study (Leader and Participant Guides) (2016 Res. 5-10)

The Commission completed its work on justification in response to 2016 Res. 5-10 at its February 2018 meeting by adopting a three-part set of materials. The first part is a consideration of the teachings of subjective and objective justification. (At times in Synod’s recent history, there has been some controversy over the matter of objective justification, that is, over the justification of the world that is accomplished and declared in Christ’s saving work.) The second part of these materials compares the biblical and confessional understanding of justification with justification as it is commonly understood in American evangelical circles. Third, materials were prepared to aid in the evaluation and study of the ecumenical discussions on justification between Lutherans and Roman Catholics that led to the publication of The Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification. (LCMS representatives did not sign the declaration, and the Synod formally declared its disagreement with it in 1998 Res. 3-08A.) The three-part materials were adopted at the CTCR’s February 2018 meeting and are included in the Appendix. They are available for free download at http://www.lcms.org/ctcr.

10. The Natural Knowledge of God in Christian Life and Christian Witness—Bible Study and Discussion Guide (General Request)

In April 2013, the CTCR adopted a report titled The Natural Knowledge of God in Christian Confession & Christian Witness. After numerous compliments on the report and suggestions that study materials be provided to complement it, the CTCR adopted a companion study at its February 2018 meeting. The materials are included in the Appendix and are available for free download at http://www.lcms.org/ctcr.

11. Immigrants Among Us: A Lutheran Framework for Addressing Immigration Issues—Bible Study (General Request)

The 2012 CTCR report Immigrants Among Us has been well received and is highly regarded by many within and outside the LCMS as a carefully reasoned, biblical, and practical guide for Christians in thinking about the complex and often contentious matter of immigration. In adopting a Bible study based on the report at its September 2018 meeting, the CTCR is seeking to make the underlying doctrinal and biblical framework and the document’s insights available to a wider audience. The materials are included in the Appendix and are available for free download at http://www.lcms.org/ctcr.

12. The Royal Priesthood: Identity and Mission—Discussion Guide and Bible Study

At its November/December 2018 meeting, the CTCR reviewed and then adopted a Bible study and guide for discussion designed to accompany its report The Royal Priesthood: Identity and Mission. The discussion guide and Bible study are available for free download at http://www.lcms.org/ctcr and is published here in the Appendix.

13. Confession and Absolution—Study Guide (General Request)

At its February 2019 meeting, the CTCR reviewed and adopted a Bible study and guide for discussion designed to accompany its recently published report on the theology and practice of Baptism, “An Inexpressible Treasure.” This guide is available for free download at http://www.lcms.org/ctcr.

D. Work in Progress

1. Guidelines for Inter-Christian Relationships (1981 Res. 3-03A) and To Study Article VI of Synod’s Constitution (2010 Res. 8-30B)


The Synod’s request for “practical guidelines . . . to assist officials, pastors, teachers, congregations, and individuals in the Synod in determining which practices and activities are appropriate to the various levels of inter-Lutheran and inter-Christian relationships in which the Synod is involved” (1981 Res. 3-03A) remains permanently on the Commission’s agenda as a standing assignment. The CTCR continues to provide such guidance as needed and requested (cf., e.g., 2010 Res. 8-30B, discussed below).
2010 Res. 8-30B, “To Study Article VI of Synod’s Constitution,” added a particular focus that fits within the general purview of this same assignment and required a fresh approach. It asked that “the President of the Synod in consultation with the Council of Presidents, the Commission on Theology and Church Relations, and the Commission on Constitutional Matters make provisions for the preparation of materials (a study) that explain the biblical, confessional, and historical basis for Article VI of the Synod’s Constitution.” The CTCR is at work on a three-part study of this matter (historical, exegetical, and systematic) that will include practical guidance.

2. Relationship of Man and Woman (1995 Res. 3-10; 2010 Res. 3-06; 2016 Res. 5-14)

The 2010 LCMS convention commended the 2009 CTCR report The Creator’s Tapestry (prepared in partial response to 1995 Res. 3-10) and also asked the CTCR “to address additional questions and issues.” The CTCR is continuing its work on various aspects of the topic of “the relationship of man and woman,” including the foundational issue of “the order of creation,” as requested by 1995 Res. 3-10 and 2010 Res. 3-06. This study will take into account a May 2015 request of President Harrison to consider current and possible future implications of the 2015 Supreme Court opinion Obergefell v. Hodges.

3. Women Teaching Theology (Office of the President)

In correspondence dated March 15, 2012, President Matthew Harrison requested a CTCR opinion on the matter of “women serving as members of theological faculties and women in general (uncalled or adjunct) teaching theology at our Concordia seminaries.” Work on this assignment continues.


The Commission’s 1981 report Human Sexuality has served the Synod well for over three decades as a tool for study, discussion, and guidance in considering God’s gift of sexuality and His intentions for its right place in human life. The 1981 report’s enduring value is evident by its commendation as recently as 2016 when the LCMS convention affirmed it “as a faithful explication of timeless truths of the Word of God” (2016 14-02A). However, profound changes have occurred in the understanding of human sexuality in popular culture since 1985. Surveys indicate that a majority of people in the U.S. and the Western world now view unwanted sexual relationships, homosexual behavior, bisexuality, gender transitions, and other practices and behaviors as both morally acceptable and normal. Many Christians have also begun to question what were, a generation ago, widely held convictions among believers about biblical teachings regarding marriage and human sexuality. In light of such changing attitudes and convictions, 2016 Res. 14-03 resolved that “the CTCR be directed to update the document Human Sexuality (1981) in order to address current challenges to the estate of marriage.” The CTCR has reviewed preliminary draft material and hopes to complete a revised and expanded report in the coming triennium.

5. Annotated and Expanded Large Catechism (2016 Res. 5-12)

2016 Res. 5-12 affirmed the ongoing value and use of Luther’s Catechisms, stating its support for the work on Luther’s Small Catechism with Explanation, which was not yet completed at that point, and also resolving that “the CTCR, in concurrence with the President of Synod and the seminary faculties, explore the creation of an annotated and expanded edition of the Large Catechism for widespread use and study in the church.” The CTCR has begun this project and will continue it in the coming triennium in consultation with the President and the seminaries.

6. Affirm the Right of Clergy to Perform Weddings in a Faithful Manner (2016 Res. 14-04)

2016 Res. 14-04 asked the CTCR to consult with the seminaries and others in order to “prepare materials to facilitate a biblical and confessional, theological and practical study affirming the right of our clergy to continue conducting weddings in accordance with our confession, and that these materials be prepared in time for the 2019 convention.” CTCR staff assisted the Synod’s Office of National Mission, which consulted with Alliance Defending Freedom in creating a resource for use by congregations, schools, and pastors, titled Protecting Your Ministry, during the 2016–2019 triennium (available for free download at http://www.lcms.org/Document.fdoc?src=lcms&id=4275). In addition, the CTCR is considering further work on this matter as part of its updating of its 1981 report on Human Sexuality (see D.4 above).

E. Requests for Opinions

The CTCR receives and responds to requests for two sorts of opinions:

1. Advisory opinions are requests for guidance from the Synod President, district presidents, and other Synod officers, boards, and commissions on matters of theology and practice under the general rubric that the CTCR “shall provide guidance to the Synod in matters of theology and church relations” (Bylaw 3.9.5.2.1) and “shall assist the President of the Synod at his request” (Bylaw 3.9.5.2).

2. The bylaws of the LCMS also specifically require the CTCR, when requested to do so, to render opinions (within 30 days) on theological questions that may arise in cases of dispute resolution or cases involving potential expulsion of an LCMS member (see, e.g., Bylaw 1.10.18.1[h]; 2.14.7.8[h][3]).

In the previous (2013–2016) triennium, the CTCR received one request for a bylaw-mandated opinion. The CTCR’s response, adopted at its February 2016 meeting, was not included in the 2016 Convention Workbook, so it is included below (#1 below). Also late in the previous triennium, the Commission received a request for an advisory opinion which was answered by the CTCR after publication of the 2016 Convention Workbook. It is reported below (#2) and the entire opinion appears in the Appendix. In the previous triennium, the CTCR also received two requests from the South Wisconsin District President which it is still considering (see #3 below). In this triennium, the CTCR received and is still considering one request for an advisory opinion (#4 below).
1. Response to a Request for an Opinion on “At-Will” Called Workers

In a February 11, 2016, letter to the Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR), the Rev. Dr. David P. E. Maier, president of the Michigan District, asked for a CTCR response to two questions. The questions were asked in accordance with (2013) Bylaw 1.10.5(b), which states that in a dispute resolution process “the District President may also ask for an opinion of the Commission on Constitutional Matters (CCM) or the Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR).” According to this bylaw, the CTCR is to respond within 30 days.

The questions are:

• Can there be such a thing as a “called worker” who is also an “at-will” employee at one of Synod’s universities, specifically Concordia University in Ann Arbor, MI?
• Can an “at-will” employee who is called be terminated without cause?

**CTCR Response**

While clearly teaching the divine institution of the Office of the Holy Ministry (John 20:21–23; 1 Cor. 12:29; Rom. 10:15; James 3:1), the New Testament is largely silent or only generally descriptive regarding many specific practical details and procedures about that ministry, such as how pastors were selected or called, actual responsibilities, length of service, and so forth. Similarly, the Confessions have a rather narrow focus regarding many practical aspects of the ministry.

In light of this, the CTCR has stated: “Although the divine character of the call is primary, the human activity by which the divine call is issued is not without importance” (Theology and Practice of “the Divine Call” [2003], 27). The Commission adds that “an appropriate use of ministerial reason is needed to devise policies, procedures, and rites that can best express and carry out the theology of the divine call into the pastoral office” (Divine Call, 30). While special attention is given to the call into the pastoral office, these points are valid for all calls.

Thus, we may speak of two principles for consideration regarding calls. First is the divine character of the call. Second is the practical need for the church to apply its theology in ways that are able to address actual circumstances and needs.

In accordance with these two basic principles, our response to the two questions follows:

1. Yes. A called worker at one of Synod’s universities can also be an at-will employee in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod in specialized fields of service.

The Synod has recognized that at times the church’s need for divinely called individuals with particular gifts or specialized skills “is best met by something less than an open-ended call” (Divine Call, 39). Examples are numerous, but several will suffice. Elected synodical officers are called to definite terms. Missionary personnel are typically called to serve with the stipulation that their ongoing service requires that funding contingencies be met. Called workers on the Synod’s staff are solemnly called but may be relieved of their responsibilities at any given time, with or without cause.

When a called worker will be classified as “at-will,” it is incumbent that the worker be informed of this at the time the call is issued.

2. Yes. By definition, if a worker is called with at-will status, the call can be terminated without cause.

Adopted by the CTCR February 19, 2016

2. Opinion on Two Questions about Laity and Clergy (Request from President Harrison)

On February 25, 2016, President Matthew C. Harrison made a formal request for a response to two questions: “1. Are the Word of God and the saving Gospel effective only when spoken by a pastor? 2. Do the Scriptures, Lutheran Confessions and the public doctrine of the LCMS (particularly Walther’s Church and Office) allow laymen to carry out the specific functions of the pastoral office (public absolution, public preaching and administration of the sacraments in the divine service) under the sole proviso that this is done “under the oversight of a pastor”?” The CTCR’s opinion seeks to maintain the proper balance and healthy tension found in Walther’s Church and Office, which affirms the responsibilities of both the royal priesthood and the Office of Public Ministry. The CTCR adopted the opinion at its final meeting of the previous triennium (April 2016). It was commended for reading, study, and discussion in 2016 Res. 5-13, but was not included in the 2016 Convention Workbook. We have therefore included it in the Appendix at this time. It can be downloaded at http://www.lcms.org/ctcr.

3. Request for Opinions from South Wisconsin District President

In the 2013–2016 triennium, the CTCR received two requests for opinions from the President of the South Wisconsin District. First, in December 2014, the CTCR received a request for an opinion on the nature of calls to LCMS clergy serving as professors at CUS schools. Second, in March 2015, the South Wisconsin District president requested an opinion on questions related to the administration of the Lord’s Supper to shut-ins. The Commission continues its work on these opinions and hopes to complete them before the end of this triennium.

4. Request for an Opinion from Minnesota South and North Districts

In July of 2018, the Secretary of the LCMS, Dr. John Sias, passed on a request from the Minnesota South and North Districts for the CTCR to evaluate and revisit the guidance offered in the CTCR’s 1998 “Opinion on Conditional Calls” (1998 CW, p. 51). This opinion discourages background checks conducted after a divine call has been accepted, thus, in effect, making the call “conditional upon” the result of the background check. The CTCR has assigned this to one of its committees and intends to address it as soon as possible.

F. Expressions of Dissent

Bylaw 1.8 from the LCMS Handbook provides a process for orderly “[d]issent from the doctrinal position of the Synod as expressed in its resolutions and doctrinal statements.” That process involves, first, discussion “within the fellowship of peers,” and thereafter the dissent is to be “brought to the attention of the Commission on Theology and Church Relations” (1.8.2).
In the 2016–2019 triennium, the CTCR received correspondence regarding three potential dissents. In a concern for unity and in order to provide further fraternal discussion, the Commission and its staff engaged in prolonged conversation and correspondence with those who were considering dissents. At this point, none of the three potential dissents to LCMS teaching and practice has been formally filed with the Commission.

II. Church Relations

The CTCR has the responsibility to “assist the President of the Synod at his request in discharging his constitutional responsibilities for maintaining doctrinal integrity as he relates to other church bodies” (Bylaw 3.9.5.2.2). This includes circumstances in which a church body requests LCMS recognition of fellowship. The Commission’s approval is required for each fellowship request. At present, some 19 church bodies have inquired about fellowship with the LCMS. What follows includes only instances that now involve formal fellowship considerations. In light of the many changes occurring in world Lutheranism, the LCMS has increasing numbers of fellowship requests and the CTCR seeks to address them both efficiently and faithfully. Toward that responsibility, at its April 2017 meeting, the CTCR adopted an overture for the 2019 convention which recommends an addition to Bylaw 3.9.5.2.2. The bylaw addition would provide a streamlined process for declaring fellowship when the requesting church body was started as a mission of one of our existing partner church bodies (churches with which we are in fellowship at the present time).

A. Requests for Church Fellowship

Church Fellowship Requests Approved by the CTCR

1. Portuguese Evangelical Lutheran Church (IELP)

At its December 2016 meeting, the CTCR received a request for recognition of fellowship from the IELP. The IELP is a small church which began as an LCMS mission start in the 1950s and is now in fellowship with the Lutheran Church in Brazil, a partner church of the LCMS. The Commission examined the IELP’s doctrinal commitments, its worship practices, and its constitution. Following reports at its April 2017 meeting from Dr. Albert Collver on visits with IELP’s president, the CTCR adopted a resolution that recommended the recognition of fellowship between our church bodies on the basis of Bylaw 3.9.5.2.2 (c). The President of the Synod, after consultation with the Praesidium, subsequently declared recognition of fellowship with the IELP. The 2019 convention will be asked to endorse his action.

2. Evangelical Lutheran Church in Belgium (ELKB)

The ELKB is a small church served by a former LCMS missionary who is now a member of our partner church body in Brazil. The ELKB came into existence in 2008 when—for logistical reasons—the (former) Evangelical Lutheran Church Synod of France and Belgium (with whom the LCMS was in fellowship) divided into two separate Synods, the ELKB and the Evangelical Lutheran Church Synod of France. Subsequently, the President of the ELKB, Rev. Gijsbertus van Hattem, requested that the LCMS recognize and affirm church fellowship with the ELKB as a separate church body. The Commission examined the ELKB’s doctrinal commitments, its worship practices, and its constitution. Following reports at its April 2017 meeting from Dr. Albert Collver on visits with ELKB’s president, the CTCR adopted a resolution that recommends the recognition of fellowship between our church bodies on the basis of Bylaw 3.9.5.2.2 (b). The 2019 convention will be asked to approve recognition of fellowship with the ELKB.

3. Confessional Lutheran Church of South Africa (CLCSA)

The LCMS is in fellowship with two churches in southern Africa, the Free Evangelical Lutheran Synod in South Africa and the Lutheran Church in Southern Africa. During the previous triennium, a third Lutheran church, the Confessional Lutheran Church in South Africa (CLCSA), requested church fellowship with the LCMS. During this triennium, the chairman of the CTCR, individuals from the Office of the President, and CTCR staff met with the President of the CLCSA and others who have worked with the CLCSA. The Commission examined the CLCSA’s doctrinal and organizational statements and then adopted a resolution at its February 2019 meeting that recommends the recognition of fellowship between our church bodies on the basis of Bylaw 3.9.5.2.2 (b). The 2019 convention will be asked to approve recognition of fellowship with the CLCSA.

4. Indonesian Lutheran Christian Church (GKLI)

The LCMS and the Indonesian Lutheran Christian Church (GKLI) have been in contact for many years. After correspondence and several visits by LCMS personnel, the GKLI requested altar and pulpit fellowship with the LCMS this past triennium, and the Office of the President asked the CTCR to consider this request on the basis of 2013 Bylaw 3.9.5.2.2 (c). Meetings and visits together have revealed extensive agreement in doctrine and practice. Where questions about certain differences in practice remain, the GKLI has requested counsel and assistance from the LCMS. On the basis of reports received from those involved in work with the GKLI and available official documents and relevant correspondence, the CTCR (at its May 2016 meeting) informed the President that it supported declaring church fellowship with the Indonesian Lutheran Christian Church. Subsequently, the LCMS called a missionary to serve in Indonesia to aid in theological education. The President is continuing to consider this fellowship request and the CTCR’s recommendation in light of ongoing work being done in Indonesia.

Current/Pending Requests for Church Fellowship

1. Ethiopian Evangelical Church—Mekane Yesus

Although the LCMS and the EECMY are not in altar and pulpit fellowship, in recent years a mutually beneficial relationship has developed between our two church bodies. Ethiopian students have studied at LCMS seminaries and several EECMY pastors have become members of the Synod through collo-

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qué and serve in various capacities and locations. In 2013, the EECMY severed its relationship with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) and the Church of Sweden because of decisions by those churches to affirm homosexual practices and ordination of individuals living an active homosexual lifestyle.

Since 2010 the LCMS and EECMY have related to each other in accordance with a protocol document that outlined a basis for cooperation and mutual support in certain areas. In 2014 the LCMS and the EECMY signed a revised “partnership agreement” that enhanced their commitment to working together where possible and appropriate and that included a mutual commitment to theological discussions directed toward the hoped-for goal of church fellowship based on agreement in doctrine and practice. The LCMS relationship with the EECMY is currently focused largely on seminary education, with LCMS theologians assisting Mekane Yesus Seminary in teaching and library development. The LCMS has also been partnering with the EECMY in the printing and distribution of confessional and catechetical texts and in their work of developing a new hymnal. Doctrinal discussions between the churches continue.

### 2. Lutheran Churches in Sudan/South Sudan

Two Lutheran churches in Sudan/South Sudan have requested fellowship with the LCMS in the past triennium: the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Sudan/South Sudan and the Sudan Evangelical Lutheran Church. The CTCR has been considering the fellowship requests and hopes to make recommendations to the President of the Synod in the near future, but its discussions and contacts with these church bodies have been hampered by military conflict in Sudan.

### 3. Malagasy Lutheran Church (FLM)

The Malagasy Lutheran Church is growing rapidly, and its pastors and congregations have a strong desire to remain faithful to the teachings of Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions. Because of the increasingly heterodox decisions by church bodies such as the ELCA and the Church of Sweden and the Lutheran territorial church in Germany, the FLM has been alienated from these church bodies. In contrast, the LCMS has had a cordial, informal relationship with the FLM for a number of years, with LCMS professors regularly teaching theological courses at FLM institutions and conferences. At its February 2017 meeting, the CTCR received a formal request for fellowship from the FLM. It is now determining the necessary steps toward that goal.

### 4. Lutheran Church of Uganda (LCU)

The CTCR received a request for fellowship consideration from the Lutheran Church of Uganda in September of 2016. It has assigned further work toward that potential goal to one of its committees, which will study materials that describe the doctrine and practice of the LCU and make recommendations for visits and other contacts as needed.

### 5. Christ Evangelical Lutheran Church–Sierra Leone (CELC-SL)

The CTCR also received a request for fellowship consideration from the CELC-SL during the past triennium. It has assigned further work toward that potential goal to a committee.

### 6. Evangelical Lutheran Mission Diocese in Finland (ELMDF)

The CTCR received a request for fellowship consideration from the Evangelical Lutheran Mission Diocese in Finland at its September 2017 meeting. This request has also been assigned for further work to a CTCR committee. The Lutheran Mission Diocese in Finland is in fellowship with several LCMS partner church bodies, including the Lutheran Church—Canada.

### 7. The Evangelical–Lutheran Diocese in Norway (ELDIN)

The CTCR received a request for fellowship consideration from The Evangelical–Lutheran Diocese in Norway at its February 2019 meeting. This request has also been assigned for further work to a CTCR committee. The Evangelical–Lutheran Diocese in Norway is anticipating recognition of church fellowship with several LCMS partner church bodies in the near future (e.g., the Independent Evangelical Lutheran Church in Germany [SELK] and the Evangelical Lutheran Church of England).

### Other Requests and Agreements

#### 1. Working Agreement between the Malagasy Lutheran Church (FLM) and the LCMS

As part of the process of working toward potential fellowship (see above), the CTCR reviewed the draft of a working agreement between our church bodies. At its April 2018 meeting, it forwarded the draft to the LCMS President’s Office with a favorable recommendation (with minor changes). The CTCR hopes that the increased cooperation will lead to the continued conversation and exploration of future altar and pulpit fellowship.

#### 2. Partnership with the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Tanzania (ELCT)

The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Tanzania has been disheartened and dismayed by recent decisions made by church bodies such as the ELCA and Church of Sweden that have been closely involved in the work of the ELCT for many years. The ELCT is seeking a closer relationship with the LCMS. At its February 2018 meeting, the CTCR examined a proposed “Partnership Agreement between the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Tanzania [ELCT] and The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod [LCMS].” Discussion before adoption emphasized that this agreement is not intended to involve the LCMS in any mission endeavors that would be contrary to the Synod’s constitution or to confuse this partnership with the long-used term “partner church,” which is specific to pulpit and altar fellowship. With those caveats, the CTCR gave its support to the partnership with the ELCT together with the hope that the increased cooperation will lead to continued conversation and exploration of future altar and pulpit fellowship.

### B. Meetings and Discussions with Other Churches and Groups

#### 1. Anglican Church in North America

Three rounds of meetings with the Anglican Church in
North America (ACNA) have occurred since 2010. Topics for the meetings have included the history and background of the two churches, understandings of authority and ministry in the church, the ordination of women to public ministry, contemporary challenges and opportunities facing American Christianity, worship and catechesis, issues related to marriage and human sexuality, and the doctrine and practice of the Lord’s Supper. The meetings have been open and cordial, with the churches’ representatives learning from one another and discovering many important areas of common ground, but also differences in doctrine and practice that require further discussion.

LCMS representatives have included President Matthew Harrison; Dr. Collver, Director of Church Relations; Dr. Lehnbauer and Rev. Vogel of the CTCR; Dr. Lawrence Rast, President of CTSFW; and Dr. Frederick Baue. Because the ACNA has a number of congregations in Canada, representatives from the Lutheran Church—Canada (LCC), including Dr. John Stephenson and (former) LCC President Dr. Robert Bugbee, have also been full and active participants in these discussions. In addition to a May 2012 joint statement by dialogue participants, a joint affirmation of marriage was prepared by the representatives and then published by the heads of both church bodies, together with the bishop of the NALC (see next item). A further joint report on the discussions was prepared by the representatives in February of 2016. Discussions will continue to address such topics as the understanding of Law and Gospel, the theology and practice of the Lord’s Supper, contemporary cultural challenges, and potential joint endeavors, especially in relationships with churches in the southern hemisphere.

2. North American Lutheran Church

Representatives of the LCMS, Lutheran Church—Canada (LCC) and the North American Lutheran Church (NALC) have been meeting together since 2011 and have held discussions on the following topics: authority of Scripture, Gospel and Scripture, ordination of women, human sexuality and marriage, and threats to religious freedom. LCMS representatives include Dr. Albert Collver, Dr. John Pless, Dr. Lehnbauer, and Rev. Vogel. The NALC is represented by Bp. John Bradosky, Dr. James Nestingen, Rev. Mark Chavez, and Dr. David Wendel. Dr. Robert Bugbee represents the LCC. Discussions continue to be both cordial and beneficial. The dialogue participants jointly drafted a statement on biblical authority in 2016 titled “God’s Word Forever Shall Abide.” The CTCR commended the statement at its May 2016 meeting (available in the Appendix or at http://www.lcms.org/page.aspx?pid=726&DocID=2384). At their Fall 2017 meeting, the NALC, LCMS, and LCC representatives adopted a three-year guided reading schedule of the Bible including quotations from J. Michael Reu’s book, *Luther and the Scriptures*. The guide is available at https://www.lcms.org/Document.fdoc?src=lcmd&id=4903.

3. Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS) and Evangelical Lutheran Synod (ELS)

Informal discussions between leaders of the LCMS, WELS, and ELS began in 2012 and have continued on a yearly basis since then, with the most recent discussions held in November 2018. The meetings have dispelled many caricatures regarding the different churches and helped to identify what currently unites and divides them. All three synods have encouraged future meetings by national convention action. Among the topics that have been addressed in the discussions are church and ministry, church fellowship, hermeneutics, catechesis, the service of women in the church, the issue of “cooperation in externals,” and specific obstacles to fellowship. The meetings will continue in the coming triennium.

III. Religious Organizations and Movements

The CTCR is charged with assisting “congregations and ordained and commissioned ministers of religion in fulfilling their commitment to witness publicly and privately to the one and only Gospel set forth in the Holy Scriptures” (2016 By-law 3.9.5.4 “Fraternal and Other Organizations”). This bylaw includes the Synod’s longstanding provisions for dealing with lodges as well as other organizations which have “an unchristian or anti-Christian character.” In providing resources and information to the members of the Synod regarding such organizations, philosophies, and religious movements, the CTCR includes a section of its website designated “Evaluations” (see www.lcms.org/ctcr). Evaluations fall into two general categories: (1) Lodge Organizations and (2) Religious Organizations and Movements. The evaluations consider, from a Lutheran theological perspective, a broad range of religious practices, organizations, movements, claims, and individuals—both Christian and non-Christian. In addition to material previously available, during the past triennium the Commission has provided several new evaluations. A goal of the Commission is to continue to provide Spanish-language translations of its evaluations. The entire current listing of topics addressed by CTCR evaluations includes:

- Lodge Organizations
  - Elks Lodge
  - Fraternal Order of Eagles
  - The Lodge
  - Membership in Certain Fraternal Organizations: A Pastoral Approach (also available in Spanish)
  - Moose International

- Other Religious Organizations and Movements
  - Abrahamic Religions
  - Baha’i Faith
  - Beth Moore Ministries (also available in Spanish)
  - Buddhism (also available in Spanish)
  - Center for Progressive Christianity
  - Christian Identity Movement
  - Christian Reconstructionism
  - Christian Science (also available in Spanish)
  - Church of Scientology (also available in Spanish)
OFFICER, BOARD, AND COMMISSION REPORTS

- Churchless Christianity
- Cults—An Overview (also available in Spanish)
- Cursillo Movement (also available in Spanish)
- Emergent Church
- Enneagram
- Gnosticism
- God's Learning Channel
- Hinduism
- Human Potential Movement
- International Churches of Christ (ICOC)
- Islam (also available in Spanish)
- Jehovah’s Witnesses (also available in Spanish)
- Judaism
- Kabbalah
- Latter Day Saints (also available in Spanish)
- New Age Movement
- New Atheism
- The Occult
- Rastafarians
- Reiki
- Restorationism
- Salvation Army
- Satanism
- Secular Humanism (also available in Spanish)
- Seventh-day Adventism (also available in Spanish)
- Swedenborgianism (New Church)
- The International Churches of Christ (also available in Spanish)
- The Occult (also available in Spanish)
- Theophostic Prayer Ministry
- Transhumanism
- Unification Church (also available in Spanish)
- Unitarian-Universalist Association (UUA)
- United Pentecostal Church International
- Unity School of Christianity
- Vineyard Ministries
- Wicca
- Word-Faith Movement
- Yoga

The Commission, through its staff, continues to respond to a large number of inquiries, making use of resources accumulated in its library and files and information available on the Internet.

Lawrence Rast, Chairman
Joel D. Lehenbauer, Executive Director
(Approved by the CTCR, February 22, 2019)

CTCR Documents in 2019 LCMS Convention Workbook Appendix

Reports

“An Inexpressible Treasure”: The Theology and Practice of Holy Baptism
Confession and Absolution
The Royal Priesthood: Identity and Mission
Women and Military Service: A Lutheran Perspective

Bible Studies/Study Guides

Immigrants Among Us (Discussion Guide)
In Christ All Things Hold Together: The Intersection of Science and Christian Theology (Study Guide)
Justification Bible Studies (each has a Leader Guide and Participant Guide):
- Unjustifiable Faiths
- Justifying Christmas
- Jesus and Justification
- He Is Our Righteousness (4 sessions)
- Subjective and Objective Justification (2 sessions)
- Justification and Evangelism
- Ecumenical Discussions on Justification

The Natural Knowledge of God in Christian Confession and Christian Witness (Study Guide)
The Royal Priesthood: Identity and Mission (Discussion Guide/Bible Study)

Opinions

Intinction: A Study Document
Opinion on Two Questions About Laity and Clergy

Other Statements

NALC-LCC-LCMS Joint Statement on Scripture

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Concordia Historical Institute
The beginnings of Concordia Historical Institute (CHI)
are found in the first constitution of the LCMS in 1847, which directed the secretary of Synod to chronicle the denomination’s history and also collect and preserve documents and artifacts of historic value. Officially incorporated as a nonprofit institution in 1927, CHI continues to retrieve, catalog, preserve, and share with church and community the historical treasures entrusted to its care while serving as a resource for observing major anniversaries of Synod leaders, entities, congregations, and events.

As the official department of archives and history of the LCMS (see 3.6.2 in the LCMS Handbook), CHI continues to search out and organize historical records that not only chronicle the history of the Synod (its congregations, institutions, leaders, and events) but also document the history of a church body that, under the mercy and grace of Christ and His Word, has not only survived crises but also has grown and flourished.

As Synod’s department of archives, Concordia Historical Institute is charged with managing what has become the largest Lutheran archival collection in North America—a collection that includes documents, publications, rare books, photographs, audio/visual media, artifacts, and fine art.

The Lord of the Church has been gracious to Concordia Historical Institute over these past three years. Striving to make CHI the premier provider of Lutheran historical resources in North America, the CHI staff, volunteers, and board are thankful for the prayers, encouragement, and support of LCMS districts, congregations, and individuals as we continue to serve the advancement of the history of the LCMS.

CHI actively manages:

- over 15,500 linear feet (3 miles) of archival material in environmentally controlled rooms;
- two high-quality museums (a permanent exhibit on the Reformation and history of the Synod at the LCMS headquarters in Kirkwood, Missouri, and a museum with changing exhibits at CHI, located on the campus of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis);
- the newly updated and expanded Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly (the longest-running journal of Lutheran history in North America);
- professional archival and research services that organize, catalog, and provide access to the millions of archived items in the CHI collection;
- an annual awards program that recognizes excellence in publishing books and articles on the history of Lutheranism in North America;
- a large archival collection of historic photographs, motion picture film, audio and video tapes, artifacts from the mission field, as well as fine art connected with the Reformation and the Lutheran Church in North America;
- a completely redesigned website: concordiahistoricalinstitute.org;
- two historic sites spotlighting the life and faith of the first Lutheran settlers in Perry County, Missouri (the Saxon Lutheran Memorial in Frohna, and Hill of Peace Lutheran Memorial in Friedenberg).

Over the last three years, CHI has presented to the church and community historic treasures entrusted to its care in new and exciting ways. “Pressed into Service by the Word of God” chronicled the effects of the Lutheran Reformation over the last 500 years through rare books and coins. (A full-color catalog, with introductions by President Harrison, Dr. Robert Kolb, and Dr. Cameron MacKenzie, is available for those not able to visit the CHI exhibit on the campus of Concordia Seminary in St. Louis.) The next exhibit in the CHI building will be “The Mercy of Christ Freely Given: The First Twenty-Seven Years of Missouri Synod Mission Work in South India.” This exhibit will open August 2019 and document the beginnings of LCMS mission work among the people of India 125 years ago.

Concordia Historical Institute is dedicated to enhancing its service to the LCMS in the next triennium. We are pleased to report that for the first time, catalogs of (a) the CHI reference library collection, and (b) the CHI archive collection are now available and searchable online. This greatly enhances the “discoverability” of the historical treasures available for viewing by researchers around the world.

Specialized research projects continue and expand. Research on the Walther League continues as the entire Walther League journal, The Messenger, is being digitized and made searchable. Research on the Walkout at Concordia Seminary continues as faculty-interview tapes are digitized and a comprehensive bibliography of published and archival resources related to Seminex and the Walkout is released.

Additionally, CHI has initiated a MELIM Online project to document the beginnings of LCMS mission work in India. Tens of thousands of photographs have now been digitized and metadata (critical information about the photograph) attached to each image file.

In connection with this initiative, CHI is now partnering with the IELC in India—particularly the principal and faculty of Concordia Theological Seminary in Nagercoil—to digitize and make available approximately 15,000 historical documents spanning the entire 125-year history of MELIM/IELC. This project is one of the ways CHI is honoring the first LCMS missionaries sent to share the Gospel with the neglected people groups of India and further historical research on this important element of Missouri Synod’s mission history.

Another area that will receive CHI’s full attention is a complete revision of the LCMS Records and Archives Retention policies and procedures to ensure historic documents generated by LCMS church leaders are identified and preserved for future historical research. This revision is especially critical in our age, when more and more documents are generated and distributed digitally. Contrary to popular thought, digitally borne documents and images are more vulnerable to accidental deletion and, as software changes, more difficult to open and access.

By the grace of God, Concordia Historical Institute will continue to solicit historically valuable documents and artifacts, increase the value of its services, products and events, while reducing risks associated with collecting, organizing, preserving, publishing, and exhibiting the historic treasures of the Missouri Synod. CHI is committed to developing even closer relationships with sister church bodies around the globe in a common desire to both preserve and trumpet the history of God’s grace among us.

With joy, Concordia Historical Institute continues to serve the LCMS, that generations to come might not only better understand the fascinating history of our Synod but also more clearly understand the redeeming work of Christ in the life of
the Lutheran Church. To that end, we ask for your continued prayers and financial support in moving Lutheran history forward—together.

Daniel N. Harmelink, Executive Director

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Board of Trustees—Concordia Plans
Board of Directors—
Concordia Plan Services

Years Ended December 31, 2016–2018

Concordia Plan Services (CPS) has been given the charge to manage the Concordia Plans (the self-insured employee benefit trusts of the LCMS) and to bring forth supplemental insurance and administrative services that serve the needs of ministries and church workers. We serve as a critical component in fulfilling the tenth objective of forming our Synod: We directly aid in the care of our church workers and their families!

CPS is driven by the principle that we are better together. CPS consolidates precious resources from ministries to provide benefits that improve and support the health and financial wellness of LCMS workers so they can focus on spreading the Word of God. Approximately 6,000 ministries, 31,000 workers, 36,000 retirees and beneficiaries, and 53,000 covered dependents count on CPS to help them be well to serve well.

Focus on Worker Wellness

At the 2016 Convention of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS), delegates placed a special emphasis on church-worker wellness, both physical and financial. CPS has responded to those resolutions with an intensified focus on wellness. CPS co-sponsored and worked with other LCMS entities to conduct the LCMS Church Worker Family Needs Assessment, which collected feedback from rostered workers on the type of support they need. In addition, CPS was involved with the Worker Wellness Action Group formed by the Office of National Mission in response to Resolution 18-03A.

Physical Health

CPS’s focus on physical health goes beyond offering great benefits. Our aim is to improve health outcomes for members of the Concordia Plans. Through specialized offerings, coaching and incentives, workers in the Concordia Health Plan have improved their health. For example, in 2017, CPS introduced the Omada weight loss program, which works to help those most at risk for developing heart disease or diabetes to reduce that risk. Since Omada’s launch, participants have lost more than 15,000 pounds.

Some of them have shared testimonials about how this weight loss has positively impacted their lives and their ability to serve in ministry. Omada estimates that CPS may have saved as much as $2 million in claims costs through healthier Plan members. New programs have been introduced in 2019 to provide additional options to assist workers in improving their health. Additionally, CPS continues to support and promote wellness incentives through the Vitality program.

More than 1,200 wellness champions are also focused on health outcomes within their ministries. CPS supports them with regular communications, ideas, and motivation, so they can help fellow church workers move toward a path to better health. District representatives of the Ministerial Care Coalition also work, with the support of CPS, to encourage wellness in each district. These efforts directly support the encouragement to LCMS congregations and ministries found in Resolution 18-04.

Financial Health

The delegates at the 2016 LCMS Convention identified indebtedness of church workers as a challenge significantly impacting the financial health of the LCMS workforce. In 2018, CPS focused on finding solutions to help workers with the significant problem of student debt. The addition of a new position to the education team allows for this person to be singularly focused on working with pre-church-work students in the Concordia University System. This team member is available to meet with students one-on-one or in group sessions to help them develop good financial habits before entering the work world. This addition enhances CPS’s financial-education program, which already includes an educator dedicated to the two LCMS seminaries, working with students on money management and financial planning.

Throughout the last year, CPS has investigated programs that will help current church workers understand how to best manage their student debt and potentially apply for student-loan forgiveness through the federal government, if applicable. The research led to the introduction of a student-loan-debt-management program that will be launched in 2019.

All of this work follows the spirit of Resolution 18-03A as we work together to address the issues around church worker indebtedness.

A Partner in Addressing the Challenges of Ministry

In 2018, CPS began a comprehensive analysis of its employers’ and workers’ experiences to better understand their challenges and identify the best solutions to serve them. This study included surveys, focus groups, and workshops where ministry representatives and workers gave their feedback about the Concordia Plans. Through these efforts, CPS is working with ministries to help them to overcome challenges now and in the years to come.

Overcoming Economic Challenges

With commonly acknowledged demographic shifts in the church, as well as typical fluctuations in economic markets, ministers are working to manage tighter budgets. Church workers are also faced with personal financial challenges as they work to save for a secure future and retirement. CPS is committed to helping ministries and workers manage and overcome these challenges.

Increasing Efficiencies and Lowering Costs

CPS is focused on helping ministries manage costs in the short term, while bringing long-term solutions that will generate costs savings in the future. In order to provide short-term financial benefits, without compromising the quality of the Plans, CPS has increased its focus on driving efficiencies with the goal
of lowering monetary costs and saving ministry administrators’ time. In 2018, CPS launched its new portal and benefits administration system. This system provides ministries with more Plan management flexibility and options.

CPS is also working to drive positive health outcomes for its members, which will lower claims cost, saving the Plans and ministries money in the long term. In 2017, CPS returned $12 million to ministries in the form of a Health Stewardship Reward as a result of lower-than-expected claims costs.

Growing Plan Membership

CPS is focusing on membership growth in the Concordia Plans. More workers participating in the Plans means that Plan risks are spread across a larger pool. A greater number of participants also allows CPS to more broadly spread administrative costs, making the Plans more affordable for everyone. In 2018, CPS focused its growth efforts on participation in the Concordia Retirement Savings Plan 403(b). Through surveys, focus groups, and workshops, CPS learned more about the needs of ministries and workers. Based on the feedback, CPS implemented changes to the enrollment processes and communications. The result: approximately 1,000 new Plan participants are now on the path to the enrollment processes and communications. The result: approximately 1,000 new Plan participants are now on the path to saving for a secure retirement. CPS intends to continue to reach out to ministries and workers about the importance of saving for retirement, as well as ensuring all other solutions are meeting needs and expectations.

Managing Risk

The financial health of the Plans remains a high priority. CPS is committed to the ongoing responsible management of these Plans to protect the promise made to LCMS workers for their financial future.

Overcoming Demographic Challenges with a Focus on Lutheran Education

A common question from members and church leaders goes something like this: “With church membership and attendance in decline, how can CPS remain viable?” While it may be true that there are fewer people in the pews on Sundays, parents are choosing to bring their children to LCMS schools Monday through Friday. CPS membership data shows that the total full-time workforce of our ministries is stable to slightly growing. This stability is driven primarily by Lutheran education. Lutheran education has always been an important part of our life together, and it remains a critical component of our ministry today! CPS sees that our ministries with schools will continue to play a key role in sustaining and growing the Concordia Plans. These ministries have unique and often unmet needs, and CPS is committed to helping identify and meet those needs. One of the biggest challenges of LCMS schools is the attraction and retention of synodically trained educators. In 2018, CPS took steps to better understand that issue.

CPS conducted comprehensive research to identify the challenges and priorities of LCMS schools and educators, with a special focus on commissioned teachers. This research included focus groups, interviews, and a survey sent to all educators in the LCMS. CPS is pairing the learnings with employment data to paint a picture of the current situation with commissioned teachers and other challenges facing LCMS schools. In 2019, CPS will share the findings with LCMS education leaders and work together with them on solutions.

Overcoming Political Challenges

In the rapidly changing political climate, lawmakers are considering measures that could infringe on religious freedom or create compliance challenges for ministries. CPS is working to protect LCMS ministries’ and workers’ rights to religious freedom and tax-exemptions and exclusions.

As President and CEO of CPS, I am a member of the Church Alliance, an organization built on supporting religious freedom for church plans and their ministries. The Church Alliance strives to ensure that legislative and regulatory initiatives continue to fully address, protect, and support the unique nature of retirement and health benefit plans operated by churches, religious institutions, and affiliated organizations. On Jan. 1, 2019, I became chair of that organization, and CPS General Counsel Ann Stillman became secretary. Ann and I, on behalf of the Church Alliance, have met with influential lawmakers and staffs, along with various regulators, so the needs and interests of LCMS ministries are considered as laws and regulations are written. For example, the Church Alliance successfully lobbied for the broadening of the religious exemption from the Affordable Care Act’s contraceptive mandate, as well as for the removal of several unfavorable items from tax reform legislation in 2017. The Church Alliance is continuing critical conversations and proposals about issues impacting ministries and workers, such as the clergy housing allowance.

The Future Is Bright

CPS is committed to protecting the promise we have made to LCMS workers to help provide for a secure and healthy future. We have found success with responsible management of Plan assets, a focus on positive outcomes for workers in the Plans, outreach to growing school ministries, and a coordinated effort to listen to those we serve. Ministries are facing a number of challenges, but by coming together, those challenges can be managed and ultimately overcome. CPS will build on recent successes to grow participation in the Plans, improve the health and financial wellness of workers, and partner with ministries to overcome their workforce challenges. The future is bright!

With Heartfelt Gratitude

CPS would like to acknowledge and thank the CPS Board members who have worked tirelessly to enhance the Plans and serve the best interests of LCMS ministries and workers, especially those whose terms have ended. Those individuals include:

- Mr. Phillip J. Fluegge, who served from 2007 to 2016
- Mr. Frederick G. Kraegel, who served from 2006 to 2018, with nine of those years as chairman of the boards
- Mr. Mark E. Schmidtke, who served from 2006 to 2018, with nine of those years as vice chairman of the boards

CPS is grateful for the opportunity to support ministries and workers who spread the Word of God. We intend to take full advantage of the opportunities God has granted us, walking together with LCMS ministries to care for workers.

James F. (Jim) Sanft, President & CEO
Concordia Publishing House

“The Word of the Lord endures forever and this Word is the Gospel that was preached to you.”
1 Peter 1:25

“The first and chief article is this: Jesus Christ, our God and Lord, died for our sins and was raised again for our justification (Romans 4:24–25). . . . Upon this article everything that we teach and practice depends.” (Smalcald Articles II I 1, 5; Concordia: The Lutheran Confessions, second edition; CPH, 2006)

In this year of our 150th anniversary, Concordia Publishing House thanks God for the honor and privilege that we have been given by The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod to be its publishing arm. It is our duty and pleasure to be and remain joyfully Lutheran, standing firm on the Word of the Lord that endures forever. As we look back over the past three years, we see many highlights of the work we have done. From the last convention until now, well in excess of 250 new items have been published, major new initiatives have launched, and several new curriculum projects have become available.

In partnership with the Office of the President and the Commission on Theology and Church Relations, the new Explanation of Martin Luther’s Small Catechism offering a fresh survey of the Bible’s teachings on many issues facing the Church today, organized around Luther’s magisterial catechism, was published in October 2017 and has been very well received throughout the Synod. It is available in several print editions, including a large visual layout, a spiral-bound lined edition, and a traditional hardback book form, along with ebook and LOGOS editions. Both young people and adults are discovering how useful it is as a devotional and prayerful survey of the major proof texts of the Scriptures. With a wide variety of topics in the traditional Q&A approach, the Explanation section follows the style that has been used in editions of Luther’s Small Catechism since the sixteenth century. It is already being used worldwide by other Lutheran and Christian churches as a resource that stands out uniquely among helps for teaching the faith to inquirers, seekers, and both new and more mature Christians of all ages.

The new Explanation is the source for our new confirmation curriculum, which appeared in August 2018 in thirty- and sixty-week formats. These will be followed by an apologetics resource and Bible curriculum, available later in 2019. Incorporating a comprehensive approach for teaching the faith and helping catechumens learn the truth of Scripture and how to live those truths in their lives, the new curriculum has also been well received. A new comprehensive curriculum for use with children at any time—Sundays or midweek—and in a variety of formats launches this fall, replacing our older Sunday School curriculum.

During this triennium, we launched CPH FaithCourses, an exciting new video- and web-based platform with a wide variety of materials and teaching opportunities. We are adding content to it monthly and are rapidly expanding the breadth and depth of offerings in the platform, which is being used by congregations, individuals, and various congregational groups in a variety of settings. For instance, a congregation in the Synod has 500 members enrolled in a study of a CPH book supported by the CPH FaithCourses teaching component; those learners are moving at their own pace through various materials: books, Bible studies, topical studies, and the like.

CPH continues to place a high priority on delivering resources in digital formats. We now offer 800 titles as ebooks, in both Kindle and Apple formats, and continue to issue our professional and academic titles in the powerful LOGOS software platform. We are enhancing our digital options for Sunday School and Day School curriculum. Working in close partnership with active parish school teachers, principals, DCEs, and professors across our Concordia University System, we are developing innovative resources that address a diversity of learning styles in various teacher-driven educational formats using the latest in digital technologies.

Several new editions of Holy Scripture have been released, including The Growing in Faith Bible, which is aimed at younger readers, placing into their hands an entire copy of the Scriptures, with notes, helps, and original artwork throughout. We offer Bibles for every age and stage of Christian faith and life, from picture Bibles to The Lutheran Study Bible, in all sorts of editions and formats. The Enduring Word Bible offers the opportunity for journaling in both notes and pictures.

The Every One His Witness program, with supporting resources, has been very well received across the Synod, and we were honored to partner with the Office of National Mission’s Witness and Outreach Ministry department to publish this resource.

To meet the challenges of our culture, we have released a number of important resources aimed at reaching all ages of the Synod’s members on a range of vital moral issues, such as human sexuality, gender confusion, homosexuality, and abortion. These issues continue to challenge the Church to respond in loving and faithful ways, to honor the truths of God’s Word, and to reach people in constructive and helpful ways. CPH resources equip our members to speak faithfully and effectively to current problems and trends. In addition to resources aimed at our lay members, we also focus on providing helpful ministry tools and resources for our pastors, teachers, and other professional church workers as they minister to and among millennials, the aging, young families, and single parents, and in times of crisis and struggle such as suicide, death, and chronic illness.

Our major scholarly projects continue apace, with the release every year of two volumes in the Concordia Commentary series; a volume a year in the continuation of the American Edition of Luther’s Works, the most important and longest work of systematic theology; and the Loci Theologici of Dr. Johann Gerhard. In 2018, we fulfilled our commitment to Synod to provide the major works of Dr. C. F. W. Walther in English in a unified series of his works. Additionally, we have added to the works of “the Second Martin,” Martin Chemnitz, and expanded his works available in English, including his foundational Church Order and Apology of the Book of Concord. In partnership with the LCMS Office of the President, a significant collection of essays on the historic faithful practice of closed Communion has been made available and has found wide circulation throughout confessional Lutheranism among our partner churches.

Encouraging and equipping the laity with faithful Lutheran devotional works has also remained a key focus. We have released the masterful Lutheran Prayer Companion, originally
R16

Concordia University System

The reason for being (raison d’etre) of the Concordia University System is the Incarnation, Life, Death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is in Him that all knowledge can be rightly understood and ordered: “He is before all things and in him all things hold together” (Colossians 1:17). This assumption flows from the confession of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod that grace alone, faith alone, and Scripture alone are the pillars of the Christian faith as articulated in the Lutheran Confessions and the Book of Concord.

The formal incorporation of the Concordia University System in 1992 combined the historic ministries of the ten colleges and universities of the LCMS into a collaborative unit for the benefit and enrichment of all the schools. Each of the institutions, from their founding, is a ministry “owned and operated” by the LCMS.

Each school has provided a summary of how its mission of witness to Jesus Christ and service to its students and communities is presently lived out. The institutions express this mission of the Church in crucial ways daily as entities of the Synod. Several recent developments are especially noteworthy (as also exhibited in the charts), namely, the continued growth—collectively—in the number of students, the expansion of graduate programs at the MA, DEd, and PhD levels, and the growth of professional programs—nursing, pharmacy, physical therapy, law. All instruction is under the rubrics of preparing students for a life of “vocation” as members of Christ’s Church. An abiding concern is the decline in church vocations among students even as enrollment continues to grow. President Harrison and the CUS Board have begun several initiatives to address this concern.

Special recognition and thanks are due the presidents who are leading these ministries of the church in higher education in a face of significant challenges.

These societal and cultural forces include: a demographic decline in the historic pool of prospective students, an increase of often intrusive governmental regulations, the complex impact of distance education on all institutions of higher learning, the severe economic challenges for students, and the increasingly competitive environments of junior colleges and cognate institutions.

In such a challenging context, the Concordia University System mourns and regrets the closure of Concordia College Alabama in Selma, Alabama. Sister schools of Concordia over some twelve years sent professors, administrators, and staff to assist. The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod sent several million dollars in direct aid. When further fiscal deficits continued, the Concordia University System sponsored two studies on viability. “Concordia College Alabama and Selma” by J. Michael Willard, an external expert, was an in-depth study of the social and cultural realities that the college was experiencing. The second study, “Report of the Ad Hoc Task Force,” was led by Rev. Dr. Tom Ries, President of Concordia University St. Paul, and included Mr. David Kumm, Executive Vice President—Chief Financial Officer/Chief Operating Officer at Concordia University Nebraska; Ms. Pam Lee, Vice President of Business Services (retired) at Concordia University Texas; Mr. Dennis Stoecklin, Chief Financial Officer at Concordia University Portland; and Ms. Bobi Swan, Vice President for Enrollment at Concordia University Portland. The fiscal conclusion: “Private gifts and grants need to continue to operate Concordia College Alabama as a four-year liberal arts college are similar under both analyses, and range from $5.6 million in FY2016 to $6.4 million in FY 2019” (p. 4).

Despite the heroic efforts of Concordia College Alabama’s Board of Regents, the Concordia University System, and The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, such large subsidies could not be funded. Multiple efforts for other alternative solutions were expended by Concordia College Alabama’s Board of Regents, the Board of Directors of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, and the Concordia University System but to no avail.

We rejoice and give thanks for the multiple achievements in service to Christ, to their students, and to the Selma, Alabama,
community provided by Concordia College Alabama for over ninety years. Soli Deo Gloria!

As an indication that the institutions of the Concordia University System remain defined by and embedded in the witness of the church, the presidents and their boards of regents expressed their solidarity with the church’s mission in an identity statement. This statement, along with supporting protocols, express a distinctive commitment and identity. The church can rightly rejoice and give thanks for the following:

**Lutheran Identity Standards for Concordia University Institutions (As Adopted by the Institutions in the Lutheran Identity Statement)**

As educational institutions of the LCMS, the colleges and universities of the Concordia University System confess the faith of the Church.

The Concordias uphold the teachings of sacred Scripture and their articulation in the Lutheran Confessions. This includes the biblical teaching that Jesus Christ—true God and true man—is the sole way to God’s mercy and grace; that at the beginning of time the triune God created all things; that life is sacred from conception to natural death; and that marriage between a man and a woman is a sacred gift of God’s creative hand—over against the reductionistic assumptions of many in our culture who view men and women as only transitory and material beings.

As educational institutions of the LCMS, the Concordias are committed to providing an excellent, robust curriculum in the liberal arts and professional studies, which together equip students for various vocations of service to church and society. As C. F. W. Walther wrote, “As long as and wherever the Christian church flourished, it always and everywhere proved itself to be a friend and cultivator of all good arts and sciences, gave its future servants a scholarly preparatory training, and did not disdain to permit its gifted youth at its schools of higher learning to be trained by the standard products of even pagan arts and science.” Accordingly, the colleges and universities of the Concordia University System affirm and promise to uphold these identity standards:

1. **Identity Statements**—The institution’s mission statement (and/or vision statement) clearly identifies it as an LCMS institution, as do the institution’s primary print and electronic publications.

2. **Governing Board**—All of the institution’s regents are active members in good standing of LCMS congregations (Bylaw 3.10.6.2 [6]).

3. **Senior Leadership**—The president and the senior leaders over academic student life, admissions, and athletics are active members in good standing of LCMS congregations, and faithfully participate in worship and religious activities on campus and in their local congregations.

4. **Faculty**—Each tenure track or continuing-level faculty search is given optimal exposure among members of congregations of the LCMS to identity faculty who are qualified in their respective academic discipline and are members of LCMS congregations. Ideally, all faculty members are active members of LCMS congregations. When academically qualified LCMS members are not available, faculty members will be Christians who affirm, at minimum, the content of the Ecumenical Creeds and are members of Christian congregations. All faculty members promise to perform their duties in harmony with the truths of Holy Scripture, the Lutheran Confessions, and the doctrinal statements of the LCMS (Bylaw 3.10.5.6.2).

5. **Theology Faculty**—All theology faculty (full-time and part-time) are active members in good standing of LCMS congregations and fully affirm the theological confession of the LCMS. As the LCMS Bylaws indicate, all full-time theology faculty receive prior approval from the CUS Board of Directors before being appointed or called (Bylaw 3.6.6.1).

6. **Academic Freedom and Responsibility**—All full-time faculty acknowledge their acceptance of the CUS Statement of Academic Freedom and Responsibilities. All faculty, both full- and part-time, pledge to perform their duties in harmony with Scripture, the Confessions, and the Synod’s doctrinal statements (Bylaw 3.10.5.6.2).

7. **Faith and Learning**—In accordance with the doctrine of the two kingdoms, all faculty strive to faithfully bring Lutheran theology into interaction with their various academic disciplines while respecting the integrity of those disciplines. Likewise, in other campus arenas, faculty, staff, and administrators will seek to apply Lutheran theology within their campus vocations.

8. **Required Theology Courses**—The institution requires two to three theology courses for an undergraduate degree, typically in Old Testament, New Testament, and Christian doctrine. Because these courses are directly related to the theological identity of CUS institutions and to the identity formation of graduates, these theology courses will normally be taken at a CUS institution. Exceptions to this will be approved by the institution’s called theological faculty.

9. **Preparation of Church Workers**—The institution provides resources to recruit, form, nurture, and place students preparing for professional church work in the LCMS (e.g., pre-seminary, pre-deaconess, deaconess, Lutheran teachers, DCEs, DCOs, DPMs, etc.). Specific programs may vary by campus.

10. **Campus Ministry**—The institution offers regular opportunities for worship that reflect the confession of the church. Faculty, staff, and students are strongly encouraged to participate in these services. The institution calls a campus pastor or chaplain, who is a Minister of Religion—ordained of the LCMS, who oversees the worship life of the community, organizes opportunities for Christian service and witness, and provides pastoral care for students.
11. **Assessment of Institutional Commitment to Lutheran Identity**—Each institution will submit an annual written report to the CUS Board of Directors describing, with evidence, how the institution meets the 10 Lutheran Identity Standards. The report will be endorsed by each respective Board of Regents and will be shared with the campus community.

**Enrollment, Placement, and Financial Information**

**Annual Operating Expenses by Institution for the Five Years Ending June 30, 2018**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>FY2014</th>
<th>FY2015</th>
<th>FY2016</th>
<th>FY2017</th>
<th>FY2018</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ann Arbor</td>
<td>Included In Mequon</td>
<td>Included In Mequon</td>
<td>Included In Mequon</td>
<td>Included In Mequon</td>
<td>Included In Mequon</td>
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<tr>
<td>Austin</td>
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<td>$37,757,476</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bronxville</td>
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<td>$24,704,955</td>
<td>$27,364,394</td>
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<tr>
<td>Irvine</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mequon</td>
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<td>$109,463,907</td>
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<tr>
<td>Portland</td>
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<td>$128,273,628</td>
<td>$101,316,430</td>
<td>$89,403,323</td>
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<tr>
<td>River Forest</td>
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<td>$60,951,481</td>
<td>$60,951,481</td>
<td>$68,680,178</td>
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<tr>
<td>St. Paul</td>
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<td>$47,299,855</td>
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<td>$522,193,964</td>
<td>$487,856,998</td>
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**Scholarships and Financial Aid by Institutions for Four Years Ending June 30, 2018**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>FY2018</th>
<th>FY2017</th>
<th>FY2016</th>
<th>FY2015</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Austin</td>
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<td>$19,691,733</td>
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<td>Bronxville</td>
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<td>$9,278,680</td>
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<tr>
<td>Irvine</td>
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<td>River Forest</td>
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<td>$18,613,547</td>
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<tr>
<td>St. Paul</td>
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<td>$11,577,561</td>
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**Church Worker Financial Aid by Institution Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 2018**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>FY2018</th>
<th>FY2017</th>
<th>FY2018</th>
<th>FY2017</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<td>$1,090,010</td>
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<td>$29,380,431</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irvine</td>
<td>$21,610,420</td>
<td>$18,613,547</td>
<td>$17,066,521</td>
<td>$16,683,084</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portland</td>
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<td>Not Yet Available</td>
<td>Not Yet Available</td>
<td>$23,676</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>River Forest</td>
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<td>$1,959,995</td>
<td>$1,959,995</td>
<td>$1,959,995</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Paul</td>
<td>$1,889,995</td>
<td>$1,889,995</td>
<td>$1,889,995</td>
<td>$1,889,995</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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<td>$14,563,951</td>
<td>$14,563,951</td>
<td>$14,563,951</td>
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</table>

**Goals for the Concordia University System in the Triennium—2019–2022**

Completely dependent on the grace and mercy of the triune God, the Concordia University System seeks to achieve these goals in the coming triennium of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod:

1. Insure and defend the freedom of Concordia University System’s colleges and universities to teach in accord with the church’s confession and require ethical behavior based on that confession on the part of faculty, staff, and students through full implementation of the “Identity Statement” and its protocols in both on-campus and distance-education programs.

2. Increase the number of church work students by at least one-third through multiple efforts to highlight the rewarding and noble calling of service to Christ and His church in parochial education, public education, and international education. Simultaneously, to increase the number of LCMS students by one-third.
3. Enhance the recruitment and development of LCMS faculty by at least 10 percent throughout the system in all program areas and encourage all nonrostered faculty to participate in the colloquy program and thereby increase the number of rostered workers while promoting the training of students through the various graduate programs, especially in education and in other ministry areas.

4. Recommend to all students—whatever religious background—the Reformation truths of sola gratia, sola fidei, sola Scriptura while challenging materialism, pluralism, rationalism, and other worldviews that contradict the scriptural portrait of man and woman as the apex of God’s creation and the object of His love and mercy in sending His Son, Jesus Christ, as Savior.

5. Present and promote the sanctity of life by under-scoring the fact that men and women are created in the image of God and merit care and protection from conception to natural death by their very nature as His creatures.

6. Present and promote the beauty and goodness of marriage between a man and a woman as God’s sacred order to be lived out in love and lifelong fidelity while also affirming the nobility and virtue of the vocation to a single life in service to God and neighbor.

7. Accent the quality of instruction in the liberal arts and professional programs as an expression of gratitude for God’s gift of wisdom and knowledge in a life that is spent in service to God and our neighbor.

8. Increase communication and collaboration between the colleges and universities, especially in the areas of distance education and recruitment, while reaching out to collaborate with other ministries of the church—Urban Ministry, Rural Ministry, Partners Abroad, etc.

Soli Deo Gloria!

Dean O. Wenthe, President

Concordia College New York

Founded in 1881, Concordia College New York (CCNY) is an affiliate of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) and member of the Concordia University System (CUS). Beginning in 2016, faculty and staff collaborated on a restatement of Concordia’s Mission and Values. Released in 2017, the new mission statement reads: Concordia College New York is a Christian higher education community of learning where mutual respect flourishes, responsibility is developed, and reverence for God is cultivated so that students can pursue lives of passion, purpose, and service. The College’s values are defined as Identity, Quality, Diversity, Innovation, and Vocation; expanded wording around each value can be found at https://www.concordia-ny.edu/about/mission-and-values. It is no accident that Identity is our first value; we define it as: We are anchored in a living Lutheran heritage as we strive to follow Jesus Christ. We express this identity with an ethics-infused curriculum and a faith-informed community life.

Concordia College New York continues to be recognized as a Best College in the U.S. News rankings. The College’s 2016 ranking of 40th in Best Regional Colleges in the North jumped to 22nd in 2017 and has remained at or above that number in subsequent rankings. Our students’ scores on professional licensure tests continue to be a testament to the strength of our programs: first-time NCLEX pass rates reveal our Nursing program to be among the top in New York State, and our Radiologic Technology classes regularly achieve 100 percent first-time pass rates on the AART.

I. Goals: New Strategic Plan

a. New Strategic Plan. In 2016, the College formed a Strategy Team for Educational Priorities (STEP), charged with developing a new strategic plan. A living document informed by continual assessment and analysis, the new Strategic Plan identifies six priorities, each linked to the College’s Dashboard Report, a key assessment metric established as a means of evaluating areas of institutional effectiveness across the College:

1. Offer high quality academic programs, building on the College’s strong faith-based liberal arts foundation with greater emphasis on programs that provide a career pathway, particularly in health services, business, and education, using innovative delivery formats to meet market demands.

2. Diversify recruitment and enrollment channels to foster sustainable growth, reduce risk, and to significantly increase net enrollment revenue, while building on the College’s market positioning: “Small School. BIG IMPACT.”

3. Promote academic excellence by investing in faculty training and professional development, and enhancing program and institutional assessment processes.

4. Enhance student support services by providing a distinctive high-touch experience, and thereby promote student academic success, and personal and spiritual development, as well as advancement in careers, vocation, and education.

5. Invest in our resources—people, facilities, and technology—to strengthen and support the College’s mission, academic programs, services, and operations. With this, the College has taken a very focused approach to fostering a mutually respectful workplace.

6. Engage our key constituents and increase fundraising revenue for the College to support programs, faculty, facilities, and most importantly, our students.
officer, board, and commission reports

b. Growth. Building on a long-term trend of steady growth, Concordia College New York increased enrollment by 9 percent for the 2018–2019 academic year. The College has continued its notable growth (The Chronicle of Higher Education Almanac 2018–19 named Concordia College New York a Fastest-Growing College) to record enrollment. We expect this growth to continue in response to the launch of new academic programs, including Criminal Justice, MS TESOL, MS Leadership, MS Educational Leadership, Center for Contextual Leadership, and ImpactU (an immersive college experience for students with a range of developmental disabilities). Student retention and comprehensive support remain priorities, and key student-facing investments in infrastructure have been made, including expanded parking to accommodate commuter students and a revamp of dining facilities.

II. Accomplishments: Enduring Lutheran Christian Identity

a. Morning Reflections. Morning Reflections is one of the ways we manifest our faith-informed community life. For twenty minutes each weekday morning, the community pauses school and work to gather in the campus chapel. Broad themes—solicited from students—frame the week, with Wednesdays reserved for Holy Communion celebration that alternates between a liturgically formal and informal rite. Reflections are expected to relate to the week’s theme and align with the College’s mission and values. A well-attended compline service is also held on Monday nights.

b. Concordia’s Center for Contextual Leadership (C4CL) is now in its second year and currently there is a cohort of 12 students. C4CL is a five-year course of study that leads to a bachelor’s degree in the student’s major of choice, a language concentration, and a master’s degree in Leadership. Students form a community around the idea of life and work as vocation, useful in the service of God and humanity. C4CL graduates are prepared for leadership positions in religious work, the corporate world, entrepreneurial endeavors, and the nonprofit sector. Under a grant from the Kern Family Foundation, C4CL Kern Fellows receive full tuition scholarships exclusive of room, board, and fees. Admitted only via recommendation from their home clergy, Kern Fellows major in Judeo-Christian Theology and commit to serving in a religious capacity for at least 5 years upon graduation.

c. Academic Quality. After the close of the 2017–2018 academic year, the College announced a reframing of its academic programs into four schools: School of Business, School of Education, School of Health Sciences and Nursing, and School of Humanities. The new structure academically aligns the College’s expanding roster of programs under the oversight of a dedicated dean, and gives faculty ownership to expand both within and across disciplines, further broadening opportunities for students.

As we continue to expand our preprofessional programs (including a new Criminal Justice major), we remain committed to delivering a holistic education with a strong emphasis on the humanities: the human ties that humanize us. In October of this year, the College announced the creation of our first endowed chair: The Rev. Dr. Thomas Nelson Green Endowed Chair for the School of Humanities. Named for a revered former dean and funded by a $500K matching gift, the chair will support the study of humanities within the disparate academic disciplines, so that all students can engage in creative and critical thinking about the human experience across the boundaries of difference. In January 2019, Dean of the School of Humanities, Distinguished Professor Dr. Mandana Nakhai, was installed in the chair.

Looking Ahead Concordia College is strategically planning for the future with scenario planning efforts that help identify critical uncertainties in higher education and their potential impact and implications. The College also continues to evaluate majors and align program offerings with demand (for instance, a new pre-engineering program is being developed). With an eye to net tuition revenue, the College will continue outreach to nontraditional students (adults, graduates, veterans), and develop new initiatives in light of the changing international recruitment market. Strategic partnerships, which have been an area of real strength (additional off-site locations for our educational programs, community college pathways), will continue to be developed.

John A. Nunes, President

R16.2

Concordia University Chicago

As a distinctive, comprehensive university of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, centered in the Gospel of Jesus Christ and based in the liberal arts, Concordia University Chicago (CUC) equips men and women to serve and lead with integrity, creativity, competence, and compassion in a diverse, interconnected, and increasingly urbanized church and world. Founded in 1864 with earlier roots traced to 1857, CUC was the first Concordia and has remained faithful to its mission in each succeeding generation.

• Throughout 2017, the university celebrated the 500th anniversary of the Lutheran Reformation through the arts, lectures, a collection of rare Reformation-related and Christian books, festival worship, and a public forum involving prominent Lutheran, Roman Catholic, and Reformed theologians.

• Combined undergraduate and graduate enrollment grew from approximately 5,000 in 2016 to a historic record of more than 6,000 in 2019.

• The entering undergraduate class in Fall 2018 set a new record-high enrollment, including the largest freshman class enrolled in the past twenty years.

• Graduate enrollment for Fall 2018 surged to 4,494 students.

• The university continues to strengthen its interna-
Total international enrollment reached a high of 435 graduate and undergraduate students in Fall 2018.

Over the past four years, freshman-to-sophomore undergraduate student retention increased by 11 percent.

Lutheran teacher education, director of Christian education, director of parish music, the preseminary program, and the Synod’s only undergraduate deaconess program form the foundation for the university’s long-standing church professional programs.

Since 2016, CUC has served the Church with a new undergraduate major in Classical Lutheran Liberal Arts.

The university established the Center for the Advancement of Lutheran Liberal Arts (CALLA), which will host the national Christian Classical Liberal Education conference in July 2019.

The university will host the Higher Things Conference in July 2019.

The historic campus in River Forest, Illinois, has undergone major facilities changes including:

- The construction of Concordia Hall, a five-story, all-suite, state-of-the-art residence hall ($16.5m)
- New student lounges connecting residence halls ($500k)
- The renovation of the 100-year-old West Annex as the exemplary Kreft Student Success Center, co-locating student support offices into one modern facility ($2m)
- The renovation and renaming of Mary Martha North Hall as Trusheim Residence Hall ($1.5m)
- Renovation of the Triangle, the primary exterior space at the center of campus, including relocating the beloved Luther statue ($125k)
- An enclosed connector between the Christopher Center and Kreft Student Success Center ($500k)
- Renovation of Koeneke Community Center retail food operations ($250k)
- Planned renovations to the McCormick Recital Hall ($1.4m)

The university continues to expand its degree programs including the addition of a new Doctor of Business Administration through the College of Business.

The university was ranked as a 2019 Best Regional University—Midwest and Best Value—Regional Universities by U.S. News and World Report.

The university was among those recognized for Best Ethnic Diversity by U.S. News and World Report. The university is blessed to carry out the Great Commission in bringing Jesus Christ to all nations and people.

Reflecting the mission of CUC and in response to the mission field God has provided, CUC was officially designated as a Hispanic Serving Institution by the Hispanic-Serving Institutions Center for Policy and Practice (HSICP2). Thirty-three percent of undergraduates are Hispanic.

The university has been designated a College of Distinction for the ninth year in a row, has also been named as a Christian College of Distinction, and is recognized for exemplary business and education academic programs by the Colleges of Distinction Association for “high-impact educational practices.”

The university was ranked as a Best Regional University—Midwest, Best Value—Regional Universities Midwest, and listed for Best Ethnic Diversity—Regional Universities Midwest by U.S. News and World Report for 2018.

The university is ranked among the top 100 Best Bachelor’s Online Degree programs in the nation by U.S. News and World Report for 2019 and achieved recognition among the Best Online MBA Programs and Best Online Graduate Education Programs as well.

The Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) recently completed its on-site review of the College of Education, awarding the coveted status of “Nationally Recognized” to three programs: Elementary Education, Spanish Education, and Special Education.

CUC submitted its HLC mid-cycle Quality Assurance Portfolio in June 2018.

CUC’s full-time faculty currently numbers 175 individuals, an all-time high.

CUC is one of only a few colleges in the country to operate in the black every year for 15 straight years, during which total enrollment has increased over 300 percent and during this same time period, endowment funds have increased approximately 525 percent.

During the past ten years, university enrollment has increased 40 percent, and the endowment funds have increased 125 percent.

Athletics programs have expanded since 2016 to include men’s and women’s lacrosse and men’s volleyball. The Cougar baseball program made consecutive
appearances at the NCAA Division III World Series in 2017 and 2018 and a #4 final national ranking.

- Athletic Excellence (2017–18): 161 Scholar Athletes; NACC Man and NACC Woman of the Year; 2 All-Academic Teams; 29 NACC All-Conference Athletes; 7 All-Americans; 4 NACC Athletes of the Year; and 2 NACC Coaches of the Year.

- The university is celebrating the tenth year of partnership with Orchard Place Elementary School in Des Plaines, Illinois, which promotes college awareness at a young age and encourages all students, regardless of socioeconomic or other challenges, to set goals for college. Nine CUC alumni are also teachers at Orchard Place. More than 450 students, parents, and educators have participated in this college-bound program.

- Among students who earned baccalaureate degrees this May are those who participated in Tomorrow's Promise, a nationally recognized, innovative partnership between Concordia Chicago, a local public school district, and Fifth Third Bank. This public-private partnership provided financial resources and mentoring to students selected as sixth graders with high potential for academic success.

- The university’s Wind Symphony made its second performance appearance at New York City’s famed Carnegie Hall in 2019.

- A team of undergraduate students were awarded first place in the Chicago IEEEXtreme 24-Hour Programming Competition, for the third time in four years. Their performance in the annual Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE) contest placed them 30th in the United States and 426th in the world—in the top 10 percent—out of 5,155 teams. CUC also debuted its first-ever all-female programming team, which finished 84th in the United States and 915th in the world, among the top 20 percent.

- The Golden Apple Award for Excellence in Teaching has been awarded to 20 CUC alumni as a recognition of their exceptional dedication to both their students and schools. The related Golden Apple Scholars of Illinois program is designed to help place top teachers into high-needs schools—25 CUC students and alumni have been named as scholars.

- Seven CUC faculty members have been named as Fulbright Scholars providing them the opportunity to participate in the international academic exchange program sponsored by the U.S. Department of State.

- The Rev. Dr. Daniel L. Gard, 11th president of Concordia Chicago, retired from the United States Navy in October 2016 and from the presidency of Concordia Chicago on July 2, 2019. A presidential search is being conducted at the time of this writing and may be completed by the time of the convention.

Concordia University Chicago serves the Synod in its mission of education and, through that mission, as a self-sustaining mission of our Lord’s Great Commission. At the center is Jesus Christ, the Savior of all the world. Here, His blessings abound.

**Soli Deo Gloria!**

Daniel L. Gard, President

**R16.3**

**Concordia University, Irvine**

**Mission Statement**

Concordia University, Irvine, guided by the Great Commission of Christ Jesus and the Lutheran Confessions, empowers students through the liberal arts and professional studies for lives of learning, service, and leadership.

**Vision Statement**

Concordia University, Irvine, will be among the finest distinctively Lutheran liberal arts universities in America, preparing wise, honorable, cultivated citizens, informed by the Gospel of Jesus Christ, for the Church and world.

University updates for 2019 Convention Workbook:

- After securing a $500,000 grant from the Lilly Foundation, the university established the Crosswise Institute, a summer program that engages high school students in meaningful dialogue on contemporary cultural issues from a Lutheran Christian perspective.

- Responding to workers in the field, Concordia created a new track for Director of Christian Education training in which candidates earn an MA in Theology.

- Concordia’s Board of Regents endorsed a proposal that prepares the university to be designated as a Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI). The federal designation allows Concordia to compete for grants that serve low-income, first-generation Hispanic students. HSI status can be achieved when Concordia’s undergraduate Hispanic population reaches 25 percent. Current Hispanic population is 24 percent.

- In the fall of 2016, Concordia hosted its first annual Latina Leadership Conference, a free half-day event designed to help girls in local high schools and community colleges and their parents to navigate the road to college. CUI faculty, staff, students, and local LCMS church members volunteer their time for the conference, which now draws over 300 attendees from 17 high schools and four community colleges.

- A Hispanic Leadership Advisory Board was constituted for the purpose of helping the university recruit students and secure scholarship support from the Hispanic community.

- Together with other conservative Christian colleges and universities in the state, Concordia formed the California Association of Christian Colleges and Universities (CACCU) to help influence state legislation which upholds and supports religious freedom.

- Concordia successfully transitioned its athletic affili-
• Concordia’s regents approved, in concept, a new campus master plan which gives direction to a complete four-phase campus buildout within the next 20–25 years. The City of Irvine has approved Phase One and Phase Two of the master plan.

• The university launched publicly “Forward in Faith—The Campaign for Concordia” in October 2018 with an $85M goal. Within the campaign, Concordia secured a $5 million estate gift, the largest of its kind in the university’s history. To date, the comprehensive campaign has raised over $72M. The new $30M Borland-Manske Center, housing music, worship, and theology programs, will provide state-of-the art recording, rehearsal, instruction, and performance spaces starting in August 2019.

• Over ten million dollars has been invested in campus improvements and student amenities in the last three years, including updates to student residence halls, fitness center, lounges, study rooms, outdoor seating, and BBQs.

• Concordia celebrated the 500th anniversary of the Reformation in 2017 with a concert titled “Reformation 500: An Evening of Word and Song.” More than 500 musicians, speakers, and dancers joined the sold-out crowd of over 1,700 concert-goers in what was the largest celebration of the Reformation on the West Coast. The concert was held at Segerstrom Concert Hall, Orange County’s premiere concert venue.

• Concordia’s music department produced two highly acclaimed, sold-out Christmas concerts in December 2018, also performed at Segerstrom Concert Hall.

• Concordia’s Enduring Questions & Ideas (Q&I) general education curriculum received national attention when profiled in The Chronicle of Higher Education’s 2018 special report on “Reforming Gen Ed: Strategies for Success on Your Campus.”

• In the last three years, Concordia added the following academic programs:
  o Bachelor of Science in Computer Science
  o Minor in Computer Science
  o Bachelor of Science in Entrepreneurial Ministry Leadership
  o Master of Arts in Church Leadership
  o Bachelor of Arts in Leadership Studies
  o Master of Arts in Executive Coaching and Consultation
  o Master of Science in Coaching and Athletics Administration

• For 2018, U.S. News ranked Concordia among the Best Colleges for Veterans in the Western Region of the U.S.

• Concordia University, Irvine, alumni now number over 20,000.

• Since its inception in January 2014, 137 students have entered Concordia’s Doctor of Education Leadership program, which enjoys a retention rate of 86 percent and a graduation rate of 75 percent.

• Over three-fourths of Concordia’s EdD graduates were promoted to higher levels of administrative or faculty positions from the time of admission into the program to completion of the degree.

• Last summer CUI hosted its seventh annual Teen Entrepreneur Academy, a residential business summer camp for high school students which drew 100 high school students from Asia and the United States, who learned about starting their own businesses while competing for a $1,500 cash prize for best business plan. Since inception, over 600 high school students have participated in the annual camp business academy.

• CUI also hosted the fourth annual Kid Entrepreneur Academy, a business summer day camp for kids in grades 5–8 which drew a record 85 students. The kids learned principles of business and business start-up strategies. Over 300 kids have participated since the program began. Last spring, CUI hosted its third annual Cornelius Business Plan Competition, open to all CUI students. Student teams competed for $5,000 in cash prizes to help start their own businesses.

• Concordia’s Human Resources department transitioned staff and faculty recruitment processes to a web-based Applicant Tracking System. The new system allows CUI to advertise positions more broadly and enlarges the recruitment pool, resulting in higher caliber applicants and better results.

• Staff and faculty who achieved the platinum level in the Concordia Plan Services wellness program have almost tripled since last year.

Kurt J. Krueger, Interim President

2019 Convention Workbook
The Concordia community—our 2,500 students, our faculty and staff partners in ministry, regents, foundation directors, 23,000 living alumni, and friends and supporters—have been diligently carrying out a variety of initiatives and activities to more fully realize our vision to be a thriving Lutheran university. As we do so, we “rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances” for we know that this is God’s will for His university (1 Thess. 5:16–18).

In 2019, Concordia is celebrating its 125th anniversary of service to God’s Church and world. While the activities and items set forth in this report may differ from those that Rev. George Weller, Concordia’s first president, shared with the Synod in the late 1800s, the reason for them has not changed—to equip our laity and our Synod to share, teach, and learn, by the power of the Holy Spirit, the Good News we have in Christ Jesus.

Our Promises of a Lutheran Education

Central to our 2020 strategic plan was to “articulate and deliver” the promises of a Lutheran education. While our undergraduate student body is nearly 50 percent LCMS, we are increasingly serving men and women from other Christian denominations. As this transition takes place, we resolved to explain what a “Lutheran education” means so that all who want to attend a Christ-centered university know what they will experience at Concordia.

During the past triennium, we have identified and articulated the four promises of a Lutheran education—Community, where guidance is provided and, when we fall short, grace is offered; Inquiry, as we firmly stand on the Truth, we explore, discover, and discuss the truths of God’s creation and interactions with each other; Purpose, understanding that we have been given a multitude of vocations by God, through which we serve Him by serving others; Wisdom, the knowledge that we live as citizens of two kingdoms and the ability to navigate their numerous intersections in ways that are faithful to our Lord and Savior.

Equipping Men and Women

In August 2018, Concordia welcomed 428 new undergraduate students, leading to a full-time enrollment of 1,247 students on the Seward campus, our highest undergraduate enrollment in 45 years. Counting all students, undergraduate, graduate, and those taking dual credit courses at our partner high schools, Concordia had more than 2,500 learners enrolled during the 2018–2019 academic year. Thanks be to God!

Driving this undergraduate enrollment growth is a number of factors, including the strategic addition of undergraduate programs. During the past triennium:

- Concordia started a Bachelor of Arts in Art Therapy, the only higher education institution in the state of Nebraska to offer such a program.
- In October 2016, Concordia launched its Bachelor of Music in Music Therapy. Concordia is the only higher education institution in the Concordia University System and within the state of Nebraska to offer a music therapy program and one of only 81 colleges and universities nationwide, out of more than 4,700, with such a program.
- Concordia launched its Bachelor of Science in Agricultural Science program in December 2018. An innovative program designed in partnership with the industry, Concordia’s integrated approach to agriculture provides students with a broad educational foundation in animal science, plant science, food science, and agribusiness. Taking advantage of our distinctive as a Lutheran Christian university and our unique location in a small town in America’s Great Plains, the program features hands-on, practical experiences and internships with local industry partners, equipping students to serve throughout this important industry wherever workers are needed. The response to this program, both within the state of Nebraska and throughout the Synod, has been tremendously positive.
- The university has formed strategic partnerships with two community colleges in Nebraska, giving students who graduate from these public institutions the opportunity, for the first time, to receive their bachelor’s degree from a Christ-centered university.

Essential to equipping our undergraduate students, both body and soul, are facilities. During the past triennium, Concordia renovated and rededicated Weller Chapel Auditorium, where more than 1,400 gather throughout each week of the academic year to praise, worship, and pray. We also commenced construction on the Dunklau Center for Science, Math, and Business, a state-of-the-art, 86,000-sq.-ft. academic facility that will house the university’s natural science, business, computer science, math, and agricultural science programs. The science wing of this facility will open in July 2019, while the entire complex will be completed in December 2019. As the new home of two of our three largest academic majors—business and biology, the Dunklau Center is a transformative project for the university.

During the past triennium, Concordia’s College of Graduate Studies and Adult Education has expanded its academic programs to include the following:

- Master of Arts in School Counseling
- Master of Education in STEAM (science, technology, engineering, the arts and mathematics)

Concordia is also furthering the College of Graduate Studies and Adult Education through partnerships within the Synod. In 2018, Concordia partnered with Concordia University, Irvine, to offer a Master of Arts in Coaching and Athletic Administration and a Master of Science in Coaching and Exercise Sciences. This program, which builds on prior established and recognized programs of each institution, is the largest such graduate athletics administration program in the United States.

The university is in the process of relocating our Lincoln, NE, campus to the Nebraska District of the LCMS’s University Lutheran Chapel. Through this partnership, the university is gaining a high visibility site in downtown Lincoln, less than one block from the state’s flagship campus, while ensuring that the Nebraska District’s renovated facility is fully utilized. This has financial benefits for both the university and the district.

In the area of dual credit, Concordia currently has 26 high school partners, 21 of which are high schools of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. During the 2018–19 school year, more than 775 students took courses with Concordia through these
partnerships, which are a great blessing to both the high schools and the university.

**Life Together**

Concordia continues to faithfully partner with member congregations, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, and its agencies and to equip full-time workers for professional ministry:

- As of July 2018, 28 percent of all rostered synodical workers hold a Concordia degree.
- Concordia placed 169 graduates as Lutheran teachers, directors of Christian education, and directors of parish music during the past triennium.
- Concordia equips approximately 35 pre-seminary students each year in preparation for their ongoing education at Concordia Seminary and Concordia Theological Seminary.
- From 2016 to 2019, Concordia will have hosted approximately 25 different mission experiences. On average, approximately 10 percent of the undergraduate population takes part in a mission experience each year. To increase the number of students who participate in a mission trip, the university established the Acts 1:8 Students in Mission Fund, which provides grants to students to pay for a portion of their mission trip cost, reducing the financial hurdle to participation and involvement.
- In response to 2016 Resolution 8-01A, Concordia has launched the Lutheran School Ministry Program, designed for nonrostered teachers who serve in LCMS schools to gain additional training in order to incorporate the Lutheran educational ethos into their classrooms.
- Concordia offers the Lutheran Heritage Guarantee, providing students who are members of LCMS congregations or graduate from an LCMS high school at least $17,000 in institutional aid per year.
- As part of the Lutheran Heritage Guarantee, Concordia offers at least $19,000 in institutional aid for qualifying students who enroll in a professional church work program.
- The Center for Liturgical Art opened a new facility in 2017, expanding its capacity to support ecclesiastical art within the church. During the past triennium, it has completed 57 projects, including 50 for congregations and ministries of the Synod.
- From October 2016 to October 2017, the university hosted a series of 16 lectures and musical events to celebrate the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, culminating in a festival worship service with more than 1,500 on Reformation Sunday 2017.

The university continues to be tremendously blessed by the faithful, generous financial support of thousands of alumni and friends who firmly believe in our mission and strongly support our educational ministry. For the 30 months of the past triennium that ended on December 30, 2018, Concordia received more than $52 million in gifts, pledges, and deferred gift intentions from more than 7,500 supporters. These gifts have provided funding for scholarships, operations, the Dunklau Center for Science, Math, and Business, various endowments, including many to provide church work scholarships, and much more.

**Soli Deo Gloria**

Concordia continues to be recognized and upheld for providing a Christ-centered, academically excellent education:

- Concordia was ranked in 35th in the “Best Regional Universities-Midwest” category of *U.S. News & World Report*’s Best Colleges rankings in 2019, its highest ranking ever. In addition, Concordia was ranked #12 for “Best Value Schools.”
- Concordia has been recognized as a Christian College of Distinction during each year of the past triennium, one of only 72 so recognized during the 2018–19 academic year.
- Concordia was accepted for membership in the Council of Christian Colleges and Universities (CCCU), joining Concordia University Irvine as one of only 183 such institutions worldwide.
- Concordia’s online graduate education degree program was recognized in each of the last three years in the *U.S. News & World Report*’s Best Online Program rankings.
- Concordia ranks as the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics’ (NAIA) all-time leader in the number of Daktronics-NAIA Scholar-Athletes, with 1,403 and counting as of December 2018.

**Looking Ahead**

As it has for 125 years, Concordia University, Nebraska, by God’s grace, remains firmly rooted in the Gospel and committed to faithfully carrying out its mission to be “an excellent academic and Christ-centered community equipping men and women for lives of learning, service and leadership in the church and world.” By delivering Our Promises of a Lutheran Education, Concordia strives to equip every man and woman who wants to serve in the full-time ministries of the Synod and every woman and man who desires to serve God by serving others in vocations in the world.

Competition for students, both undergraduate and graduate, will continue. It is the reality of higher education. In this competitive climate, Concordia’s expanded academic offerings and enhanced facilities will allow the university to attract students who may not have previously considered Concordia, including members of LCMS congregations. Those who are led to attend will, like the generations who have come before them, receive an excellent education and, most importantly, by the power of the Holy Spirit, meet Christ here. Secure in our knowledge of His blessing, we recognize that the opportunities before us are ever present. May Almighty God give us the wisdom and insight to pursue them.

Our prayers are with the delegates during their convention deliberations. May God bless richly the 67th Convention of the LCMS, under its theme of being “Joyfully Lutheran,” and our work together to witness Jesus Christ throughout the world.

Brian L. Friedrich, President
R16.5

Concordia University, Portland

Greetings, LCMS National Convention delegates and colleagues in Christ,

Concordia University-Portland continues to affirm and seeks to live out its mission as a Lutheran university to prepare leaders for the transformation of society, as we focus on our core themes of Lutheran, Rigor, and Servant Leadership. The university is pursuing new models for delivering on this mission, pursuing our Vision 2024, and adapting to current student needs and marketplace realities.

This 2018–19 academic year, our campus theme was “All In,” based on Matthew 22:37–39, as we seek to love God and serve our neighbors. We strive to be “All In” as we live out the LCMS National Convention theme “Joyfully Lutheran: Rejoice, Pray, Give Thanks,” reminding us to “Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus” (1 Thess. 5:16–18).

Here are some highlights of God’s blessings these past few years:

- As of today, our student enrollment is more than 6,000 worldwide on campus and online, and growing, with a focus on developing caring professionals, in a Lutheran intellectual tradition, focusing in four primary areas: education, health care, business, and law. During 2013–15, our enrollment more than doubled, dipping briefly in 2016, before continuing on an upward trajectory. By God’s grace, the University and its flagship programs, which seek and reach the highest standards and accreditations, continues to attract students to a unique Lutheran higher education experience.

- Our board of regents continues to align and steward God’s resources according to our mission and vision, embedding our arts and sciences within the professional program areas and creating a new Luther Center that will reach more intentionally across programs, curriculum, geographies, and congregations to build upon our 113-year commitment to students, community, and congregations throughout the Pacific Northwest. Leadership in our religion faculty, campus ministry, and Concordia’s Center for Applied Lutheran Leadership continue to provide direction as we live out our mission.

- Our 3 to PhD community, now in its second year of development, following the fall 2017 grand opening of a new $48M facility for Concordia University-Portland’s College of Education and Faubion School PK–8, is receiving national attention as a new model to create safer, healthier, and more educated communities. The initiative is a public-private partnership with Portland Public Schools’ Faubion School, Trillium Family Services, Kaiser Permanente, and Basics Food Market. Learn more at www.3toPhD.org.

- Concordia Athletics was successful in its three-year process to move from NAIA to NCAA Division II (GNAC Conference), in which we are now competing. Join us for an event! www.gocugo.com

- Our Concordia Foundation efforts and impact continues to grow. In addition to the significant capital projects, like the 3 to PhD facility and the Hilken Community Stadium, the Foundation continues to raise more scholarship dollars than ever before. Thanks to the generosity of our donors, we were able to continue to assist the 97 percent of our students who need tuition support.

- We are completing three years of a prestigious multi-year Lilly Endowment grant and were invited to resubmit, supporting faith formation for youth, through our new EnVisionPDX interactive programming at the intersection of faith and pressing social issues. Visit www.EnVisionPDX.com for more information. EnVisionPDX is an initiative of Concordia Portland’s Art & Carol Wahlers Center for Applied Lutheran Leadership (CALL).

We are grateful for God’s many blessings and for the overwhelming support of our University friends, alumni, donors, church partners, and community.

Thank you for your partnership in ministry and for being such a valued part of our Concordia family! In His Service,

Johnnie R. Driessner, Interim President

R16.6

Concordia University, St. Paul

As an academic institution Concordia University, St. Paul, is guided by three foundational statements:

- **Mission:** The mission of Concordia University, St. Paul, a university of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, is to prepare students for thoughtful and informed living, for dedicated service to God and humanity, and for enlightened care of God’s creation, all within the context of the Christian Gospel.

- **Vision:** The vision of Concordia University, St. Paul is to be acknowledged as the leading Lutheran university offering exceptional opportunities for students from all backgrounds who seek relevant career preparation and a challenging academic experience coupled with the insights of Lutheran theology.

- **Promise to students:** Concordia University, St. Paul empowers you to discover and engage your purpose for life, career, and service in a dynamic, multicultural, urban environment where Christ is honored, all are welcome, and Lutheran convictions inform intellectual inquiry and academic pursuits.

During the triennium, Concordia completed its second comprehensive strategic planning process in the last six years. The new five-year plan entitled Vision 2024 builds upon the successes of the previous plan. The new planning horizon is July 1, 2018, through June 30, 2023. Four strategic goals frame the plan:

- **Grow enrollment.** During the last three years, total enrollment grew by 15 percent, from 4,380 students
in the fall semester 2015, to 5,036 in the fall semester 2018. Growth has been in all three categories of students: traditional undergraduate, nontraditional undergraduate, and graduate. CSP is listed as the 10th fastest-growing private nonprofit Master’s college in the United States in the 2018 Almanac of the Chronicle for Higher Education.

- **Increase persistence to graduation.** During the past three years, retention and persistence to graduation have again increased by several percentage points in each category of students. In 2017–18, Concordia University, St. Paul, graduated a record 1,571 students.

- **Maintain quality, relevant curriculum to strengthen transitions to jobs and graduate school.** Improved systems for tracking students’ post-graduation transitions have indicated increased effectiveness in employment of graduates in their chosen field, and admission to first- and second-choice graduate schools. The university continues to place 100 percent of its mobile minister of religion—commissioned graduates into ministry settings, and 100 percent of its pre-seminary graduates have been accepted into their first-choice seminary. CSP has garnered numerous quality rankings, including
  - #1 online kinesiology bachelor’s degree in the U.S. by Sports Management Degree Hub
  - #1 Master of Business Administration in Health Care Management in the U.S. by www.affordablecolleges.com
  - #8 Master’s in Early Childhood Education in the U.S. by Top Education Degrees
  - #7 Best College for Adult Learners in the U.S. by Washington Monthly
  - One of the top 40 best online colleges in the U.S. by www.bestcolleges.com
  - Concordia faculty member Dr. Steven Manderscheid was awarded a Fulbright scholarship to work with the national University of Management in Phnom Penh on innovation and change. Dr. Manderscheid is CSP’s 6th Fulbright scholar.

- **Grow net assets.** During the most recent three fiscal years (2016, 2017, 2018), total net assets grew by 24 percent, from $86.5 million at the end of FY2015 to $107.1 million at the end of FY2018. Growth was achieved through positive operating results, reduction of long-term debt, and increased value of invested assets and property.

Growth in enrollment has been achieved largely through an increased number of academic programs, aggressive pricing models, and enhanced marketing efforts. Specific financial aid offerings are provided for members of congregations of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and include the Lutheran heritage scholarship for all LCMS undergraduate and graduate students, the *Twelve Disciples Scholarship*, a full-tuition scholarship for highly qualified students preparing for a church vocation, and a 50 percent tuition gift-aid guarantee for any student preparing for a church vocation who meets the university’s admission requirements.

As a “university of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod” (cf. Mission Statement), CSP prepares its faculty and staff to serve “in the context of the Christian gospel” (ibid). All new full-time faculty and staff participate in a semester-long Lutheran Identity Seminar, which introduces new employees to the institution’s Lutheran culture, role in the broad panoply of Christian higher education, and alignment with mission and promise, and reviews fundamental Lutheran doctrine.

CSP received a professional development grant from the Network for Vocation in Undergraduate Education (NetVUE) to conduct a unified focus on vocation known internally as The Purpose Project, with the aim to “enhance the vocational knowledge, skills, and abilities of Concordia University, St. Paul, faculty and staff in their shared work to develop and support student-centered undergraduate vocational initiatives.” CSP received a second NetVUE grant for 2019–21, to focus on interactive assessments and planning guides for university programs to analyze the alignment of written curricula with the university’s vocational promise statement.

In 2018, the university received reaffirmation of its accreditation by the Higher Learning Commission, thereby securing institutional accreditation for the next ten years.

CSP continues to be recognized as one of the most racially and ethnically diverse Lutheran institutions of higher education in its region, with 27 percent of total enrollment being students of color and 170 international students from 27 countries. The university houses the Center for Hmong Studies, provides a Hmong Culture and Language Program, and hosts a biannual International Hmong Studies Conference.

CSP is recognized as a premier university serving the needs of veterans and active-duty military personnel. Over 220 students with military experience are enrolled at the university and served through the General John W. Vessey Veterans Resource Center. CSP received the 2018–19 Military Friendly Schools Designation.

The number of tenure-track faculty grew from 70 to 90 during the triennium, including additions in biology and chemistry, business administration, education, kinesiology, mathematics, music, nursing, physical therapy, and theology. Two LCMS- rostered ministers of religion joined the faculty in Academic Year 2018 and 2019: Prof. Teresa Fitzpatrick in English, and Rev. Dr. Samuel Deressa in the Department of Theology and Ministry.

During the triennium the university made significant capital improvements to campus facilities, including classrooms, athletic facilities, and fine arts facilities. New construction included the addition of Reformation Tower, commemorating the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, and Behm Cross Roads, a new entrance to the Buenger Education Center and Meyer Hall. A $10 million acquisition of a nine-story office building adjacent to the campus will expand the campus footprint by nearly three acres and educational and general space by 101,000 square feet in 2019.

Concordia launched the following new degree programs during the triennium:

- Pre-licensure Nursing
• Bachelor of Arts (BA) in Public Relations
• Bachelor of Arts (BA) in Sport Communications
• Master of Fine Arts (MFA) in Writing
• Master of Science (MS) in Nursing
• Master of Science (MS) in Information Technology Management
• Master of Science (MS) in Coaching and Athletic Administration

Concordia’s women’s volleyball team, led by Head Coach Brady Starkey, won their eighth and ninth national championships during the triennium, winning the NCAA Division II National Championship in 2016 and 2017. Among all student athletes, 23 Concordia athletes were named All-American and 6 were named Academic All-Americans. Concordia graduate Riley Hanson (’17) was named one of the ten top female scholar-athletes in the nation by the NCAA. The university was recognized by the NCAA as one of the top twenty institutions in the nation for graduation rates of student athletes, with 92 percent of student athletes persisting to graduation.

During academic year 2018–19, Concordia University, St. Paul, observed the 125th anniversary of the founding of the institution under the theme Leading in Legacy, using Psalm 90:17 as the theme verse: “May the favor of the Lord our God rest on us; establish the work of our hands for us—yes, establish the work of our hands.”

President Thomas Ries announced his retirement effective June 30, 2019. As of this writing, a presidential search is underway.

Thomas Ries, President

Concordia University Texas

Since 1926, Concordia University Texas (CTX) has been affiliated with The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, fulfilling common, yet distinct, missions. In partnership with the church and other schools of the Concordia University System, CTX continues to develop people for lives of service to the church and to the world. The vocation of higher education is a unique calling within the church where faculty and students are invited to consider how the study of ALL things can be seen through the lens of the Christian faith. Lutheran higher education demands faithfulness to a two-kingdom theology, which allows for deep dialogue and embracing paradox. By engaging in scholarship and witness to the world, CTX holds closely its connection with the LCMS and is proud to stand alongside its sister schools across the church.

This report is laid out in four different sections focusing on what is currently happening and a vision for the future. As CTX plans to celebrate its 93rd year of ministry, the church can rest assured that the school is remaining faithful to its mission, is on a firm financial ground, and is planning for a future that can be joyfully celebrated.

Academic Excellence

In its vocation as an academic institution, Concordia University Texas must deliver its product in a manner that is excellent and that is nourishing to its students. Excellence in higher education is described in many ways, often pointing to admission rates, retention rates, completion rates, and job placement rates. While all of these are important, there are other measures of excellence that include how students learn, how they think about the world, and the vocations in which they engage throughout their lives. The below examples point to a myriad of ways that CTX measures academic excellence.

• CTX recently received a re-affirmation of its regional accreditation through the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) with no monitoring reports. This was an affirmation for the school that it is doing what it says it does—and others agree.
• The recently added Doctorate in Education program continues to draw students, with its first cohort scheduled for graduation Fall of 2019. The program is now fully online, joining many of the other CUS schools in the pursuit of developing school leaders for our communities.
• The Concordia MBA was ranked third in the Central Texas region for number of students. While many MBA programs in the region have seen a decline in enrollment, CTX continues to attract students to its program that focuses on leadership, ethics, and business acumen.
• The CTX Nursing program consistently has a 95–100 percent NCLEX pass rate for its graduates. The program was recently ranked #4 in the state of Texas by RegisteredNursing.org.
• Both freshmen and seniors report that CTX students consistently outrank their peers in the amount of time they get to spend with faculty and the amount of time they spend in service to the community. This report from the National Survey of Student Engagement is a reminder of why smaller liberal arts colleges have a big impact on students.
• New programs are being added every year, ranging from theater to computer gaming to psychology to accelerated degrees in nursing to multiple concentrations in the MBA. A regular review of all programs ensures that Concordia is being responsive to market needs and student interest.
• In the fall of 2018, CTX welcomed 13 new full-time faculty to replace previous positions and bolster programs that are expanding. These faculty went through a 4-day intensive workshop on teaching philosophy and the distinct nature of Lutheran higher education.

Faithful to Lutheran Identity

At the 2016 LCMS convention, the schools of the Concordia University System adopted a series of Lutheran Identity Standards that articulated a number of items that are important for schools to remain closely connected to the church-at-large. Concordia University Texas has met all standards and has faithfully reported its compliance each year of the past triennium. In addition to meeting these standards, CTX also works hard to
ensure that faculty, staff, and students know what it means to teach, work, and learn at an institution of Lutheran higher education. The following examples enumerate ways in which CTX lives out its faithfulness to Lutheran identity:

- A new mission statement was adopted by the Board of Regents in the spring of 2018 that states the school is rooted in the Lutheran tradition and affiliated with The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. The mission is very clear on who we are, what we do, and what the outcome of our vocation should be.
- The Richard J. Dinda Professorship of Lutheran Identity and Mission was established in the Fall of 2018 in which a faculty member is given time to research, write about, and lead faculty in keeping the Lutheran identity alive.
- Engagement with and attendance at daily chapel increased 17 percent after a campus-wide effort was held during the 2017–2018 academic year. Concordia’s Cantor continues to provide a rich chapel experience that is reflective of our Lutheran history, theology, and practice.
- Campus ministries have made an intentional effort to engage student leaders in leading Bible study and prayer groups, planning service opportunities, and working closely alongside campus activities to build relationships and witness to fellow students.
- The Director of Christian Education (DCE) program at CTX places between 15–20 interns each year and is currently one of the largest DCE programs among the schools of the CUS. Placements include churches across the United States and in such diverse countries as Tanzania, Chile, Slovakia, and Turkey.
- Each year CTX sends one of its employees to participate in LECNA (formerly Thrivent) Fellows, a program that is preparing future leaders for our schools. In the past triennium, four different people have participated in this program that focuses heavily on Lutheran identity and what it means to be a school of the church.

**Operationally Sound**

The phrase “no margin/no mission” is as true today as it has always been—and in higher education, it may be even more so now. In an environment that has increased competition, where costs continue to rise, and in which regulations are always increasing, CTX has done much over the past triennium to solidify its foundation so that it can remain viable long into the future. Specifically these three items are noted:

- **Execution of the Strategic Plan:** Concordia University Texas launched its five-year plan in the fall of 2016, with a focus on building a strong foundation. Three years into the plan has resulted in the execution of 39 out of 62 initiatives, an understanding of the hard work it takes to execute, and the knowledge that the institution CAN execute when needed. A new five-year plan will be launched in 2021 that focuses on future growth and impact on students.
- **Predictable Financial Outcomes:** One of the aspects of failing colleges is that they lose control of their financial outcomes and are regularly surprised by lower than planned for revenue (and/or higher than planned for expenses). Because of a robust budgeting process and careful monitoring, CTX has been in line with its planned projections over the past three years, allowing the university to consistently provide raises, fund strategic initiatives, and not make dramatic cuts during the year.
- **Steady Enrollment:** CTX understands that its business model relies heavily on student tuition for continued operations. While certain programs gain and lose students over time, the overall growth of the university has been on a steady trajectory since 2016. With a low of 2,568 and high of 2,730, CTX has managed its enrollment to meet its funding needs.

**Forward Focused**

On June 27, 2026, Concordia University Texas will hold its celebration of 100 years of ministry to the church, community, and world. As CTX looks forward to the future, it is imperative for it to remain academically excellent, faithful to its Lutheran identity, and operationally sound. Several highlights accent what the future might look like:

- CTX will launch the first competitive E-Sports program in Central Texas in the Fall of 2019. Competitive gaming is gaining ground in universities across the country and is being looked at by the NCAA as a possible addition to its lineup of sponsored athletic contests.
- CTX was recently recognized as a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) after passing the 30 percent Hispanic population threshold. CTX joins Concordia University Chicago in this designation which provides access to additional funding and support of multiple associations.
- Plans are underway to begin construction on a new residence hall that plans to open in the Fall of 2021. This will put residential capacity at over 600 students on campus.
- A five-year plan for adding programs has been put into place and will begin being executed in the Fall of 2019. This plan calls for additional programs in the traditional and post-traditional programs, including both face-to-face and online offerings.
- Leadership development among employees has become important and is being executed across the university in all departments. Programs exist for young leaders, new faculty, seasoned leaders, and those identified as possible college administrators, including university presidents.

Donald Christian, President
Concordia University Wisconsin and Ann Arbor

By the time our convention gathers in Tampa, Concordia University Wisconsin and Concordia University Ann Arbor will celebrate the sixth anniversary of the merger of our two institutions. That step, formally implemented July 1, 2013, was preceded by more than a year of close collaboration leading to consolidation. The journey has been a momentous one and we have much to celebrate.

As we craft this report, we anticipate the visit of the Higher Learning Commission for renewal of our accreditation. HLC’s focus for their visit is the merger, and our accreditor is keen to assess the success of this venture. Of course, we expect the HLC to affirm what we already know—the merger of two Concordia campuses has been a great blessing to CUW and CUAA, to the Concordia University System, and to the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. Through their various vocations, thousands of students, their lives uncommonly impacted by CUWAA, now touch the lives of many thousands more. We are grateful for the support of Synod and for the prayers of all who have supported this endeavor. May the Lord continue to bless Concordia as we “prepare students in mind, body, and spirit for service to Christ in the Church and in the world.”

Concordia University is a Lutheran higher education community committed to helping students develop in mind, body, and spirit for service to Christ in the Church and the world.

As of the fall 2018 census, Concordia University Wisconsin and Ann Arbor (CUWAA) serves 7,376 students at two residential campuses in Mequon, WI, and Ann Arbor, MI, online, and at nine extension campuses.

The University’s six schools of study offer 87 undergraduate majors and programs, 33 graduate/master’s degrees and programs, five doctoral/professional programs, and six associate degrees. The largest program areas include business, education, family life, nursing, and health professions.

The University educates a strong percentage of the church career professional undergraduates in the Concordia University System—569 as of fall 2018, a 9 percent increase from fall 2015.

Learner Profile

- 37 percent Traditional Undergraduate
- 14 percent Accelerated Learning/Non-Traditional
- 43 percent Graduate School
- 4 percent Professional (Pharmacy)
- 2 percent Other
- 33 percent Lutheran Traditional Undergraduate Students
- 11 percent International
- 20 percent Minority
- 22 percent First Generation Traditional Undergraduates

96 percent of CUW and 94 percent of CUAA traditional undergraduates are employed one year after graduation (at CUAA this is a +12 percent growth since the 2016 Convention).

Uncommon Higher Education: A Faith and Learning-Centered Community

CUWAA is a Christ-centered, learner-focused institution driven by rigorous academics and a commitment to excellence in teaching. Our learning environment prioritizes academic rigor and ensures well-prepared students, who are ready for career and calling success.

Triennium Highlights

We boast notable pass rates in all programs. Our average licensure exam pass rate for all professional programs is 95 percent, well above the national average.

This triennium, CUWAA made significant strides in student retention. At the Ann Arbor campus, current fall-to-fall retention is 74 percent, an increase of 10 percent over the prior two years. The Wisconsin campus achieved an all-time high for retention in fall 2017 with an impressive 82 percent rate.

In 2016, we measured student spiritual formation and growth with the University Spiritual Life Survey, which indexed students’ perception of their own spiritual vitality against their perceptions of campus spiritual vitality. CUWAA has the lowest gap between these two indices of any participating university to date.

Uncommon Success: Committed to Purposeful Growth

A primary goal this triennium was to more deeply root CUWAA’s brand reputation locally, regionally, and nationally. With the public launch of our brand, “Live Uncommon,” we are positioned among the top institutions in our region and are exceeding our goals for student leads and enrollment.

We have achieved significant enrollment gains on the Ann Arbor campus thanks to an infusion of an array of academic and co-curricular programs, including the opening of our state-of-the-art School of Nursing in 2016, and the recently launched physician’s assistant studies program.

The Ann Arbor campus has added 171 students since the 2016 Convention. Overall enrollment on this campus has increased by 60 percent since the 2013 campus merger with Wisconsin.

Uncommon Impact through Service and Leadership

Concordia University Wisconsin and Ann Arbor continues to offer uncommon support to our nation’s military veterans. As of August 2018, 607 veterans, active military, spouses, and dependents have been served by CUWAA (334 of those in the most recent academic year).

The university has also embraced a strategy to grow its scholarly activity as both a teaching and learning tool that effectively advances our mission and serves society.

Notable Faculty Scholarship


Dr. Reivian Berrios Barillas, occupational therapy, “Sex Differences in Neuromuscular Fatigability of the Knee Extensors Post-Stroke,” academic journal article, January 12, 2017.

Dr. Erin Laverick, English, Project-Based Learning, academic book, November 1, 2018.


Uncommon Champions for Access and Opportunity

CUWAA is dedicated to ensuring that lifelong Lutheran education becomes accessible to more students and not fewer. In 2016, we introduced the Luther Promise, an institutionally funded tuition guarantee that provides up to $20K annually for qualified undergraduate students. Four new scholarships introduced in 2019 further support access for adult and post-traditional learners. Ranging from $150–$500 per three-credit course, our Uncommon Scholarships are available to qualified employees of our Church, corporate, and academic partners, and alumni.

In 2018, the University unveiled its first full-tuition scholarship. The Lutheran City Educator Scholarship is a competitive scholarship that provides full tuition (exclusive of room and board) for up to three undergraduate students per year. The Lutheran City Educator Scholarship is renewable for four years, if the student maintains a 3.0 GPA or higher, remains designated as a Lutheran education major, and remains actively teaching at a Lutheran elementary or secondary city-based school for at least five years after graduation.

Uncommon Achievements

- March 2016
  - CUAA student satisfaction results top national average

- April 2017
  - CUW campus ranked safest in state, second in nation

- August 2017
  - CUAA receives national recognition for its campus safety

- August 2018
  - Green Bay Packers introduce Concordia University as ‘Preferred MBA Program’

- July 2018
  - Concordia honored among National Colleges of Distinction

- October 2018
  - CUW’s academic advising team receives global academic tech company’s highest honor

- October 2018
  - Concordia University Ann Arbor’s sim lab now includes “the world’s most advanced pediatric patient simulator”

- December 2018
  - CUW physician assistant alum becomes one of only eight geriatric ER directors in the nation

Connect with Concordia University: cuw.edu; cuaa.edu

Patrick T. Ferry, President

R17

Lutheran Center for Religious Liberty

INTRODUCTION—LCRL BASICS

The mission of the Lutheran Center for Religious Liberty (LCRL), as the LCMS, two-kingdom, First Amendment organization in Washington DC, is to ignite and fuel a uniquely Lutheran response to increasing intrusions by the government in the realm of the Church while educating, encouraging, and equipping LCMS members and organizations to take informed action in support of religious freedom for the sake of the Gospel ministries of our churches, our schools, and our universities.

Purpose and Services

The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS), through the Lutheran Center for Religious Liberty (LCRL), will monitor and protect First Amendment rights—guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution—in the public square. It will equip Lutherans and Lutheran organizations to:

1. Engage federal and state officials through advocacy and defensive legal strategies;
2. Educate future generations about serving God through vocations in government, law, and public policy; and
3. Connect with Lutherans involved in government affairs. Where the government, the culture, and faith conflict, Lutherans can and must speak up and out in support of religious liberty.

Why This Matters

We are living in a time when Christian values and morals no longer hold sway, where the culture of the day has permeated society in an effort to

- Chip away at Americans’ most basic religious liberties despite the protections of the First Amendment
- Rapidly deconstruct the biblical definition of marriage, redefining the definition of the family, the very building block of our culture
- Write off as inconsequential the lives of 55 million preborn Americans; and
- Castigate the public expression of our Christian
faith, attacking any form of “bearing witness”—the catalyst that is the heartbeat of who we are as Lutherans.

An evaluation of current faith-based entities and think tanks in Washington, DC, indicates a plethora of groups and institutions that support the protection of religious liberty. However, none offer the distinctly confessional Lutheran understanding of Luther’s two-kingdom theology:

One is the kingdom of this world. Into it we are born; in it we sustain our bodies and do our work. The other is the Christian Church, in which we have become members by faith. In it we do our spiritual tasks; in it we pray, serve the Church, and do mission-work. This is the purpose for which we have been placed on earth. (Dr. Theodore Graebner to the 1937 Synod in convention)

This void can and ought to be uniquely filled by the LCMS for the betterment of the country and in opposition to any movements, views, or legislation that would harm the right of religious freedom in the public square.

The Lutheran Center for Religious Liberty (LCRL) office offers advantages:

• Creates a direct presence of the LCMS and like-minded Lutherans in the nation’s capital.
• Enables the LCMS to monitor and communicate impending legislation, infringement on religious liberty, and other matters of concern to LCMS members, congregations, Recognized Service Organizations, and other LCMS institutions
• Provides a venue to engage and encourage Lutheran youth considering vocations in government service or politics
• Offers proximity to potential partner organizations and offices to help build coalitions.

Four Primary Tasks

1. Educate youth and laity on major issues facing the country, the Lutheran doctrine of vocation (in particular Christian citizenship), and two-kingdom theology.
2. Assist in connecting Christians with legal defense when they suffer persecution (arrest, lawsuits, etc.) for public-square speech and actions that are in agreement with Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions but are in conflict with the culture and government.
3. Advocacy, advocacy-training, and support.
4. Publication and communication to governing bodies and policymakers regarding the orthodox Lutheran, two-kingdom view on cultural issues.

Alignment with LCMS Goals

1. Mission Planting: This office exists to protect the public voice, the religious liberty of our churches, missions, schools, and universities for the sake of mission.
2. Theological Education: The LCRL will expand 2 Kg, vocation training from Seminary to Higher Ed, eventually also to High School to 8th Grade, to Church Bible Studies and Lay leadership training. It’s “2 Kg Civics” training for the sake of mission for ALL of our churches and people.
3. Collaborate to Enhance Mission Effectiveness: The LCRL effort will, in all of its teachings and literature, emphasize why and how “Two-Kingdom Cultural Engagement” is vital to effective missional outreach.

Great Opportunity Seized in 2018–2019

• Established the Office in DC in 2018
  o Already coalescing the Lutheran presence on the Hill (elected officials and staff) through various gatherings,
  o And, establishing working partnerships with the Values Action Team of the House and Senate, The Southern Baptist ERLC group, The Heritage Foundation, the Weyrich luncheon, as well as various congressmen and senators who value religious liberty, life, traditional marriage, and educational freedom.
• Established and Grown LCRLfreedom.org—The Two-Kingdom Web Resource for LCMS Churches and Schools
  o Presently the site is populated with timely and easy-to-read resources to inform and instruct our people how “to put their temporal liberties to work for the sake of the eternal liberties of Christ”;
  o See The Weekly “Word from the Center” devotion and op-ed piece;
  o See Mom and Pop, Two-Kingdom Papers on issues of the day;
  o See the upcoming “The Dish”—a weekly blog from various Lutheran writers from around the country.
• Established and Performing the Educational Training Processes of the Center for the Sake of the Church
  o See the “Champions For Liberty Events”—presentations and training for pastors and laity about two-kingdom engagement of the culture for the sake of the Church’s mission.
  o See at dialogue/partner stage—the “University Educational Initiative”—the partnership of the LCRL with one or more Concordias for university-level certification and DC internships.

Goals for 2019 and Beyond

• To Grow Our Advocating/Encouraging Presence on the Hill
  o In spite of the change of tenor in the 116th congress, the LCRL seeks to grow our pres-
ence as a thought leader of religious liberty, life, marriage, and educational freedom in the various partnerships and meetings that we presently attend.

- And, the center will coalesce an ongoing Lutheran voice on the Hill for the support and encouragement of those, especially LCMS Lutherans, committed to our cause who are at work in government.

- To Expand Our Educational Initiatives
  - To secure ongoing partnerships with one or more Concordias—namely to finalize “the University Educational Initiative” training partnership, launching our university-level program with DC internships.
  - To expand our LCRLFreedom.org web resource.
  - To grow our weekend “Champions For Liberty” events around the country training the laity for two-kingdom cultural engagement concerning liberty, life, marriage, and education, all in service to the Church’s mission.

Gregory Seltz, Executive Director

Lutheran Church Extension Fund:
“Joy:fully Lutheran: Rejoice, Pray, Give Thanks”

Organization Mission Statement:
“To support the Church in fulfilling its mission of sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ by being a Christ-centered servant partner of the LCMS, ensuring that funds and services are available now and in the future.”

The Lutheran Church Extension Fund (LCEF) is honored to serve and support LCMS ministries in sharing the Gospel.

From July 1, 2016, through Dec. 31, 2018, the U.S. economy grew at an average real annualized rate of 2.70 percent. Economic growth accelerated in 2018 as the short-term impact of tax cuts spurred economic growth among both consumers and corporations. During this same period, the unemployment rate declined to a low of 3.70 percent. Fueled by higher wages, rising consumer confidence, tax cuts, and plentiful jobs, U.S. economic activity took off, hitting a peak of 4.20 percent in the first quarter of 2018.

At the same time, the Federal Reserve continued its policy of “normalizing” interest rates. The Federal Open Market Committee (the committee which sets monetary policy) began raising interest rates in December 2015. There have been nine rate increases since 2015, to the current rate of 2.50 percent. Inflation, while increasing, appears to be stuck at or near the Fed’s target rate of 2.00 percent by almost any measurement.

Housing, manufacturing, and retail sales all remained strong throughout most of this period. However, in recent months, we have begun to see some cracks. Housing starts, existing home sales, and median sale prices have been slipping recently after peaking in mid-2018. Manufacturing activity, as measured by the ISM Manufacturing Index, has shown signs of slowing. While manufacturing activity is still growing, the pace of growth has slowed significantly in the past three months.

It appears that future federal funds rate increases are being taken off the table. In three months, we moved from a 70 percent chance for a 25-basis point increase in the federal funds target rate to basically a 0 percent chance. While we will likely get at least one rate hike in calendar year 2019, it is likely to be late in LCEF’s fiscal year or in fiscal year 2020.

Interest rates in the bond market appear to be range bound. It is unlikely, given what we know currently, that interest rates will rise significantly at any time. Indeed, there is a growing risk that interest rates will drift lower. Equity markets should be stabilizing here soon after a 20 percent pullback in the broad market indices. Volatility, however, is likely to remain the byword for 2019.

LCEF is pleased to report on the key financial trends and activities of LCEF as of December 31, 2018, and prior fiscal year-end data for years 2016–2018 below. For more current information, visit lcef.org or call 800-843-5233.
Investments

The laddered fixed income portfolio as of December 31, 2018, totaled $202.8 million with an interest yield of 2.88 percent compared to a yield of 2.73 percent a year ago. The long-term reserve portfolio (consisting of fixed income, equities, and other non-correlated investments) totaled $68.7 million.

Net market value losses for the period ending December 31, 2018, totaled $4.5 million with laddered fixed income gains of $1.6 million offset by long-term portfolio losses of $6.1 million. Inclusive of the investment income as of December 31, 2018, the total return for the laddered portfolio was 3.65 percent. Within the long-term portfolio, the equity and alternative portfolios earned a total return loss of 9.26 percent and 7.49 percent, respectively, with the fixed-income portfolio earning a total return gain of 2.82 percent. The total return on the long-term reserve portfolio (consisting of fixed income, equities, and other non-correlated investments) totaled $68.7 million.

Prior fiscal year-end data:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(in 000s)</th>
<th>FY 2016</th>
<th>FY 2017</th>
<th>FY 2018</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Investment Portfolio</td>
<td>$358.7M</td>
<td>$317.2M</td>
<td>$281.7M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Net Gain/(Loss)</td>
<td>($1,542)</td>
<td>($4,783)</td>
<td>$2,901</td>
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</table>

- **Investor Payables**—Loyal investors continued to provide funds to enable LCMS ministries financial resources that support their efforts to expand God’s kingdom. A promotion to coincide with LCEF’s 40th anniversary began October 1, 2018. The promotion offered investors a 40-month fixed rate note at 4 percent with a $40,000 cap per note. The promotion closed on January 17 after reaching its goal of $100 million. LCEF processed 4,600 accounts (1,727 new investors). Prior fiscal year-end data:

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>FY 2016</th>
<th>FY 2017</th>
<th>FY 2018</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Investor Payables</td>
<td>$1,592,675</td>
<td>$1,616,634</td>
<td>$1,599,497</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Maturities of LCEF’s 35-month notes at 3.5 percent began in October and continued through December. LCEF offered investors with maturing notes the opportunity to re-invest the 35-month note at 4 percent. Well over 90 percent of the 35-month note investors have re-invested at the 4 percent rate.

Loans

- **Loans Receivable**—LCEF supported ministry expansion with closings totaling $166.4 million in district/national loans; $17.2 million in Rostered Church Worker (RCW) loans (LCEF purchased 45 RCW loans totaling $3.9 million from the Lutheran Federal Credit Union [LFCU]); and $36.3 million from loan restructures as of December 31, 2018. National lending has seen some slight ebbing of new loan volume. However, we are seeing complex loan requests that take more time to process. There are significant requests in the pipeline totaling approximately $87.3 million (in addition to $35 million in refinancings). RCW new mortgage activity includes 71 closed loans (a 19 percent increase over the same period last year) FYTD. Year to date, LCEF has purchased 16 RCW consolidation loans from LFCU, an increase of 220 percent over last year. Prior fiscal year-end data:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>FY 2016</th>
<th>FY 2017</th>
<th>FY 2018</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Impaired Loans</td>
<td>$125,989</td>
<td>$103,818</td>
<td>$94,536</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delinquency Rate</td>
<td>.41%</td>
<td>.74%</td>
<td>.91%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Regionalization

Since its last convention report, LCEF has been engaged in efforts to decentralize operations into three regional offices: Central Region (Minneapolis, Minnesota), West Region (Irvine, California), and East Region (Orlando, Florida). The purpose of regionalization is to better deliver service and support through LCEF district vice presidents to districts, congregations, schools, organizations, workers, and members, so that ministry extends in the church and world. We continue work with other entities to leverage the regional structure.

- **Distribution of Operating Results**—LCEF was pleased to again share earnings distribution with partner districts and Synod, Inc. totaling $2,019,000 in 2018. Prior fiscal year-end data:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>FY 2016</th>
<th>FY 2017</th>
<th>FY 2018</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kaleidoscope Fund</td>
<td>$1,933,854</td>
<td>$2,019,000</td>
<td>$2,139,096</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Kaleidoscope Fund**—Since 2016, the Kaleidoscope Fund has granted nearly $2.1 million to LCMS ministries. In addition to the regular grants, in 2017, a total of $250,000 was granted to LCMS Disaster Response for those affected by Hurricane Harvey. That same year, LCEF granted another $302,365 to LCEF borrowers affected by Hurricanes Harvey and Irma.
OFFICER, BOARD, AND COMMISSION REPORTS

- **District Entries**—Since the last LCMS convention in 2016, following prayerful deliberation and diligent research and analysis, the Ohio and South Dakota District Church Extension Funds elected to become the 30th and 31st participating districts of LCEF effective March 31, 2017, and Oct. 15, 2017, respectively.

- **Student Marketing Campaign**—For seven years, Concordia University System (CUS) students from across the country came together for a unique competition and fellowship opportunity at LCEF’s National Student Marketing Competition. We enjoyed the ideas and excitement shared between students and professors alike. After long and prayerful discussions in 2018, LCEF determined to discontinue the competition with a goal to use those funds to focus on creating new opportunities to partner with the CUS in the future. In the same year, LCEF introduced its first high school competition, the Yes! Challenge, hosting three St. Louis area Lutheran schools on May 2, 2018. Students prepared business case studies and presentations that were evaluated by a panel of four judges. Plans are to continue and expand for 2019.

**Financial Trends**

- **Total Assets**—Total assets as of Dec. 31, 2018, amounted to $1.874 billion, an increase of $45.2 million since June 30, 2018. The increase was due primarily to LCEF’s 40-month 4-percent promotion. Prior fiscal year-end data:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>FY 2016</th>
<th>FY 2017</th>
<th>FY 2018</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Assets</td>
<td>$1,807,841</td>
<td>$1,838,901</td>
<td>$1,828,692</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Liquidity/Notes & Support Dollars Payable**—LCEF continues its commitment to a strong capital and liquidity position. Liquidity remained relatively unchanged at 17.6 percent of investor payables. Notes and support dollars totaled $1.645 billion and have increased $46 million since June 30, an increase driven by the 40th anniversary promotion. The increase has been the source of funding for the loan receivable increase of $41.5 million through Dec. 31, 2018. Prior fiscal year-end data:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>FY 2016</th>
<th>FY 2017</th>
<th>FY 2018</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Liquidity</td>
<td>22.5%</td>
<td>19.62%</td>
<td>17.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notes &amp; Support Dollars Payable</td>
<td>$1,592,080</td>
<td>$1,616,634</td>
<td>$1,599,497</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Strong Income**—LCEF achieved operating income totalling $4.7 million for the period ending Dec. 31, 2018, a decrease from $7.1 million the prior year. The decline is the result of a contraction in net interest income as loans lag repricing to the increase in cost of funds. Net interest income will improve going forward as annually adjustable loans re-price to the increase in cost of funds. The operating income goal for the end of the year is $9.1 million. Net income for the period ended Dec. 31, 2018, totaled $616,000 compared to net income of $6.8 million the prior year. Net income will need to reach $6.7 million to distribute operating results. The net income goal for the end of the year is $7.7 million. LCEF’s base capital ratio as of Dec. 31, 2018, was 11.91 percent compared to 11.22 percent a year ago. The capital to asset goal for the end of the year is 12 percent. Prior fiscal year-end data:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>FY 2016</th>
<th>FY 2017</th>
<th>FY 2018</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Net Interest Income</td>
<td>$35,558</td>
<td>$36,647</td>
<td>$37,416</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operating Income</td>
<td>$6,301</td>
<td>$12,628</td>
<td>$11,242</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Income/ Expense</td>
<td>$3,255</td>
<td>$691</td>
<td>$922</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Net Income</td>
<td>$8,012</td>
<td>$8,769</td>
<td>$7,095</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capital to Asset Ratio</td>
<td>11.26%</td>
<td>11.74%</td>
<td>12.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Conclusion**

LCEF has been blessed with loyal support from its investors and faithful commitment from its borrowers. As a result, LCEF is positioned with a strong capital and liquidity position and has funds available to support loans to ministries within the United States and throughout the world. LCEF seeks ways to advance innovation and creativity in our approach. We are committed to exploring responsible lending options that challenge historical approaches and meet the needs of our partners.

We encourage all our national and district staff members and volunteers to seek God’s guidance in turning any perceived “roadblocks” into opportunities to serve and support efforts to share His Word. We seek to share the resources entrusted to us, and the talents of our staff and volunteers, as we are guided by the Lord. We seek to be a catalyst for energizing ministry, and we thank God for the privilege of serving.

_Soli Deo Gloria!_

Bart Day, President/CEO

R19

**LCMS Foundation**

With thanksgiving to God for His many blessings, the LCMS Foundation marks its 60th year of service to the people and organizations of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

We celebrate the generosity of God’s people in supporting the work of His church during those years and ask the Lord’s continued blessing on our humble efforts that through His blessing and guidance the successful performance of our tasks will help bring glory to His name.

The Foundation primarily provides two services to the LCMS: planned giving work among LCMS members and the investment management of these gifts and other assets of the church.

During fiscal years 2016–2018, the LCMS Foundation distributed more than 8,300 gifts totaling $101.5 million to several thousand LCMS organizations. These ministries include our congregations and schools, seminaries, districts, and ministries providing missionary support, rural and urban outreach, housing assistance, and much more.
Gift Planning and Investment Management

The gifts the Foundation distributes are a result of the joyful response to God’s love found in the hearts of individuals in our LCMS community. These are primarily planned gifts such as endowments, donor-advised funds, charitable trusts, etc., administered by the Foundation and distributed to ministry after the donor was called to his or her heavenly home.

To carry out this work, twenty gift planning counselors are located across the United States. They assist with individuals and families in creating comprehensive estate plans to support family and ministry with the very best gifts.

Ministries that receive significant gifts or already possess sizeable assets can then benefit by working with the Foundation to invest those gifts for future growth. The Foundation presently manages more than $850 million dollars in investment and trust assets for hundreds of LCMS organizations. We provide sophisticated, diversified investment portfolios at low cost aimed to help LCMS ministries accomplish their long-term goals.

By managing assets collectively for the church, the Foundation offers access for LCMS congregations and ministry organizations to a sophisticated, diversified investment model at a low cost. A variety of investment options are available to help meet ministry needs for investment timeline and risk tolerance.

Leadership and Organization

Mr. David Fiedler has served as president of the LCMS Foundation since 2013. Approximately 50 full-time employees serve the Foundation in various capacities.

Governance

Direct oversight to the Foundation is provided by its Board of Trustees, which meets quarterly to review and monitor the performance and activity of the organization and to provide strategic direction. The Foundation board is made up of thirteen trustees, eight of whom are elected by the LCMS Member organizations described below. Two other trustees are elected by the Synod in convention. The remaining two trustees are the Synod President or his representative, and the chairman of the Board for National Mission or his representative. The Chief Financial Officer of the Synod is an ex-officio, nonvoting member of the board.

The LCMS Foundation is also responsible to 60 Member organizations, who represent directly or indirectly, all of the ministries of the church served by the Foundation. These Member organizations include the 35 LCMS districts, the member institutions of the Concordia University System, our seminaries, auxiliaries, etc. Once a year delegates from this group meet to elect trustees and vote on other official actions at the Foundation’s annual meeting.

Strategic Plan and Transfer the Blessings

As the Foundation looks to the future, we seek to grow our impact on the Lutheran Church and its ability to share the Gospel. We continually review the needs of the Church and our Lutheran donors to determine how we can better serve the people and organizations of the LCMS. We gather input from our board, our leadership team, our staff, and outside experts to identify areas where we can improve our work in this support of ministry. Thus, we have identified six key areas of focus over the next several years:

- Offer best-in-class service, staff talent, and infrastructure.
- Develop and maintain mutually beneficial partnerships within the Church.
- Increase retention and realization of estate gifts.
- Increase awareness of and preference for the Foundation’s abilities to support ministries.
- Utilize data and analytics in operations and decision-making.
- Expand the number of people across the Synod who perform gift planning work among their fellow members.

Transfer the Blessings, the Foundation’s gift planning ministry to LCMS organizations, continues to demonstrate its value in assisting LCMS donors in creating their Lifetime Plan for Giving™. This Transfer the Blessing ministry pairs a Foundation gift planning counselor with a congregation to work directly and intentionally with members in establishing their charitable Christian estate plans. Transfer the Blessings builds upon the relationship the member has with the congregation and produces an approach to giving that provides resources to the church beyond weekly offerings.

The Foundation’s annual Ministry Report, audited financial statements, downloadable resources, account access, and contact information can be found at the Foundation’s website, lcmsfoundation.org.

As we enter the next triennium, the servants at the LCMS Foundation rejoice with the Church in the enormous blessings the Lord has bestowed upon us over the past 60 years. We look
forward confidently by God’s grace to carrying on our service to the individuals and organizations of the LCMS in the future as well.

David Fiedler, President

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**LCMS National Housing Support Corporation**

As a wholly owned subsidiary corporation of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, LCMS National Housing Support Corporation (NHSC) is a faith-based, not-for-profit organization, incorporated in the state of Missouri in 2004. NHSC launched its first year of operations in 2007 and functions under the registered trademark of Lutheran Housing Support. NHSC furthers the Synod’s rich legacy of serving our neighbors’ bodily needs by encouraging and assisting LCMS congregations, districts, and RSOs seeking to provide housing and better their communities by offering development, loan, and other consulting services.

NHSC exists to work together with congregations and organizations who desire to bring to light the suffering, the poor, the lonely, the downtrodden and bring them into the presence of the true Light of the world. NHSC’s mission and vision serves as a conduit in alignment with Synod’s purposes “providing opportunities through which its members may express their Christian concern, love, and compassion in meeting human needs” (Const. Art. III 4).

**NHSC’s Vision and Mission:**

- **NHSC’s vision** is restored and revitalized neighborhoods that are anchored by LCMS congregations actively engaged in collaborative mercy.

- To bring that vision into reality, our **mission** is to provide access to capital and customized consulting services to underserved neighborhoods as they transform into thriving communities.

**NHSC’s Value Statements:**

- **Christ-centered:** Our work is a grateful response to the love of God in Christ Jesus.

- **Commitment:** We are committed to the personal, spiritual, and professional growth of our employees, and to the well-being of the congregations and neighborhoods we serve.

- **Collaborative:** We seek to work with other like-minded individuals, congregations, and organizations to accomplish our mission.

- ** Mercy:** The mercy that we show others reflects God’s mercy to us.

At NHSC we partner with congregations, districts, RSOs, and their community partners in transforming residential neighborhoods. We provide the tools and resources that enable our partners to do the work of mercy through housing and other identified community improvement initiatives. Since its inception, NHSC has grown to provide a variety of services. NHSC’s current services include

- Network, train, and support communities, LCMS entities, and their partners engaged in community-based projects with private and public financial investments for redevelopment and revitalization activities.

- Develop models for successful neighborhood revitalization in blighted, economically challenged communities.

- Provide financial and technical resources designed to strengthen the capacity and sustainability of LCMS entities engaged in housing and neighborhood revitalization activities.

- Establish local, sustainable, financially stable, and collaborative models to support innovative approaches to revitalize communities and abate deterioration.

**NHSC’s notable achievements over the last three (3) years include the following:**

**Access to Capital:**

- Allocated six (6) grants, totaling $554,433, to LCMS entities to spur community development activities across the United States.

- Developed and launched a lending business line in 2016. In three years, NHSC has deployed $500,000 of development capital to four (4) of its LCMS partners to help advance housing ministry efforts across the United States.

- Assisted LCMS partners in securing more than $1.5 million in grants through the provision of grant writing services. These grants carry out a variety of housing ministry activities across the United States.

- Facilitated and referred $9.4 million of lending business to the Lutheran Church Extension Fund, of which $1.5 million was approved and $7.9 million is under loan review.

**Provision of Customized Consulting Services:**

- Provided a wide variety of resources and consulting service to sixty (60) unique LCMS entities located in eighteen (18) states and two (2) countries. Each entity, expressing a desire to improve their communities and its residents, is utilizing community development activities as a transformative tool.

- Trained over 486 pastors, laypeople, and LCMS partners to recognize community needs and increase awareness of synodical resources.

- Successfully implemented the “Helping Hand Initiative” in 2016. This initiative is an owner-occupied rehabilitation project. Spearheaded by LCMS congregations and their community partners, the Helping Hand Initiative supports the critical home repair needs of low-income, disabled, and/or elderly residents. Through NHSC’s Helping Hand Initiative, thirty-seven (37) homeowners have been served thus far, and the congregations involved provided
assistance to neighbors without the resources or ability to undertake needed repairs on their own. Two of the three projects implemented were completed in partnership with LCEF’s Laborers for Christ.

- NHSC launched its first post-disaster initiative in 2017. Project RENEW (Reaching and Engaging Neighborhoods through Empowered Witness) is a strategic response to the devastation experienced by residents of the Trinity Gardens neighborhood in Houston, Texas, which was most impacted by Hurricane Harvey. Through Project RENEW, NHSC is spearheading a comprehensive LCMS collaborative effort that provides human and spiritual care to individuals and families residing in the inner core of Houston.

**College Hill (Direct Services)**

- Completed construction and sold five (5) homes in the Nazareth Homes Development. By investing in new housing stock in a neighborhood once devastated by crime, neglect, and poverty, the appraised values of homes in the neighborhood have increased by 25 percent and at least one new resident-owned business was started where none existed.

- Completed critical repairs for low-income homeowners, serving more than twenty (20) residents.

- Contracted with an urban planning and economic development consulting group to engage residents, developing a comprehensive Community Development Plan.

- Executed a multipronged strategy that decreased crime acts by an average of 49 percent, relative to 2009. These strategies included (a) property acquisition and demolition focused on nuisance properties and failing structures; (b) community events such as community cleanups and police-community relations events; and (c) installation of an integrated security camera system comprised of twelve (12) cameras in four (4) crime “hotspots” identified by the St. Louis Metro Police Department.

- Planned and secured funding for a community play space to transform parcels of abandoned and unsafe land into a welcoming green space designed for creative play.

Over the past three (3) years NHSC has achieved some tremendous milestones! As NHSC presses forward, growing pains have strained the corporation’s financial and human resources. The NHSC team continues to stay focused and works diligently to explore operational efficiencies, employ cost-reduction strategies, and identify additional financial resources. NHSC’s current strategic objectives include the following:

1. Diversify and increase NHSC’s income stream.
2. Strengthen NHSC’s image and brand to position the organization for greater visibility and impact within the Synod.
3. Build NHSC’s capacity to become a Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI) and provide loans that support our partners’ community development initiatives.
4. Improve capacity to respond to the needs of congregations, districts, RSOs, and their community partners.
5. Strengthen NHSC’s infrastructure, staff, finances, and management systems to position the organization for growth and long-term sustainability.
6. Assure long-term viability of NHSC by recruiting and maintaining a stable and effective Board of Directors and working committees.
7. Continue to carry out only funded endeavors in College Hill, while crafting an exit strategy to include building the capacity of the College Hill Foundation to be the direct service provider.

We ask for your continued prayers and support of housing ministry. Additionally, we humbly ask for your support of NHSC’s forthcoming overture.

Nicole Turner-Ridley, Chief Executive

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**Atlantic District**

The Atlantic District is composed of the eastern portion of New York State. We start at the Canadian border and come directly south through the Adirondack Mountains; the state capital region around Albany, Schenectady, and Troy; the Hudson Valley through the Catskill Mountains; the northern suburbs of New York City; New York City (the capital of the world); and all of Long Island. It is one of the most beautiful geographical regions of the United States, and one of the most densely populated. Roughly 19 million people reside within the borders of the Atlantic District, many of whom are unchurched or de-churched. Both the Capital Region and New York City continue to be listed in the top 10 post-Christian, least-churched places in the United States. This mission field creates endless challenges and opportunities to “Engage the World with the Gospel of Hope,” the Atlantic District theme.

This mission field is a challenging place filled with challenging people. It is a place where the threefold emphasis of Witness, Mercy, and Life Together is lived out in various ways in neighborhoods, homes, and parishes.

Witness is a part of the mission outreach of the Atlantic District as we share the Gospel in multiple languages; different cultural groups; and across the global neighborhood in which we live. The Words of Institution can be heard in 20 different languages on a given Sunday, so people from cultures across the globe can participate side by side and receive the body and blood of Christ. While the languages may be different, it is the Lord’s body and blood that continues to offer life and salvation among people of every nation, tribe, and race.

Witness and mercy are expressions of each congregation as she reaches out to the neighborhood, meeting identified needs; each school as they share faith through each interaction with students that come from various neighborhoods who may be
hearing of Jesus for the first time; and each agency as the love of Christ is shared by being His hands in everyday lives.

To meet the challenges we encounter, we rejoice in the various opportunities and training for people to serve the church. We have men training in EIIT, SMP, CHS, and traditional routes. There are men and women training through various routes to become rostered commissioned workers to meet the challenges we face. The Atlantic District, in partnership with other East Coast districts, has partnered to train leaders to assist local congregations in a variety of tasks to serve the church.

The congregations of the Atlantic District continue to gather together for worship and celebrate the Lord’s Supper regularly. We rejoice in the freedom of cultural expression that ties together the components of the Divine Service.

The Atlantic District continues to give thanks for the Koinonia project as we explore our life together. This has continued through discussions locally and throughout the district.

The Atlantic District schools are an incredible mission field. It is the teachers and administration that encourage the faculty and staff to engage the students and families they serve with the Gospel of Hope. They live out the Lutheran ethos in their daily lives and teaching. We pray continually for the wonderful work they do amidst a changing culture.

The Atlantic District does its best to adapt to the new, changing world. As people and culture have changed, the district has strived to continue to meet the challenges of this new world without watering down or compromising the Gospel.

The Atlantic District continues to seek out new opportunities to support and grow the mission and ministry of the church in the district. This is a challenging task in an environment where normal giving patterns seem to be changing. The challenge for the Atlantic District is not only supporting ongoing ministry, but assisting struggling congregations; starting new missions; and identifying and training diverse leaders of the church.

We continually give thanks as we walk together in common mission especially here in New York.

Derek G. Lecakes, President

R22

California-Nevada-Hawaii District

Under the theme “Hearts Burning with Christ for the World,” based on Luke 24, the CNH District Convention celebrated the transition of leadership from long-term president Dr. Robert Newton (15 years) and two staff members, Pastor Ted Hartman (14 years) and Joel Koerschen (29+ years). President Michael Lange was elected to a first term and First Vice-President Tom Zelt of Fremont, CA, was re-elected as First Vice-President. This past triennium also marked the transition of the CNH District’s long-term CEF wrapping its assets into the national LCEF. Mr. Bill Swift serves as the LCEF representative. Over $1.2 million of retained earnings were awarded to CNH congregations and ministries for the sake of God’s mission in grants.

The CNH District’s Mission Agency has been active assisting in the planting, re-planting, and cultivation of new mission starts. The CNH Mission Agency together with Jesus …

joins Him in planting the Gospel among those outside of Christ’s church.

Pray, remembering and asking that He be powerful in this, His work and we

A.) equip for Gospel witness in our communities
B.) provide missionary training for professional and laity
C.) encourage new starts for the sake of connecting new believers

Undergirding this we work to encourage multiplicative disciple-making.

Spring of 2019 marks the 6th annual CNH mission conference. Ministry plants include.

1. The launch of LINC Bay Area and the full-time funding of City Director Aaron Putnam. This important partner is the primary leadership development and church planting partner for the CNH in the Bay Area.
2. The organization of Addis Kidan as a full congregation. This multilingual parish is focused upon church planting for East Africans in the greater Bay Area.
3. The readiness of St. Matthew’s Kauai to apply for Synod membership.
4. In addition there have been five new language starts in the Oromo, Hmong, and Spanish language groups.

Our district has been guided for the past fifteen years by the vision that all of our churches and schools be equipped to serve as missionary outposts in their communities. Outcomes include

1. The CNH District consists of well-equipped, healthy, missionally committed leaders.
   A.) There is a district-wide culture that facilitates the overall wellness and equipping of leaders.
   B.) Identify and utilize leaders across the district to assist others in mission for both congregations and schools.

2. Congregations have a positive mission direction.
   A.) Congregations have hope with a vision for the future.
   B.) Cooperative ministries between congregations are fostered and enabled.

3. Basic congregational and support services are provided in an efficient and cost-effective way.

A variety of grants are made available through the generosity of donors and in the district grants. The CNH makes church work education grants but also offers a variety of incentive grants for congregations and their leaders to engage in mission work with their community and to engage in practical individual and group experiences to enhance missionary learning and practice. The CNH District intentionally formed a mission agency to catalyze and organize the district’s mission work together. We believe the CNH District and its Mission Agency is not merely an office or an organization, but each and every “called out” missionary person of God scattered in and around our region, both within and sent beyond our congregations.
The 2016–2109 Triennium has been a time of extensive natural disasters in the CNH District. The CNH District has been blessed to receive and continue to work to fully distribute gifts from around our generous church body to fire victims in Santa Rosa, Napa, Clear Lake, Redding, Butte County (Paradise), California, as well as volcano flow victims on the Big Island of Hawaii. Because of the state of the forests in California, we expect that opportunities to continue to support future fire and natural disaster victims may escalate in the near future.

Michael R. Lange, President

R23

Central Illinois District

This district is highly tuned to the work of the Lord being done among us as Word and Sacrament ministry. We are fully committed to speaking a word of pardon to repentant sinners as the objects of our heavenly Father’s love and His Son’s holy sacrifice. We are eager to see even more join the number of the saints through a confident trust in Jesus. We desire to see CID congregations thrive and grow. Our professional church workers are encouraged to seek faithfulness knowing that God will supply the success of the mission.

The challenge looms before us here in the heartland that is experienced elsewhere. We live in a post-Christian age. The church doesn’t have the effect and influence that it formerly had. Society is fomenting an environment that is more and more hostile to the Church, its message, and its adherents. Our congregations are finding several generations lukewarm or missing to the preaching of the Gospel. The Gospel is perceived as irrelevant in our cities and communities. The cross is viewed as a quaint enough story of ancient times, but callous hearts are cold to the divine practicality of atonement and redemption. Where the disease is ignored, so is the Physician.

Our 2018 district convention brought our delegates together under the banner of the cross and the theology of the cross. Again, Jesus was held before our eyes to confirm that all has been done so that we might stand “not guilty” before our Father. The results of Jesus’ salvific work were proclaimed as solid ground in facing the difficulties and challenges of life. Our regional Vice-President, the Rev. Dr. Daniel Preus, representing the Synod together with the LCMS First Vice-President, the Rev. Dr. Herbert Mueller, also served as our convention essayist. Building on Jesus’ substitutionary work from His conception, through His suffering and death, and onto His victorious resurrection, and focused on His life-giving Word, we are given grace and hope to embrace when things and times get tough. We have made it a point to strongly emphasize Gospel themes for our last several conventions.

Having a strong contingent of faithful pastors and teachers, ecclesiastical supervision has been more a blessing than a bane. We spend more time celebrating God’s grace than the devil’s attacks. We rejoice in victory more than weep in defeat. This is all God’s love showered upon us, undeserved. Yet there has been quite a turnover in the number of pastors, principals, teachers, and other rostered personnel that need replacing in our congregations and schools.

At the district office, we saw Mr. Glenn Goeres retire from his position as Assistant to the President for Education and Congregational Life. But after a rather lengthy illness that retirement turned to glory as the Lord called Glenn to be with Him in 2018. Mr. Lewis “Trip” Rodgers most ably stepped in to take over where Glenn left off. A long-time teacher and principal in the Central Illinois District he entered the position already possessing the respect of his peers. The Rev. Joel Cluver, Assistant to the President for Missions, Evangelism, and Stewardship, also retired during this triennium and the Rev. Dr. Ken Schurb has served superlatively as his replacement. His many gifts and keen intelligence have been a wonderful blessing to this district in the almost two years he has been among us.

Our Central Illinois District Church Extension Fund, one of four independent funds still extant in the Synod, oversees investments of over $35 million and is still providing funding for church construction, several generous gifts to congregational and district projects, and support for various ministries in our district. Mr. David Rohe retired in 2018 and has been replaced by Mrs. Christine Anderson who is assisted by long-time Executive Assistant, Mrs. Susan Short. This fund has the strong support of the district and its congregations that should sustain it for quite some time.

Our support staff, Hugh and Marsha Shown, has been of great assistance to our office and the district. Their expertise and efficiency have kept things running smoothly over the years. Hugh is our bookkeeper/co-business manager and Marsha, our receptionist and administrative assistant for over twenty years, is scheduled to retire in May 2019.

We continue to pray for God’s mercy and blessing as we look to the future which despite the seeming insurmountable challenges that threaten Christ’s church in this place, we are assured that the same Jesus who has redeemed us will bring us safely through and the gates of hell shall not prevail.

It is a privilege to be The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod in the midsection of the state of Illinois, serving over half of its 104 counties. God has blessed us with close to 50,000 communicant members whom He is shaping every day into His faithful servants. We continue in mission for our King knowing that what He has begun He will bring to completion to His glory. He will bless because that is His promise!

Mark A. Miller, President

R24

Eastern District

The 99th Convention of the Eastern District was held at Daemen College in Amherst (Buffalo), New York, June 15 and 16, 2018. 250 were in attendance. Rev. Dr. David Maier, Michigan district president, served as the convention keynote speaker and Bible Study presenter. Rev. Christopher Esget, Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod Vice-President for the East Region, served as synodical representative. The theme of the convention was “Always Reforming” (“Ecclesia Semper Reformanda Est”).

A major portion of the convention was dedicated to break-out sessions and small-group presentations. Three resolutions were forwarded to the 2019 Synod Convention. New church professionals were recognized and welcomed into the District. A memorial time was observed to honor church worker brothers and sisters who had gone to glory over the past triennium.
Circuit Visitors were ratified by the convention and the District President was re-elected on the first ballot.

The Eastern District became a place of increasing contrast in the past triennium. Many congregations have declined to a point at which they are unable to sustain the style of ministry that had been in place primarily under the direction of a solo pastor. Each of the 10 elementary schools and 45 early childhood centers are also confronted with diminishing revenues, rising operational costs, and increasing competition.

Those realities force the 125 district congregations to examine creative alternatives for ministry. New methods of providing pastoral care, spiritual leadership, and quality Christian education are being explored and, in places, implemented. Ministries of the Eastern District are now especially encouraged to “partner,” that is, form coalitions, in order to continue or to enhance their presence in their communities. Some congregations link together to share pastoral services, some share the services of gifted lay leaders, some join together for local servant events or international mission projects, and others have pooled their youth into a “mega-size” group for spiritual growth and recreational activity. In doing so, congregations and schools are also discovering that vitality, creativity, and good congregational health come when congregations connect with other congregations and not in a closed-“silo”-congregation world.

Challenges to congregations ripple into district programming and staffing. Like its congregations, the Eastern District also partners with other districts. The LCEF Vice President and Lutheran Foundation Counselor, both of whom find their offices in the Eastern District, are shared with the New Jersey and Southeastern Districts respectively. In addition, the district office staff downsized recently. Currently the senior staff consists of a full-time district president and three part-time assistants to the president; a significant change from the past.

Congregations of the district were visited in 2016 and 2017. From the president’s office about two-dozen “visitors” were enlisted for this purpose. Visitors were sent with questionnaires to be completed by members of the congregations. The visitors were instructed to listen to responses and offer encouragement and hope among the congregations. They were well received and appreciated. A Visitation Report lists the challenges to the mission expressed in the questionnaires. The Report also includes suggested “pathways to greater health” for congregations as appropriate for greater ministry effectiveness and health.

We have been blessed through the years with several DELTO, SMP, and EIIT pastors. In 2018, work began in earnest to transition Deacons to Pastors through the SMP Colloquy and General Pastor processes. As of this writing, four of our Deacons have been approved for SMP Colloquy; two others are awaiting their interview. Two Deacons have been ordained as General Pastors.

Aspiring to be a light for the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Eastern District has supported regional mission organizations, initiated and adopted the foreign mission project “Mission Liberia,” provided tuition debt assistance to new church workers, networked congregational presidents and church finance leaders through Internet share groups, and provided a Leadership Legal Conference to inform participants of laws and policies pertaining to the church.

Pioneer Camp and Retreat Center remains one of the high-visibility, high-impact ministries of the district. Long-time camp advocates and new supporters have made decisions in the past several conventions to continue in support of Pioneer. The objective to make Camp Pioneer a primary resource for ministry in the district is being achieved at an ever-increasing level.

We recognize that we are living in ever-challenging times for the church. We might not always enjoy the privileges of the church past, but God is forever strong and faithful, and God is “Always Reforming” His church. We are grateful for strong lay leaders in our congregations and will continue to encourage the same. We vigorously maintain that the pastoral office is created by the Lord of the Church “to equip the saints for works of ministry” (Ephesians 4:11, 12).

We do not stand alone. Our faith is in Jesus Christ alone, but we need your prayers and encouragement if we are to be the people that God has called us to be by the Holy Spirit. To God be the glory.

Chris Wicher, President

English District

The English District is 105 years old and is one of two non-geographic districts of the LCMS. As of this report, the English District is blessed with 160 congregations in 20 states within the U.S. and in Ontario, Canada. We, in the English District, are blessed to carry on the tradition and culture passed on from our Church Fathers past and present. As a true microcosm of the Synod, we are blessed to reflect virtually every face and ministry type offered within the greater Synod. The joy of being a missional district is felt in almost every congregation that is visited and every ministry that is offered. Some of the highlights of the last three years are:

- The adoption of 1-1-1 mission funding by the district convention as a new funding model for missions in the district.
- Continued partnership in the Dominican Republic and other international partnerships.
- New ministry focuses within existing congregations.
- Addition of two campus ministry sites at churches within the district.
- Expansion of ministry in Pittsburgh and Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, as well as a mission plant in Clarksburg, West Virginia.

The triennial theme for the English District is “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and mind.” This theme continues the previous theme of the district and has been very contagious within many of our district congregations. Many of our congregations have run with it within their own specific ministry context. Under that theme, the district is focusing on eight specific areas to emphasize within the triennium.

1. The English District will be a model for the Synod in funding new missions and missionaries by our congregations participating in the Dollar for Missions (1-1-1) funding model.
2. The English District helps its congregations become and remain healthy.
3. Our congregations raise up church workers.
4. Christian education is integrated into serving people of all ages.
5. Our church workers and their families benefit from wellness resources.
7. Our youth and young adults are engaged in the ministries of our congregations, district, and Synod.
8. Our congregations collaborate on new missions and ministries.

The goal of this activity is to build stronger connection between members of congregations and people who may not know Christ. This is an ongoing work for all Christians, and the English District is making it a priority for the next three years. These areas will serve as the End Statements for the district board of directors for the next triennium.

Visitation is a key component to the life of the English District and its culture. With geography being the biggest obstacle between many of our churches, the district has emphasized visitation by way of the circuit visitor, vice presidents, and the staff of the district office. To that end, we are blessed with an assistant to president and missions executive who has done a great job helping with visitation. While focusing on new starts, the missions executive will help the president fulfill his task in visitation and care for the workers of the district.

The 56th regular convention of the English District was held on June 19–21, 2018, at Concordia University, Ann Arbor, Michigan. Elected to his second term as president was Rev. Dr. Jamison J. Hardy of Finleyville, Pennsylvania. Also elected to serve:

- Rev. Jeffery Miskus, pastor at Church of St. Mark in Mississauga, Ontario, Canada, first vice-president, Lake Erie Region.
- Rev. Ben Eder, pastor of Pilgrim Evangelical Lutheran Church, Kenmore, New York, second vice-president, Eastern Region.
- Rev. Robert A. Rogers, pastor of Trinity Lutheran Church, Villa Park, Illinois, third vice-president, Midwest Region.
- Rev. Todd Arnold, pastor of Lutheran Church of the Risen Savior, Green Valley, Arizona, fourth vice-president, Western Region.

Jamison J. Hardy, President

Florida-Georgia District

The Florida-Georgia District, which celebrated her 70th anniversary in 2018, is the Synod’s district on the farthest shores of the Southeastern United States, stretching from Key West, Florida, to Blairsville, Georgia, spanning almost a third of the East Coast. We are joyfully Lutheran in an area that does not have many Lutherans, and are committed to proclaiming the name of Jesus through Word and Sacrament, teaching and instructing young and old in the Word of God, and celebrating the Sacraments in accord with the Word of God. With very few exceptions there is a high level of koinonia among the pastors, teachers, and congregations in the district, with a focus on connecting people to Jesus. Through the work of the Circuit Visitors, true koinonia continues as pastors work together through their monthly Winkel meetings with great harmony and joy in their witness, mercy, and life together. Over the past three years, God has abundantly blessed this work as we have focused on two specific areas of leadership and outreach.

In the area of leadership, we have worked to continually strengthen leaders, both professional and among our laity, which we believe has strengthened our ministries. One key to this has been a program we developed called Emergent Leaders. This is a ten-day program that helps leaders, including pastors, administrators, teachers, DCEs, musicians, and laypeople, identify their strengths and build on them. Over 100 participants have been involved. In addition, we have made a number of additional opportunities available to assist our workers in their personal growth, including Pastoral Leadership Institute, DOXOLOGY, and Grace Place Wellness.

Scholarships have been provided for workers to conferenc- es both in our district and beyond. Our own conferences have featured outstanding speakers to fulfill our commitment in assisting workers in providing ongoing education and growth in relevant, practical, and theological applications for local ministries. The district staff serves to lift up the ministries on the front line as they fulfill the staff mission of serving, assisting, and encouraging ministries in their proclamation of Jesus!

In the area of outreach, we have spent considerable time reassessing our mission program. With the board of directors we have determined that the most critically important thing any of us can do is to proclaim the name of Jesus to a world lost in the darkness of sin at a time church attendance is diminishing in many places.

As former Mission Executive Rev. Doug Kallesen returned to parish ministry, we began working with Five Two, an organization focused on planting new ministry, to assist us with our mission program. We have determined that as we start new ministries they are to be sustainable, marketable, and have a long range plan. Leadership teams are assembled by the local ministry, and then assessed with a comprehensive battery of questions that help determine viability and potential of starting new ministry. This has already resulted in several new ministries, including the Centro de Paz para la Vida (Peace Center for Life) that will reach into the immigrant neighborhoods surrounding the church to assist people with all kinds of needs. The district goal is to plant two new ministries in each region each year for the next five years, so that when the district celebrates the 75th anniversary we will have a minimum of 50 new ministries begun which impact lives for the sake of the Gospel. We have seen all kinds of ministries being considered, from early learning centers to Alzheimer care facilities. We have also implemented some Mission and Ministry Facilitators to work directly with congre-
tations, who have the freedom to implement mission in the way that is best in their situation. We are not so concerned with the method as we are that congregations are engaged in acts of witness, mercy, and reaching into their communities to live life together as servants of Jesus.

An area of outreach that we continue to struggle with involves Latino Ministry throughout the FLGA District. We see a growing population, but few bilingual pastors or leaders to accommodate the needs. We realize that more language training skills are necessary, not just in the FLGA District, but across the Synod. While indigenous leaders are being raised up on a local level, this takes a great deal of time. We are blessed to have a variety of ethnic ministries including Latino, Hispanic, Haitian, and Korean, and are currently working with enclaves of Ethiopian people. However, there is much more to do. Our campus ministries continue reaching out to students, and we are seeking to strengthen these ministries as well as reach several colleges and universities near some of our congregations. We have also done work in Haiti, Puerto Rico, and several South American places.

Some of our school ministries have struggled to continue, while at the same time, we have seen some of our larger schools have record attendance. Youth ministries continue to thrive despite serving fewer numbers of youth. Several DCEs have been added to the district roster, and on the whole we have seen some tremendously creative youth ministry done, including awesome high school and middle school gatherings annually. We have begun work on a Recruitment Task Force to encourage more youth to consider church work.

Financially the district has remained healthy and is currently with little debt. We eliminated our mission grant program and replaced it with a mission loan program that partners ministries in mission and allows a perpetual funding of missions. The FLGA District has experienced tremendous staffing transitions since the last Synod convention including a vacancy in our mission program, the loss of a business manager to the SMP program (which is a blessing to the church at large), and a change in our LCEF DVP. Each of these transitions has presented a challenge, but God has been faithful and provided, and the district is in the process of slowly rebuilding a team as we anticipate more changes in the next few years.

As I reflect on the past three years, I find that we have a district filled with servant leaders, and I am certainly grateful for our shared vision and partnership, with a deep commitment to connect people to Jesus.

Gregory S. Walton, President

Indiana District

Our 2018 convention theme was “God’s Plan, Our Future and Hope.” This was based on Jeremiah 29:11: “For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.” Thankfully, even though the Indiana District leadership is in a state of transition, in Christ we know that God’s eternal plan, the plan that centers in the cross and empty tomb, gives us certainty about our future. This is a living hope that flows from our Lord’s resurrection and correspondingly from our new birth in Holy Baptism.

As we encountered and are still encountering this transition, we are reminded of renowned artist Albrecht Duerer who made famous that Latin phrase, “Soli Deo Gloria”: “to God alone be the glory.” Duerer would abbreviate this “SDG.”

Several faithful servants are retiring or moving elsewhere from the positions in which they served faithfully for many years. We thank the Lord for the fifteen years of faithful service rendered by retiring District President Daniel May. All of the many lives of pastors, commissioned workers, and laity touched by the Christ-proclaiming work of this man are truly amazing. Who can count the numerous congregations he visited, encouraged, guided, lovingly chided, helped, and touched in so many ways? Then there is appreciation extended to him on behalf of the Council of Presidents. SDG. Indiana District Superintendent of Lutheran Schools, Jon Mielke, has just retired. He served tirelessly for twelve years, regularly encouraging, praying for, assisting, and guiding our Lutheran commissioned workers and our numerous Lutheran schools. He also was regularly in Indianapolis, influencing and discerning legislation that related to our schools. SDG. Our Indiana District Executive for Finance, Ron Bleke, served in this demanding position for almost seven years. Ron likewise is retiring. He consistently put forth efforts above and beyond the call of duty, always keeping on top of the vast amount of financial matters and needs across the district, keeping abreast of new laws and insurance guidelines, communicating with workers and congregations concerning their financial needs, as well as guiding all in the district office in various financial discussions. SDG. For over thirty years Juanita Voltz (“Nita”) served as secretary, receptionist, and overall assistant in the office. She was the cheerful voice that one heard on the phone when calling the district office. Nita retires from her position with our deep gratitude. SDG.

Then there are those moving to other positions and regions. Steve Strauh who served over seven years as our LCEF Vice President, and who volunteered in several key situations and activities in the district, was promoted in the LCEF realm. SDG. Rev. Philip Krupski, servant within the LCMS Foundation, has likewise been promoted within this arm of service. He served faithfully in our district for the Foundation for three years. SDG.

Into these several positions being vacated our Lord has placed unworthy servants. Yours truly, Rev. Dr. Daniel Brege, was elected President of the Indiana District. Lord have mercy. Dr. Kevin Brockberg is learning quickly the role of Superintendent of our Lutheran Schools. As of this writing the search continues to fill the other positions within the district office. Those positions that are “adjunct” positions within the district (LCEF Vice-President; LCMS Foundation rep.) have been filled with faithful men who are indeed, like their predecessors, serving with a servant attitude. Thomas (“TJ”) Mattick is the new LCEF VP. Andrew Behrman is just transitioning as the newly appointed LCMS Foundation representative. SDG.

We shall not name them individually, but SDG relative to the service of numerous pastors and commissioned workers who have retired recently or in the last triennium. Through them the Good News of Christ our Savior was shared, magnified, taught, witnessed, and upheld. We thank our God and we thank you men and women who thus served our Lord Jesus with
fidelity and often in the face of trial and tribulation. For all of you pastors and commissioned workers who continue to serve and toil in your respective duties and functions within the Indiana District, thank you and SDG.

Then there are the often unsung heroes, the laity and volunteers within our over 230 congregations and our approximately 100 schools. Without you men and women this district could not function. We give you thanks for your faithful financial support, and even more so for your constant prayers and your diligent assistance and encouragement to the workers in your midst. Thank you for realizing the necessity for faithful distribution and reception of Word and Sacrament. SDG.

Our Lord has wrought many wonderful works through His people here in Indiana. SDG for all of these. One such work that has involved Synod joining with and in our district is the establishment of a missionary-at-large in the Gary area. Rev. Delwynn Campbell, called by Synod as such a missionary, has been faithfully doing mission work as well as serving God’s people in the Gary area. May the Gospel of our Lord Jesus continue to grow and be magnified! SDG.

Finally, though our Indiana District is in transition—a transition that will continue as other individuals retire in the next three years—the Lord has continued to bless us with that eternal stability which comes from the unchanging Christ, who is the same yesterday, today, and forever, and from His abiding Word. Truly SDG—to God alone be the glory!

Daniel J. Brege, President

**R28**

**Iowa District East**

Iowa District East is comprised of 119 congregations with 144 active, candidate, and emeriti pastors. We also have eight Lutheran elementary schools, one high school, and 27 preschools. The commissioned workers are 24 principals, DCEs, and parish workers. Our schools are staffed with 110 commissioned or contracted teachers. The geographical setting of IDE is the eastern half of the state of Iowa. This district office currently employs four workers (two ordained and two contracted). In reference to the resolutions passed in the 2016 convention, IDE remains faithful to the use of the historic liturgy in Divine Service as each congregation prepares to receive the Holy Supper of our Lord. While we have been blessed to have very few vacancies in the last triennium, we have used men on candidate status to comprise call lists for calling congregations. The pastoral and lay leadership in each parish highly value the Lutheran Confessions and conduct Divine Service as well as their baptized lives in accordance to what we believe and confess is true.

Our goals each year are to assist our pastors in preaching and emphasize visitation in the homes of their members. The same is true of the district president. Our intent is to exemplify visitation by being present in our congregations, attending the needs of our church workers, and assisting each parish to live the baptized life that our culture so desperately needs to see and hear. We have not planted any new mission starts this triennium and have had two closings. The challenge to IDE is the demographic changes to our population and in some cases pure apathy of its citizens to the Word of God. Farms are being purchased by corporate industry and what used to be 10 family farms is now cultivated by one or two people. While there are fewer families who remain in Iowa and tend the farm, there are still plenty who have no relationship with Christ Jesus as members of His Church. There is as much opportunity for harvest in the populace as there is in the fields planted with grain. It is a matter of value for what God gives us as free gift of grace. What we receive is worth inviting others to come and participate in as well. Encouraging our membership to invite their neighbors from all capacities to Divine Service is a focus we must emphasize. We have the Holy Treasures of our Lord. Our pastors preach and teach pure Word of God. Our schools prepare our children rightly. We have everything Pentecost gave the Early Church. The same Word and Sacrament that grows the Church in every era is at our disposal. We have work to do and by God’s grace we will do it. God help us all and bless us with the promise of eternal life in Him until we rest securely in the resurrection.

Brian Saunders, President

**R29**

**Iowa District West**

“Bound Together in Christ’s Love”

The theme for the 40th convention of Iowa District West was *Bound Together in Christ’s Love*. The theme was based on Colossians 3:12–17 (ESV):

Put on then, as God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so also you must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Paul begins with good news. You are Chosen! We are chosen by God to be His people. In the book of Ephesians it says, “even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him” (Ephesians 1:4 ESV). Paul reminds us that from the very beginning of time, from the foundation of the world, God has chosen us to be His people. God sent Jesus for us! “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16 ESV). Whoever believes in Him has eternal life. Christ Jesus lived, died, and is risen for us! This is the Good News of God’s Grace. In Christ Jesus, God chose you to be one of His own sons and daughters. Our identity as the people of God is that we have been chosen by Him to be His people and to share in His glory forever.

This identity as people of God is lived out over and over in the congregations of Iowa District West (IDW). Pastors are
present with their people as they faithfully visit the sick and shut-ins of their congregations. They lead the people in worship, that is teachers, deaconesses, directors of Christian education, and other church professionals are forming and informing the next generation of Christians. Church members are volunteering to serve in their congregations and communities. Hundreds of quilts are prayerfully constructed and other projects of mercy are offered by willing servants to the Glory of God. These are acts of compassion and kindness.

The Holy Spirit sanctifies us and in doing so He gives us hearts of mercy. This is God’s work in us as He calls us to put on compassion and kindness. The Holy Spirit in Holy Baptism calls us to be the Holy people of God, to live in perfect Koinonia fellowship with one another. This is our identity as God’s chosen people. Jesus says it like this, “By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:35 ESV).

The culture of worship in Iowa District West is faithful in the common order for the distribution and reception of The Lord’s Supper. There is a great love for the Lutheran heritage in Christian worship. Lutheran Service Book has become the primary worship resource for many of our congregations while also identifying and encouraging the many musical treasures and gifts that the Holy Spirit continues to pour upon the Church.

Trends across the District

We are witnessing a dramatic change in the demographics in Iowa. It is not a surprise to anyone living in the rural areas of Iowa District West that in the past 20 years there has been a major shift in the population. Our small towns are becoming smaller, and the Des Moines metro is growing significantly. I have witnessed the pain people feel as they consider closing a congregation and the growing pains of people as they consider how they will serve an increasing population. To be sure, both the increase and the decrease in population can cause a burden to our churches. There are areas of the district that are growing at an astonishing rate.

On a Mission to Support Christ’s Mission

This is the mission statement of the board of directors, “to assist the congregations and their members in conserving and promoting the unity of faith and in carrying out their mission . . . more effectively and efficiently together with other member congregations” (LCMS Handbook 1.3.3, emphasis added). IDW continues to be a leading District in the support of our national and international mission work. In the past triennium, the District has passed on to The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod 50 percent of funds received from congregational support. At the same time, we encourage our congregations to directly support our LCMS missionaries over and above our district commitment to the Synod through Mission Central.

The district has identified five strategic missionary partners who are intentionally seeking to reach the unchurched in their communities. Each of the missionary partners are engaged in unique types of ministry. The goal of our strategic partnerships is to provide sufficient financial support and organizational resources so they can carry out the work of sharing the love of Christ.

Since our last convention, the district has welcomed Rhonda Mohr as assistant to the president for education, youth, and family life. She assists our Lutheran schools with workshops and conferences for school boards, principals, and teachers. Our principals meet monthly at the district office to share information, strategic planning, and bolster the Lutheran identity in each of our schools. We are blessed to have over 40 Lutheran preschools in Iowa District West. Our Family Life Ministry provides Christian education resources to assist our congregations and families with Sunday School, Vacation Bible School, confirmation instruction, and adult education programs. The district assists congregations and workers in the faith formation of our young people for Christian life in this rapidly changing world. The district continues to host annual youth gatherings, facilitate national youth gatherings, coordinate servant events and mission trips, and work with Camp Okoboji in summer camp programs.

The congregations in Iowa West have a long history of caring for and sharing our burdens with one another. We have a close relationship with Lutheran Family Service of Iowa. We were very involved in disaster relief efforts in Texas, Florida, and Puerto Rico. I thank God for congregations that are ready and willing to work with one another in this common confession and common mission. I praise God for pastors who are willing to take on the extra work of vacancies and congregations that will release them for service. Our congregations have been ready and willing to make use of pastors on candidate status as vacancy and visitation pastors. I believe we need to be pioneering in how we continue, bearing with one another, in our ministry together.

Endowment and legacy gifts have allowed us to provide increasing amounts of financial aid to students preparing for church work careers, students attending Concordia University System schools, and for our workers seeking continuing education. We have also addressed some of the issues of church workers’ indebtedness through the district’s Ministry Excellence Fund.

The district continues a partnership with the Lutheran Church Foundation to provide a Christian estate planning counselor to assist congregations and lay people wishing to fund ministries through endowment and legacy gifts. IDW also partners with the Lutheran Church Extension Fund to provide an LCEF Vice-President to serve our congregations, workers, and lay people with investment opportunities, loans, and an arch of church extension services.

I count it a joy and a blessing to be a pastor in IDW. But times are changing. Rural Iowa is changing, but so are our urban and suburban communities. We rejoice in the timeless blessings of Christ and the changeless message of the Gospel. This Good News brings peace and confidence in “changing times.” I believe congregations throughout Iowa District West are sensing that they could fulfill their God-given mission better together than separately. Because we are “Bound Together in Christ’s Love,” I encourage the leaders throughout Iowa District West to explore new ways to join forces with neighbor congregations to bring the changeless message of God’s love for the world to your communities.

Steve Turner, President
Kansas District

Our work in the Kansas District is aptly reflected in the theme of our 2018 convention: “Life Together in Mission.” We chose that theme to draw attention to the all-important “partnership in the Gospel” that Paul talks about in Phil. 1:3–5. We certainly “thank God with joy” for the privilege of supporting and encouraging the members of the district—160 congregations, 14 elementary schools, 44 preschools, and nearly 400 workers—in carrying out the mission Christ has given His Church. We’re thankful, as well, for opportunities we’ve had to maintain and enhance our work with other valued partners, including the Synod, RSOs, auxiliaries, and related agencies.

Goals

If you click on “About Us” on the homepage of our website, you’ll see the phrase “Synod in this Place,” a nod to Bylaw 4.1.1.1. Our “common work” in the Kansas District—captured in our mission statement, goals, and priorities—strongly aligns with the Synod’s constitutional objectives, bylaw purpose, and convention priorities while also taking into account directives from our district convention.

Following is a brief summary of progress on the major directives and priorities that have guided our work since the last Synod convention.

District Resolutions

Since 1997, the Kansas District has been the sole district supporter of mission work in Guinea. During the past triennium, we’ve worked with the LCMS Office of International Mission (OIM) to identify promising ways to continue supporting Guinea while aligning our efforts with new Synod strategies for French-speaking West Africa, which include a strong emphasis on theological education. As such, we’ve now designated our annual Pentecost Offering to the Center for Lutheran Theological Studies (CLET) in Dapaong, Togo, which provides pastoral training to African students. In the past two years, the offering has raised enough to cover full tuition for three Guinean students at the CLET.

2015 Res. 15-01-03A: Encourage the Kansas District to Work Together in Mission. This resolution encouraged involvement in the Synod’s Planting Gospel Seeds program, which has since been subsumed under the re:Vitality program. The Kansas District has actively encouraged congregations to participate in both re:Vitality and Every One His Witness (thereby also addressing 2016 Synod Res. 1-01 and 1-03). Our missions executive continues to receive training as a re:Vitality facilitator, and the district offers grants to congregations interested in conducting workshops.

2015 Res. 15-06-04A: Improve the Call Process. One of our highest priorities has been to improve the call process, particularly with respect to efficiency and communication. We’ve looked for ways to reduce bottlenecks and keep the process moving smoothly, and we’ve made significant progress. I make it my practice to lead every pre-call meeting to get the process off to a good start. We’ve developed ways to keep the process moving forward, even when I’m out of the office for extended periods of time. I keep detailed records on every call and communicate any significant developments to both the lay point person and the CV, which helps promote accountability. During a recent two-year period, the ball was in the court of the district president only 10 percent of the total time of those vacancies.

2015 Res. 15-06-01 (also LCMS 2016 4-05A): Koinonia Project. Another high priority has been implementing the Koinonia Project throughout the district. In the 2015–2018 triennium (and for several years prior), we had three of our 16 circuits engaged in the Koinonia Project. Now Koinonia is an even higher priority in the new triennium. We discussed the concept under the theme “Life Together in Ministry” at our 2018 pastors’ conference, and we’ve just established a District Koinonia Task Force, which will develop a plan for expanding the project throughout the district.

Synod Priorities

LCMS Bylaw 4.4.4: Visitation. We conducted 48 “official” visitations (of 139 parishes/160 congregations) in the Kansas District during the district triennium (2015–2018); 45 of those were during the Synod triennium (2016 to the present). In addition to the formal visits, CVs, VPs, and the DP were involved in numerous other situations where an unusually great amount of time was spent with a congregation and resulted in wide-ranging, two-way communication about the ministry of those congregations. The first round of visitations was largely a “get to know you” visit and a general survey of congregational ministry, since the custom of such visits had been absent for many years. The second round will be based very intentionally on the description for visitations listed in the Synod bylaws.

2016 Res. 4-04A: Common Order for the Lord’s Supper. We’ve made intentional efforts to model this practice at our district convention and conferences. We also expect that the Koinonia Project will provide opportunities for the “full and open discussion” of unity and freedom that districts have been asked to undertake.

2016 Resolution 4-05A: Koinonia Project. See discussion of 2015 Kansas Res. 15-06-01 above.

2016 Res. 12-02: Workers on Candidate Status. We currently have two pastors on candidate status and 54 commissioned ministers on candidate status. During the last triennium, I focused primarily on the pastors, ensuring that they have pastoral care and annually reporting their situations to the Council of Presidents, our circuit visitor conference, and in our district newsletter.

2016 Resolution 8-01A: Lutheran Ethos of Our Schools. The 2018 Kansas District delegates in convention adopted Res. 18-04-07, “To Encourage Colloquy or Other Educational Tracks for Non-Rostered Teachers to Be Inculcated into Lutheran Theology,” by a vote of 175–17. Some of our schools have now acted on this resolution. We also have a district NLSA (National Lutheran Schools Accreditation) commissioner who works closely with our schools on the accreditation process.

2016 Resolution 13-02A: Licensed Lay Deacons (LLDs). In October 2016 (shortly after the Synod convention), the Kansas District had 58 LLDs, but most were not serving in regular Word and Sacrament ministry as de facto pastors. Of these 58, 41 were current in submitting their annual reports and requesting renewal of status. Since that time, we identified deacons who seemed to meet the criteria for SMP colloquy; one has completed SMP colloquy and has been ordained. Today the district has 32 LLDs, all of whom are current with their annual reports, with three LLDs still in the final stages of their applica-
tion for SMP colloquy. In two additional cases, congregations have requested an exception to continue to be served by their LLD for a limited time and for a specific reason.

Performance Assessment
A few months prior to our 2018 convention, we took stock of how we’ve used the “talents” the Lord has given us (Matt. 25), assessing what we’ve accomplished and where we might go next. That stock-taking exercise yielded over two dozen items (listed below), all of which are aimed at enhancing our service to district members, strengthening our partnership with the Synod and other organizations, and exercising faithful stewardship of the gifts entrusted to us.

Worker Support
- Increased emphasis on church worker care through the Core Needs Survey, expanded committees for follow-up, broadened executive staff involvement, and renewed focus on organization and efficiency
- Increased the number of Winkel visits
- Implemented PALS (Post-Seminary Applied Learning and Support) and launched a new worker orientation event
- Appointed a District Life Coordinator
- Increased intentional attention to congregations and workers in central and western Kansas

Congregational Support
- Improved the call process
- Increased congregational visitation
- Reviewed 45 congregational constitutions and gave final approval to 32 of them
- Reorganized District Disaster Response (appointed a District Disaster Response Coordinator; encouraged the involvement of LERT teams)

Missions
- Filled a vacancy: Assistant to the President for Missions and Stewardship
- Filled a vacancy: Administrative Assistant for Missions and Stewardship
- Established a partnership with Mission Central and LCMS Mission Advancement
- Established a partnership with the LCMS Office of International Mission (West Africa/Guinea)
- Planted two new worship sites: Ascension, Pratt (chartered in 2017) and Concordia (exploratory; now conducting weekly services)
- Designated 10 percent of congregational receipts each year to district mission grants

Communication/Transparency
- Created new mission and vision statements
- Added a new position: Communication Specialist
- Redesigned website and logo
- Added new information to the website, including board report summaries, Board of Directors minutes, and an enhanced budget summary
- Conducted “Meet the District Staff” events in 10 locations throughout the district

Administration
- Developed a new strategic plan
- Realigned and balanced budgets
- Refined the procedure for annual pastors’ conference elections and business meeting
- Conducted an assessment of the Kansas District Retreat Center; launched a plan for improvement
- Made numerous improvements to the District Office building
- Extensively revised the District Operations Manual
- Welcomed a new volunteer archivist, with plans to improve organization and access to resources

Looking Ahead
Shortly after our 2018 convention, we created a strategic direction document to guide our work in the new triennium. At the core of the document are three key aims:

1. Witnessing Faithfully
2. Fostering Unity
3. Helping Ministries Thrive

The challenges we face as we pursue these aims are likely very similar to those in other districts: demographic and cultural shifts, shrinking resources, and resistance to change. But we’re excited about the opportunities we’re exploring—including potential partnerships, networks, and grant-funded projects—that will help us address those challenges and strengthen our ministries in the Kansas District.

Perhaps most encouraging is the growing spirit of unity and fellowship in the district. At our 2018 convention, we asked delegates to respond to the statement, “I am optimistic about life together in the Kansas District.” The vast majority (84 percent) strongly agreed or agreed. In an open-ended comment, one delegate noted: “I believe the theme for this year’s convention [Life Together in Mission] was well chosen and served to remind all participants that working together in Christian love towards our common goals is far more beneficial than doing otherwise.”

United in our Baptism, confession, and common work, we in the Kansas District are “Joyfully Lutheran!” And we have every reason to “Rejoice, Pray, Give Thanks!”

Peter Lange, President
Michigan District

Focusing on the Michigan District Critical Targets of

- Great Commission Ministry,
- Great Compassion Ministry,
- Healthy Congregations, and
- Healthy Church Workers, …

the Michigan District continually strives to effectively serve the congregations and church workers in its care. Our focus and emphasis is to “hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful.” We also boldly and daily prayerfully “consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near” (Hebrews 10:23–25).

Res. 4-04A asked the district presidents to appeal to the LCMS Congregations, Workers, and Institutions within Christian Freedom and for Love’s Sake to Retain a Common Order of Service for the Lord’s Supper. Our Congregation Mission and Ministry Facilitators (CMMFs), who frequently participate in services throughout our district, report that congregations follow this request. The Michigan District also takes pains to model conformity to this request when gathering for worship, pastors’ conferences, theological conferences, and the district convention.

Res. 4-05A asked the district presidents to Continue and Expand the Koinonia Project. The Winkels of the Michigan District are encouraged to study materials that Synod puts out for these Circuit gatherings.

Res. 12-02A asked the district presidents to Encourage Calling Church Workers on Candidate Status. The district president, in preparing call lists, has a list of candidates that are available in the district. When applicable, he places a candidate’s name on a call list for congregations or ministries within the district.

Res. 8-01A asked the district presidents to Encourage and Strengthen the Lutheran Ethos of Our LCMS Early Childhood Centers, Elementary Schools, and High Schools.

1. What has been accomplished in your district over the last triennium to strengthen the “Lutheran ethos” of our Lutheran schools?

We know that healthy congregations/schools are thriving when served by healthy church workers and healthy laypeople. Those healthy church workers and laypeople serve at their best when, strengthened by Christ through Word and Sacrament, they disciple the saved with sound biblical teaching and are about the mission of reaching the lost by compassionately meeting the needs of the people in their community. Great emphasis is placed on building relationships through which the Lord can work to create the God-given opportunities to share the Gospel. To that end, we continually strive to strengthen our workers/volunteers through numerous conferences to better accomplish that purpose. People are at their best when on a mission to tell others about Christ and our “Lutheran ethos” is best strengthened in the same way.

2. What work has been done to encourage pastors, administrators, teachers and parents to work together in establishing this Lutheran ethos in their churches and schools?

During the last triennium the district has continued to encourage, challenge, and equip the workers/volunteers in our Lutheran schools to do as Paul says in 1 Corinthians 9:22. “I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the Gospel, that I may share in its blessings.” Yes, the doctrine of our Lutheran church is a part of the foundation of who we are as Christians. We also recognize that what works in one school or community academically and didactically may not be what is best for another school. We remain firm in what we believe as Lutheran Christians and support our workers/volunteers in everything they do (short of sinning) to accomplish the mission to reach and save those who don’t know the love of our Savior.

3. How have you encouraged schools to undertake and complete the National Lutheran School Accreditation (NLSA) process?

NLSA is the best tool we have for assisting our schools in their continued “health” and growth. Accreditation is a strong encouragement for all of our schools and has become an expectation for schools that desire to improve on a yearly basis and a part of the culture of Lutheran schools in the Michigan District.

4. Do you have any recommendations for the further strengthening of the Lutheran ethos of our schools?

Recognize that “Lutheran ethos” can be determined by much more than the eleven things prescribed in Res. 8-01A. Having the input of the Education Executives, who have intimate knowledge and relationships with the schools in our districts, before crafting such a resolution would be important if future resolutions are brought before convention.

Res. 13-02 asked the district presidents to Regularize Status of Licensed Lay Deacons Involved in Word and Sacrament Ministry. The Michigan District, in response to Res. 13-02, required our Licensed Lay Deacons (those serving Word and Sacrament to members in a parish without a full-time pastor) to apply for SMP Colloquy.
• 26 Deacons attended the one-week intensive training at the Fort Wayne Seminary.
• 19 Deacons applied for SMP Colloquy (includes anyone who was interviewed by the committee).
• 3 Deacons applied for General Colloquy.
• 15 Deacons were approved for SMP Colloquy and have been ordained in our district. One is currently in the process.
• 2 Deacons were approved for General Colloquy and have been or are in the process of being ordained in our district. One is currently in the process.
• 2 Deacons were not approved for SMP Colloquy and have applied for an exception.

The Michigan District continues to train men for pre-SMP/Deacon ministry within our district. When they have trained and served as a Licensed Lay Deacon for two years, they are encouraged to apply for SMP Colloquy.

Under the theme of “IMAGINE…Living as God’s Saved and Sent Servants,” the 2018 Michigan District Convention was held on June 24–26 at Concordia University Ann Arbor. Rev. Michael W. Newman, Texas District President; Rev. Bill Woolsey, Five Two Network; and Mr. Gary Thies, Mission Central—LCMS World Mission were welcomed as convention essayists. Res. 1-01 “To Affirm the Priesthood of All Believers in Christ and Therefore Their Call as Missionaries” was adopted with a 91.5 percent majority.

Several major conferences were planned for pastors and professional church workers during the past three years, many of which are available on the Michigan District YouTube channel, including:

• 2016 Living in the Tension with Mr. Chris Willard, Ms. Jo Saxton, Dr. Tim Elmore, Ms. Jackie Oesch
• 2017 If the Foundations Are Destroyed—What Can the Righteous Do? with Mr. Ken Ham, Rev. Dr. Tony Cook, Deaconess Heidi Goehmann, Mr. Dave Rueter, Rev. Dr. Patrick Ferry
• 2018 Metanoia—Living in Change with Rev. Tod Bolsinger, Rev. Dr. Larry Rast, Rev. Dr. Dale Meyer, Dr. Erik Hermann
• 2017 Theological Conference—“Let’s Talk Male and Female”
• 2018 Theological Conference—“Take Heart Take Action”
• 2019 Theological Conference—“Be Constant in Prayer” with Rev. Dr. Victor Belton, Mrs. Connie Denninger, Rev. C. Bryan Wolfmueller, Rev. Chris Paavola

Over 16,700 students attend an LCMS-sponsored early childhood center, elementary school, or high school in Michigan. God uses these ministries to help parents in their role of nurturing their children’s faith. Over 1,000 adults daily share Christ through these ministries and raise up People of Hope who are rooted in Christ Jesus.

The Michigan District Church Extension Fund (CEF)
Michigan Church Extension Fund continues to be an integral member of the Michigan District ministry team. For 118 years, CEF has provided congregations and schools of the Michigan District with low-interest-rate loans to help build and update facilities, while offering its members various investment instruments that not only earn a competitive rate of return but, most importantly, help build God’s Kingdom.

The Michigan District continues to be joyfully Lutheran and rejoices in our Savior, prays for, is excited about, and anticipates our future while giving thanks for our heritage.

David P. E. Maier, President

R32

Mid-South District

The Mid-South District has been privileged to serve in the Kingdom of Christ by His divine grace and guidance. Our supporting congregations of the Mid-South District are to be commended for their work on behalf of our missions and ministries. Living in a changing world brings a great many events and circumstances that impact what the Mid-South District does and what it looks like. The Mid-South District celebrated its 50th anniversary, chartered in 1966, when the Western District was divided into the Missouri and Mid-South Districts. Our genesis touched the lives in Arkansas, Tennessee, Kentucky, and supported missions around the world. The Mid-South grew from the original 67 congregations to make a vital “footprint” of our Lutheran heritage. The Mid-South District seeks opportunities to be about the work of the Great Commission, when Jesus called His Church into ministry to bring the Good News of eternal salvation through God’s grace for the sake of our Lord, Jesus Christ.

The Mid-South District’s focus remains on missions and ministry with emphases on assisting congregations and educa-
tion ministries to retain the focus on Word and Sacrament; resourcing, equipping, and strengthening existing congregations and schools for Kingdom effectiveness; recruiting, supporting, and mentoring professional church workers; planting churches; achieving financial stability and long-range fiscal accountability; and staffing for effective ministry support. Despite the closing of some congregations, active congregations were planted, and cooperation with the district LWML to implement “Each 1 – Reach 1” initiative that produced an increase in the district’s baptized members in the last three consecutive years. E1-R1 is meant to “Equip, Enable, Encourage, and Empower” our members to be the “salt and light” to a dark world.

Additionally, the Mid-South District’s mission includes direct support to the South of Lake Victoria Diocese Lutheran Church in Tanzania, their seminaries, and the Malagasy Lutheran Church and their college for young Lutherans. Our work with Trinity/ Hope missions in Haiti supports schools and daily meals for over 25,000 children for less than 30 cents a meal!

The district developed the COMPASS and C.A.R. programs that help congregations and education ministries define their ministries and missions activities. C.A.R. (Congregational Assessment Resource) comparatively defines common indicators of congregation activity with other congregations to assist in strategies and planning. COMPASS offers a team of surveyors to gather information about a congregation’s mission and ministry opportunities. The results have assisted congregations in strategic planning, outreach activities, and operational optimization.

The district, through its supporting congregations and members, provides financial support for students in church work tracks in the Concordia University System and our seminaries. The district’s Scholarship Committee awarded $80,000 in financial aid for Mid-South students. The district also provided $6,000 for district professional church workers debt relief assistance.

The district continues its commitment to making disciples of all nations. For 52 years, church planting has been a hallmark of the district. Our former investment of 102 percent of our congregation commitments to missions for plants did not achieve the result of a self-supporting congregation. The district’s church planting efforts now focus on “mothering” church, auxiliary, campuses, joint congregation efforts, or circuit initiative.

Consistent with biblical stewardship and catechesis, the district sponsored a program for congregations to offer the Financial Peace University program, taught from a Lutheran perspective for Mid-South District families. At the end of completion of FPU, the Mid-South District rebates the entire program cost. Further, the district offers Tuesday Sermon Studies for assistance and discussion around God’s Word.

Our future is bright. We will endeavor to continue mission support and outreach—to engage, equip, encourage, and enable each member of our district. We will establish a Lutheran Identity Task Force that will develop materials and information to give members that can share our Lutheran heritage with confidence and boldness. Through the SMP Colloquy, financial assistance to the SMP track in our seminaries, and further training of laity to be supports of the pastoral ministry, the Mid-South District will provide every possible opportunity to meet the needs of each congregation in our district. We will expand the resources and content of our small and rural ministry support by offering “Best Practices Forums” that highlight and offer helpful information on what other successful ministries in the RSTM can share with other congregations and schools.

We will continue to expand and promote the district’s strategic planning instrument, COMPASS, along with the revised Congregational Assessment Resource, that offers detailed information on the current operations of every congregation, compared to the other congregations in the C.A.R. pool; and expand its use beyond our district. We will increase our activity to Identify Future Church Workers from the district congregations who show aptitude and skills to serve in the Church. Providing additional Student Scholarships and assistance in Education Debt Relief will help remove much of the deterrent facing potential servants of the church.

We will, because of the influx of multi-cultural ethnic groups moving into our district, identify additional opportunities to Expand Ethnic Ministries in partnership with our local congregations. We will refine and assess the matrix of Church Planting in order to maximize the potential successful planting opportunities in accordance to the will of God. We will partner with congregations and schools that have excess facility capacity to Plant Schools, Early Childhood Centers, and possibly Virtual Schools.

I must thank our staff, board of directors, and the supportive and dedicated people in our district who make our district the best it can be for this time, and in this place with which God has blessed us.

Roger Paavola, President

R33

Minnesota North District

REJOICE:

The 195 congregations, 7 elementary schools, 19 preschools, 332 rostered church workers, 48,107 baptized, and 38,190 communicants along with various ministries such as Lutheran Island Camp and Christ Serve Ranch and Creation Science Environmental Learning Center, Good Shepherd Lutheran Community and Shepherd of Grace Lutheran Living Centers, Breezy Point Chapel (Summer Preaching Station), Deaf Ministry, College and University Campus Ministries, Anyuak African Ministry, Parish Nurses, District Lutheran Laymen’s League and Lutheran Women’s Missionary League of the Minnesota North District, rejoice in the Lord and the work He has sent us to do with “Joyfully Lutheran” in sharing the Good News of Christ crucified and risen.

We rejoice in the blessing of celebrating the 500th anniversary of the Lutheran Reformation in 2017 with special events and worship services including A Festival Service at Concordia University in St. Paul which was a cooperative effort of the university and the Minnesota North and South Districts.

We rejoice in the launching of Main Street Living Broadcast Ministry which now encompasses the State of Minnesota. This is a network TV program which includes a 30-minute worship service led by pastors from the Minnesota North and South Districts along with North Dakota, followed by a remastered This is the Life program. This outreach endeavor was made pos-
sible through the initiative of the South Dakota District Main Street Living group.

We rejoice in our efforts to foster a spirit of unity and freedom through presentations and discussions at our conferences and circuit meetings regarding worship forms and orders.

We rejoice in our cooperative work with our Lutheran schools to encourage and support our non-rostered teachers to go through the colloquy process to obtain roster status which helps to foster a Lutheran ethos.

We rejoice that we are able to offer financial assistance to individuals from the district who are preparing at our seminars and universities for full-time church work vocations.

PRAY:

We pray for a church worker so that we may continue work in reaching out to our Native American population.

We pray for our outreach efforts through Every One His Witness, Re:Vitality, and Engaging Your Community Training Workshops.

We pray for our partnership with the Office of International Mission working in Puerto Rico.

We pray for the expansion of our Bring It Home program for promoting and increasing family and personal devotions.

We pray for our ongoing training for lay leaders through Spiritual Lay Leadership Seminars led by Ambassadors of Reconciliation.

We pray for our church workers and the resources we offer for their spiritual, emotional, and physical well-being: church worker care coordinator; congregational care counselor; Sowers Fund (financial assistance in times of need); Ministerial Health Commission; financial assistance to attend Doxology, Grace Place, Shepherd’s Canyon; church workers’ wives retreat; PALS program; Christian counselors/therapists recommended list; health screening at state pastors’ conference; retirement planning workshops; new workers’ orientation; retired workers’ appreciation luncheon (which takes place at the close of the new workers’ orientation bringing together both those beginning ministry and those whose service has concluded); mental health seminars; opportunity to “get away” at no cost at Lutheran Island Camp; continuing education seminars; assessment tool and online course to deal with Compassion Fatigue.

We pray for a potential partnership with Lutheran Family Services of Iowa in an effort to utilize their expertise in such areas as counseling, adoption services, training for care-givers, and addressing life issues from the unborn to those nearing death.

We pray for the work of Pastor Fred Hinz who serves the Minnesota North and South Districts as our Public Policy Advocate and the Public Policy Committee who monitor governmental issues and provide resources and responses to actions proposed or taken by our state legislators.

We pray for our Synod/District Life Coordinator, Pastor Jason Wolter, who provides resources to our congregations, ministries, and church workers for promoting the sanctity of life.

We pray for our Lord’s grace and blessing as we serve Him with joy!

GIVE THANKS:

We give thanks for our retired church workers who willingly continue to serve our Lord and His church.

We give thanks for our C.R.O.S.S. (Congregations Reaching Out to Support Schools) Appeal to assist our seven Lutheran elementary schools as mission outposts. Over $80,000 has been received from congregations in the district.

We give thanks for our partnership with the North Dakota District and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya in supporting Project 24 and Christ’s Care for Children: Kenya, as we seek to build a total of 24 centers in Kenya and provide for the needs of at-risk children.

We give thanks for the opportunity to help make the Wittenberg Project a reality.

We give thanks for the gifts given to support the work of seminary professor James Cerdenola of the Lutheran Church of the Philippines and Good Shepherd Lutheran Church and School in Cotton Tree, Liberia, along with Pastor James Kollie and his family.

We give thanks for our Bring It Home Devotional Bible Study Program which has over 500 people on the weekly mailing list who have purchased over 3,500 copies between The Story Bible or Know the Bible Now. Thank you to Concordia Publishing House for working with us. One of the aspects of this project was to encourage individuals and congregations to purchase additional copies to give away as an outreach tool.

We give thanks for Beverly Olsen and the over 32 years of faithful service in the district office. Bev retired August 1, 2018.

Here We Stand: On Christ Alone…Our Cornerstone (2018 District Convention Theme)...with “Joyfully Lutheran: Rejoicing, Praying, and Giving Thanks!”

S.D.G.

Donald J. Fondow, President

R34

Minnesota South District

In the 2015–18 triennium, the Minnesota South District planted new churches and ministries, strengthened the mission of existing congregations and schools, and built concord and harmony through a variety of projects—including our district-wide Koinonia Project 2.0, engaging in significant visitation, 2016 Year of Wellness, and To All Generations initiative. Our mission statement, “Cultivating leaders intentionally engaged in the mission of God,” guided our support of pastors (410), commissioned workers (592), and lay leaders (from 246 congregations and 88 schools/centers).

Implementation of Synod Resolutions and By-laws

LCMS Bylaw 4.4.4: Visitation. Circuit and congregational visits by district staff in the 2015–18 triennium confirmed the three challenges discovered in our 2014–15 visits:

1. Declining or plateaued worship attendance
2. Aging membership
3. Financial stress

Our 2015–18 visits addressed these challenges with grassroots input and approaches appropriate to different ministry settings. One culmination of these visits was a report, available
on our website, titled, “Circuit Visit and Final Survey Report.”
The final pages of this report offer practical applications for
churches to address these three challenges.

2016 Res. 4-04A: Common Order for the Lord’s Supper.
This was one issue discussed as part of the Koinonia 2.0 project
(see following). We affirmed the Common Order of Service for
the Lord’s Supper and continued to encourage our churches to
strive for unity by engaging in conversations about doctrine and
practice of the Lord’s Supper.

2016 Res. 4-05A: Koinonia Project. In 2014–15, we went
district-wide with the Koinonia Project. This project opened
the door for conversations among pastors to build greater trust
and understanding concerning divisive issues. For Koinonia 2.0
during the 2015–18 triennium, pastors, commissioned workers,
and laypeople met across the district at six different locations to
discuss the six chief parts of Luther’s Small Catechism, identify-
ing what we confess, what we reject, and what we need to discuss
further. The result was a document (available on our website)
called, “A Statement of Concord.” We praise God for the many
who participated in Koinonia 2.0 and for the growing concord
among us.

2016 Res. 12-02A: Workers on Candidate Status. We have
117 workers on candidate status—15 ordained and 102 commis-
sioned. Commissioned Minister Information Forms (CMIFs)
of commissioned ministers on candidate status are shared with
every congregation and school going through the call process.
When appropriate, the district president encourages calling con-
gregations to consider ordained workers on candidate status.
Names are routinely included as call lists are prepared.

2016 Resolution 8-01A: Lutheran Ethos of Our Schools.
School visits by the Education Executive, regular communica-
tion, and the annual education and pastoral conferences all
encouraged pastors, administrators, and teachers to establish
and strengthen Lutheran ethos in their schools. In the 2015–18
triennium, the district colloquy support program provided fi-
ancial assistance for nine non-rostered teachers. Additionally,
seven schools/centers attained National Lutheran Schools Ac-
creditation (NLSA) for the first time. NLSA has been extremely
effective in assessing and strengthening Lutheran ethos in our
schools.

2016 Resolution 13-02: Licensed Lay Deacons. Our district’s
one licensed lay deacon has applied to be certified through the
Specific Ministry Pastor to General Pastor Certification (SMP/
GPC) program.

Update on Minnesota South District’s 2015–18
Triennium Goals and Initiatives

Our 2015–18 initiatives helped us stay in step with district
goals.

1. Oneness. See Koinonia 2.0 (Res. 4-05A). Created
   Engaged in Mission publication to highlight district
   missionaonal ministry. Reformation festivals were held
   in each of the four regions of the district. Over 2,000
   worshipers gathered on October 29, 2017, at Con-
   cordia University, St. Paul, to celebrate the 500th an-
   niversary of the Reformation, with LCMS President
   Matthew Harrison preaching.

2. Meeting expressed challenges. See visitation (Bylaw
   4.4.4). Executive district staff visited all 24 circuits to
   understand and develop responses to aging mem-
   bership, declining attendance, and financial stresses.

3. Christian education. The To All Generations ap-
   peal raised significant funds for grants to strengthen
   Christian education across the district, in conjunc-
   tion with visitation and NLSA progress (see also Res.
   8-01A).

4. New outreach ministries. Congregations were encour-
   aged to establish at least one new community con-
   nection. A new standing committee, Congregational
   Mission Formation, was established.

5. Wellness. 2016 was the Year of Wellness, which
   reached out to church workers and congregations
   through conferences, retreats, and workshops. The
   wellness initiative continues into the new triennium.

6. Church planting. Church plant Remedy Church in
   Oakdale has had regular worship since 2016. Remedy
   is the first church to be planted using the crowd
   sourcing/funding capabilities of our New Church
   Incubator. We look forward to the next New Church
   Incubator launch out of Christ Victorious in Chaska
   later this year.

7. Campus ministry. Campus evangelists now serve at
   the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities; University
   of Minnesota, Mankato; and Concordia University,
   St. Paul.

8. Excellence in preaching. To move toward more excel-
   lent proclamation of the Word and in celebration of
   the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, pastors
   were encouraged to use the “Preach the Word” video
   series for personal growth.

9. Professional conduct. Clergy Coaches received training
   to come alongside other pastors and workers fac-
   ing times of transition, difficulty, or change. The 2017
   Fall Pastors’ Conference focused on pastoral integ-
   rity and workers at risk.

10. Best practices. Congregations were encouraged
    through a technology summit, worship arts sum-
    mit, new learning communities for pastors, funding
    for congregations to attend the Best Practices for
    Ministry Conference, and cultivating leaders through
    Emergent Leader Training.

11. Public policy advocacy. The One Voice for Public
    Policy publication, created by our MN Public Policy
    Advocate, informs and encourages pastors, teachers,
    and leaders in the district to incorporate marriage
    and sexuality, sanctity of life, religious freedom, and
    parental choice in education into their teaching and
    preaching. Efforts also included coalition involve-
    ment, legislative hearing testimony, and direct com-
    munication with elected representatives.

We praise God for how He worked through our initiatives
in the 2015–18 triennium!
Looking Forward in the 2018–21 Triennium

Our June 21–23, 2018, district convention gathered around the theme, “Chosen to Proclaim,” based on 1 Peter 2:9 and emphasizing the high privilege of every Christian in being set aside by God for the task of proclaiming Jesus Christ. The convention saw the retirement of incumbent President Dean Nadasdy and the election of Rev. Dr. Lucas Woodford as new district president on the second ballot to a first term.

Our staff and board of directors agreed on eleven initiatives for the 2018–21 triennium, all based on specific resolutions adopted by the convention and designed to keep us in step with God’s mission. These initiatives, along with our re-affirmed Mission Statement and Promise Statement to those we serve, will guide and organize our work over the next three years. Additionally, a major focus of the new triennium will be a district-wide push to engage and encourage congregational Bible study.

Our 2018–21 Initiatives:

1. Rooted in the Word. To move toward more excellent preaching, teaching, hearing, and understanding of the Word (2 Timothy 2:1–2).

2. Visitation, Listening, and Encouragement. To be present with our circuits, congregations, schools, and workers to encourage them, thank them, and give attention to the joys and challenges they are experiencing (Galatians 6:2, 10).

3. Oneness. To nurture our growing unity, concord, and harmony (Ephesians 4:1–6).

4. Outreach Ministries. To encourage and support congregations and individuals in refreshing existing and developing new outreach ministries in their communities (1 Peter 2:9).

5. Church Planting. To encourage congregation involvement in church planting by supporting church planters in their efforts, by becoming mother congregations, and by participating in the New Church Incubator (Luke 19:10–27).


7. Schools and Early Childhood Centers. To strengthen our existing schools and early childhood centers and expand education ministries (Matthew 19:14).

8. Campus Ministry. To encourage congregations toward greater evangelistic activity and efforts among college and university students (Psalm 78:1–7).

9. Public Policy Advocacy. To advocate for scriptural truth and provide resources in the following areas of public policy: marriage and sexuality, sanctity of life, religious freedom, and parental choice in education (Matthew 22:21).

10. Wellness. To provide resources that promote wellness among church workers, their families, and congregations (Mark 12:30–31).


Our Promise Statement to those we serve: “Rooted in the Scriptures and growing in a relationship of mutual trust and Christian love, we promise to equip, support, and encourage you in your ministries, joyfully serving together to make disciples of Jesus Christ.”

Our entire district is a ripe mission field, with over 1.75 million unclaimed (no religious affiliation) people and nearly one-third of the overall population being of non-Anglo descent (and often immigrants or refugees). We strive in this 2018–21 triennium to be found faithful stewards of the Gospel and all its gifts, helping our pastors, leaders, and congregations learn how to be intentionally engaged in this mission field while rejoicing fully in our “Joyfully Lutheran” identity.

Lucas V. Woodford, President
The convention re-elected Rev. Dr. R. Lee Hagan to his second term as district president. Also elected were Rev. William Marler as first-vice president, Rev. Dr. Kevin Golden as second vice-president, Rev. Brian Thieme as third vice-president, and Rev. Kristopher Morris as fourth vice-president.

The vision for this triennium, “Faithful Witnesses,” has five areas of emphasis.

- **Healthy Servants**—Building on the progress of the last triennium, district leadership will provide support for professional church workers through the Church Worker Care Team, health and wellness components at professional conferences, and orientation for new workers.

- **Healthy Congregations**—District leadership will support congregations to be faithful to the Word of God as they love one another and seek the lost through leadership development and teaching a biblical approach to conflict.

- **Healthy Schools**—Lutheran early childhood centers and schools will be supported through professional conferences, consultation, and mentoring programs for principals and new teachers.

- **Strengthening Families**—District leadership will provide resources and equip congregations to strengthen the faith formation in the home. Key events in this area will include Tell the Next Generation Family Ministry Conferences in 2019 and 2021.

- **Engaging Communities**—Finally, district leadership will encourage and equip congregations to engage their communities as faithful witnesses of the Gospel through Plus One and other efforts to reach the lost. More than thirty coaches have been trained to assist congregations and small grants of up to $1,500 have been made available as part of Plus One. The key event in this triennium will be a second district-wide mission summit in 2020.

The district praesidium is addressing 2016 Convention Resolution 4-04A “To Appeal to the LCMS Congregations, Workers and Institutions within Christian Freedom and for Love’s Sake to Retain a Common Order of Service for the Lord’s Supper,” by a series of articles that emphasize the “spirit of unity and freedom … in our walk together.” The hope of the Missouri District praesidium is that the congregations and workers would hold freedom and order in tension as modeled by Dr. Luther’s own liturgical reforms in the early years of the Reformation.

While there are many challenges facing congregations and schools in Missouri, the opportunities are growing and great. We give thanks to God as we witness growth among ethnic groups in our congregations. For example, congregations are connecting with growing numbers of Asian and African immigrants. Our prayer is that all of the congregations of Missouri would be active in engaging their communities and equipping families to teach the faith in the home. Our focus is that the Gospel be proclaimed in all our daily callings as we live as “Faithful Witnesses.” In the words of the Psalmist, “we will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the Lord.” (Psalm 78:4)

R. Lee Hagan, President

R36

**Montana District**

The Montana District consists of 69 congregations of God’s people gathered around Word and Sacrament comprising some 14,000 souls. The district has two congregations outside the borders of the state of Montana (Williston, North Dakota, and Salmon, Idaho). Congregations of the Montana District support six day-schools and fifteen pre-schools or day cares. They also support missions to the Crow and Cheyenne reservations.

The theme for the District’s 2018–2021 triennium is from John 1:17 “Truth Came Through Jesus Christ.” At our district convention, we read aloud the entire Gospel of John and discussed and confessed God’s faithfulness in delivering to us the truth that we so desperately need.

This gift is immensely important for our day. With so much confusion regarding the reliability of some of our sources of information (e.g. Facebook), we need a source of truth. With so many voices contradicting the core of the Christian faith, we need to be confirmed in the truth of our teaching. With so many lost people surrounding us, we need a truth we can give to the world.

We know the Truth in Jesus. He calls Himself the Truth. We know the Truth in His Word. Jesus calls the Scriptures the Truth. Other sources of truth are of dubious nature because they are dependent on abilities of men. But Jesus, the very Word of God, is the Truth that sets us free from the problems of sin and death.

This truth is not just for us. It is for the whole world. The people of God have been given the truth not to hide away, but to speak it and live it in the world so that others may know it and live.

God has blessed the Montana District. In the past triennium we have been blessed to once again begin new work by calling a district supported missionary to revitalize a tiny congregation in Anaconda. One of the larger communities in Montana, Anaconda is a strategic location for the Gospel to be heard. Our congregations are happy to be supporting Anaconda as well as our previous new start in Big Timber and Livingston.

In addition, we launched another location of serving remote areas through the use of technology. The congregations in Stanford, Denton, and Lewistown are served by one pastor who each Sunday visits one of the congregations and live-streams his Bible class and worship service to the other two congregations. Proclaiming the Gospel in sparsely populated areas brings challenges. The district is determined not to close the doors of even tiny congregations. In fact, the goal is to find ways to open even more.

God has also blessed us with faithful servants ordained and commissioned. These dedicated men and women give of themselves so that the Gospel is proclaimed in its truth and purity and the Sacraments administered according to it. The Montana District is remarkably unified in doctrine and practice. While the practice of worship (Res. 4-40A) is discussed regularly at Winkels and pastors’ conferences, we have not seen the divisions that other districts suffer. Due to our unity, the Koinonia project (Res. 4-05A) has not been introduced. The Winkels function quite well in this duty.
The relatively low number of congregations and workers makes it easy for the district president to visit all workers on candidate status (Res. 12-02A) and to visit all the schools (Res. 8-01A), encouraging them to: (1) call rostered workers as teachers; (2) ensure that Lutheran doctrine guides all curriculum choices and teaching methodologies; (3) follow the practice of making the Gospel integral to every subject taught in the school; and (4) use the Word of God to form the basis of the conduct and relations of students and staff. The Montana District does not make use of Licensed Lay Deacons (Res. 13-02).

Our biggest challenge is to speak the truth in small and isolated communities. Fifty percent of our congregations have fewer than 50 people in church on Sunday. As a result, 70 percent of our congregations are in multiple parish relationships. We will continue to pursue new and creative ways to proclaim the eternal truth, so that all the citizens in our district, no matter how far out-of-the-way, will have an opportunity to hear the Good News of Jesus.

Terry R. Forke, President

R37

Nebraska District

The Lord has blessed the Nebraska District of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod for more than 130 years with congregations that preach the true Word of God and administer His Sacraments, as well as Lutheran schools that teach the truths of Holy Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions. First and foremost, the Nebraska District is comprised of 242 congregations and all our commissioned and ordained workers. We operate 32 Lutheran elementary schools, four Lutheran high schools, and 35 Early Childhood Centers. These ministries and workers are the core of our effort to proclaim the Word and make His presence known. We are indeed “Joy:fully Lutheran.”

We have been sent into the world as the incarnational presence of Jesus to convey His care and proclaim His Good News. The district’s board of directors continues to seek the Lord’s guidance to monitor a strategic plan for resourcing its congregations, schools, missions, and professional church workers in their mission to disciple the saved and reach out to those who are without Christ.

Four major strategic targets have focused our work in this triennium:

Target 1: Connection to God. The work of the district is fundamentally the work of each congregation serving the Body of Christ with Word and Sacrament and sending people out into their vocations as witnesses of the Savior. Divine Service and Bible study are fundamental to a healthy congregation and Synod. Decreased attendance in both worship and study is a great concern. Improving what we offer and encouraging involvement are key. Developing and encouraging evaluation tools are important first steps. In keeping with Resolution 4-04A, each of our circuits studied a paper on our theology of worship at circuit pastor gatherings.

Target 2: Connection with one another. As each of us are connected to God in Christ, we are then connected to one another. A healthy congregation and Synod must have healthy relationships. God calls us to work together. Pastors communicatin-
Crookston; and Trinity in Jansen closed their doors and ministries during this triennium. We thank God for the lives they touched. Divine Shepherd in Omaha gave birth to Grace Hill Lutheran Church, Omaha. Changing and challenging demographic shifts, along with decreasing numbers of available pastors continues to call for faithful creativity in how we bring the Gospel to our broken world.

The Nebraska District supports funding for four campus ministries: Lincoln, Omaha, Wayne, and Kearney. Ricky Jacob continues to serve faithfully in Native American ministry in Winnebago. Hispanic and African immigrant ministries continue to make known the love of Christ. The generosity of our congregations and individuals offtowever local, national, and international mission support, with missionary Gary Thies, Rev. Dr. Brent Smith, and the many volunteers of Mission Central having become the largest mission supporting agency in the LCMS. The Nebraska District and Concordia University, Nebraska, continue a strong partnership in the Gospel, with district congregations and individuals moved by the Spirit to support the mission of CUNE as well as our LCMS seminars at St. Louis, Missouri, and Fort Wayne, Indiana. Our two LWML districts and the LLL continue to find ways to support ministry and outreach within and beyond our borders.

Our task is clear and our focus is on the future. As we live out life together, mercy, and witness, we focus on strengthening the faith of believers in their connection with Christ and, in Christ, growing in our connection with one another. We need to wrestle with our differences and find our common confession that in our deeds we might continue to show the compassion of our Lord and in our witness proclaim the truth, the way, and the life.

+ To God Be the Glory +

Richard Snow, President

R38

New England District

It is my privilege to be in my third term as president of the New England District. If you will indulge me, it is with all my heart before my Savior that I personally affirm New England to be the finest district in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. Our pastors are wonderful gifts to the Church and the numerous church workers, rostered and otherwise, are nothing but blessings to our part of Christ’s harvest field. It is my privilege to serve in this role and I pray with humility before our Lord that He makes me worthy of such a responsibility. This report will outline the major wonders that the Lord has done among us in the last triennium.

The Lord in the last triennium focused our ability to provide care for the church worker and the worker’s family. The New England District “upgraded” the divine call to Deaconess Tiffany Manor to a full-time position and she accepted. After evaluation during the last triennium it was determined to seek to make this position, namely “Deaconess for Human Care” a full-time position and to budget resources accordingly. Deaconess Manor has done a marvelous job of reaching out to our church workers and the families of the same, especially a focus on pastors’ wives. She has been readily accepted by the pastors and church workers. Her office is under my own supervi

sion as district president and we have regular reports but the district has insured that confidentiality is always to be maintained in her work. It was also felt, and enacted upon accordingly, that the title of her job be changed to “Director of Worker Support” to more reflect the nature of her office.

The Lord in the last triennium also focused on our ability to provide care for the congregations. The New England District had called a District Revitalizer, the Rev. Eric Sahlberg, who is a church planter and expert in church revitalization. In the last triennium he travelled extensively throughout New England engaging pastors and church leaders in the area of church revitalization. With New England sadly leading the way in the secularization of our society, with all six of our states now in the top ten states for rejecting traditional Christian views and experiencing the decline of the church we are indeed a mission field and in need of revitalizing our present congregations—such has received great support and more funding for same is in our current fiscal year budget.

In light of these goals and objectives the New England District adopted a new logo with the cross of Christ hovering over a map of our six states with His love beaming down upon them. We also after overnight retreats with staff and with the support of our board of directors adopted a new vision statement for New England that is basically, “Care for the Worker—Care for the Congregations—Care for the Neighbors.” We believe that healthy workers lead to better care for our churches and great outreach and care for our communities as a result.

“Care for Neighbors” includes work in the last three years of the district in foreign missions with continued support for ministry in Kenya, Africa, and Liberia, Africa. We have also begun work with establishing an Oromo congregation in Boston, Massachusetts. The district also supports local human care ministries including a successful “Hands of Grace” outreach to Northwest Connecticut out of one of our district congregations. This ministry has inspired human care outreach in other New England District congregations including “The Bridge” in South Windsor, Connecticut, and “Caring Shepherds” in Hebron, Connecticut. Other congregations engage in similar ministries.

As a rule, New England, perhaps because we are indeed an outpost of the Synod in the northeast corner of the United States, and with many of our congregations living with a “mission/outpost” mentality—is remarkably free of conflict and is a hallmark district of collegiality, Christian peace, and unity. In the last three years we did create a full Employee Policy Manual and have updated our entire Operations Policy Manual as well to insure these things can continue. As such, I have been blessed as district president with relatively lesser work demanded in the area of doctrinal correction or conflict. Most of my work has been to help struggling congregations meet financial needs and to maintain ministry in our post-Christian environment here in New England.

Most of our parish workers, especially the clergy, did not grow up in New England or even the Northeastern portion of the United States, resulting in a sense of isolation. The cost of living in New England is astronomical. We have a growing number of congregations unable to afford full-time pastoral ministry—and we are greatly indebted to our retired pastors who serve them on Sundays or during the week. As stated earlier, we are in a post-Christian environment and we acknowledge that
LGBTQ platform has won the day in New England (though Christ Jesus has won the eternal war).

Because we live in one of the most rapidly changing environments for mission and ministry with that growing antipathy and even hostility to Christianity, we are doing our best to meet changing needs. One area had some concern in that the financial resources coming to district from congregations have as in many areas become harder and harder to determine ahead of time. We have made budget cuts to become “leaner and meaner” but also stronger in our way of doing ministry. Concerns exist that we have had to use estate gifts and endowments to do some ministry of the district but we are grateful to the Lord that He has provided a healthy reserve of financial resources for us at this time. We have truly “trimmed the fat” in the New England District. Ironically, though, it is also my firm belief that the smaller and more personal/intimate nature of our district is ideal for the kind of ministry that occurs in New England and it certainly allows me as district president to have a more personal relationship with my workers and congregations. One concern that I do have, however, is that there seems to be a struggle to get the younger workers to accept positions of leadership—undoubtedly in part because their hands are full with their ministries in their equally small-staffed congregations. But this would be one goal for this triennium of our district—to raise up with the Holy Spirit’s guidance and help new and younger workers to replace those who are aging.

With our synodical foundations of hope and blessing, it is my hope and the hope of all New Englanders that the light will continue to shine and shine in a greater way. Numbers are not everything but we do want our numbers to increase as the Lord provides and allows. But we want it to increase for His glory and for the salvation of those for whom Jesus was born, lived, died, rose again, and reigns on high.

Timothy Yeadon, President

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New Jersey District

Our Demographic Situation and Pressing Ministry Challenges

The 2017 New Jersey population was estimated to be 8,953,745 people, residing in 21 counties and 566 municipalities, with 59 percent of the residents being white, 18 percent of the residents being Hispanic, 13 percent of the residents being black, and 9 percent of the residents being Asian. In terms of age distribution, 1 percent of the residents are of the G.I. generation (1901–1924), 8 percent are of the Silent generation (1925–1945), 18 percent are of the Boomer generation (1946–1960), 28 percent are of the Gen X generation (1961–1981), 29 percent are of the Millennial generation (1982–2004), and 16 percent are of the Homeland generation (2005–2025). It is estimated that nearly one-third of all New Jersey residents identify themselves as having no religious preference.

Despite residing in a state that has the highest population density, the New Jersey District has become the smallest LCMS district, numbering 10,168 baptized members, 8,418 communicant members, and experiencing a total average worship attendance of 3,650 souls. Like many other districts within Synod, we continue to see that many of our congregations are growing smaller in terms of both baptized and communicant membership, and that the average age of those who worship is getting older.

The crisis situation in which we find ourselves is this: we no longer live in a churched culture but in an unchurched and de-churched culture. This state of affairs both challenges and invites God’s people to acquire a proper ministry balance between edification and evangelism and becoming more missionary in our posture and orientation toward the growing number of U.S. citizens who are not Christians.

Several of the many pressing ministry challenges that are before us:

- How do we witness to, and evangelize, people who have built their lives upon non-Christian narratives, especially the growing segment of the U.S. population that has “no religious or spiritual preference”?
- How do we effectively reach, and communicate with, the younger generations with the Gospel, recognizing that 44 percent of the New Jersey residents are under the age of 36?
- How do we pay our bills, adequately compensate our church workers, and maintain our physical buildings and properties; while making known His Gospel and extending His kingdom, to the ends of the earth as He encourages us to do?
- How do we communicate the biblical message in oral, print, broadcast, and digital culture; and how do we steward social media effectively for ministry engagement in the “public square”?
- How do we address, and minister to, a culture that perceives and judges the Christian message to be irrelevant in answering the “big questions,” and dealing with the day-to-day problems, that people have in, and with, life?
- How do we defend and communicate the Christian faith in a secularized and pluralistic culture in such a way that we are “able to give the reason for the hope that lives within us, yet with gentleness and respect” to the many, many kinds of people who are trying to make sense of life, and the realities around them, without the hypothesis of the triune God?

The District’s Ministry Plan in Light of the Permanent and Triennial Objectives of Synod

God is working out His saving plan in and through His chosen and redeemed people, and each disciple has a responsibility for advancing the saving purposes of God in the world (Matthew 4:19–20; 1 Corinthians 6:19–20; 1 Peter 2:5, 9). Moreover, our present life and ministry is timed by God’s own clock, His fixed times, the kairos determined by God; consequently, for each disciple, there exists a divine kairos of opportunity for advancing His mission purposes.

So that His mission might be accomplished in the lives of His people, and in the world, God has entrusted His people (and our Synod) with four ministries:
In order to equip His people for these essential ministry endeavors, the …

- an evangelistic ministry as His people seek to evangelize large numbers of people through their life of witness and Gospel proclamation and bring them, by God’s grace and the Holy Spirit’s working, to faith in Jesus Christ.

- a maturational ministry as His people grow up into Christ in every way and become mature disciples of Jesus, who are also His stewards, servants, priests, witnesses, salt, light, living letters, etc.

- an organic ministry as His people are connected to one another in relationships that live out the “one another admonitions” of Scripture, with each believer using his or her gifts, talents, and abilities for the building up of the Body of Christ and for the common good.

- an incarnational ministry as His people, wherever they go and with whomever they come into contact, are able to be His ambassadors and living letters, mediating His mind and word and demonstrating His love, concern, and compassion for others.

In order to equip His people for these essential ministry endeavors, the …

- first major ministry focus will be to increase the biblical literacy of His people through the teaching ministry of the district’s Leaders and Learners program and the leadership of the Congregational Services Council, beginning with these core training events: Divine Drama: The Biblical Narrative; Fifty Stories that Every Christian Should Know; The Parables of Jesus; and offering an annual pilgrimage to Israel.

- second major ministry focus will be to equip His people in how to share His story of salvation in Jesus Christ with others through the teaching ministry of the district’s Leaders and Learners program and the leadership of the Outreach Council, beginning with these core training events: Every One His Witness (Rev. Mark Woods); How Did Jesus Do Evangelism; and Life Is All about Stories: Helping People Make Sense of Their Story in Light of His Story.

- third major ministry focus will be to equip His people to be missionaries in their daily lives and vocations through a missionary formation process that has content and training in these core subject areas: (1) foundational: the mission of God; who I am in Christ (identity) and why am I here (purpose); who we are in Christ (identity) and why are we here (purpose); (2) contextual: worldview; culture learning; (3) contextualization: the core narratives and ministry practices of an apostolic church; and through the missionary training ministry of Rev. Greg Finke: joining Jesus on His mission.

- fourth major ministry focus will be the establishment of The Kairos Network (Rev. Matt Peeples, Director) and its ministry of forming mission leaders and extending His kingdom through church planting endeavors.

- fifth major ministry focus will be the development of specialty workshop presentations based upon these resources and ministry areas: worldview; celtic evangelism; how to reach secular people; ALOA: Adult Lutherans Organized for Action; Trinitarian apologetics; and adaptive leadership.

**Special Report Items Asked for by the 2016 Synod Convention**

The communion practice of the majority of New Jersey District congregations is the biblical and evangelical ministry practice of close communion; there are a few congregations, however, that practice closed communion.

Informal conversations have been encouraged at the pastors’ conferences that have explored and discussed these issues connected with the Koinonia Project: admission to communion; pastoral authority; the mission of God; preaching; church and ministry.

Consistent effort has been made to include, on call lists, the names of pastors who have candidate status so that they might have the opportunity to serve an LCMS congregation.

Commissioned minister Caren Vogt has been active in regularly visiting Lutheran preschools in the district so that they may be strengthened in their Lutheran identity and Lutheran ethos.

In mid-February 2019, two licensed lay deacons successfully passed their colloquy interview and will be installed at these New Jersey District congregations: Rev. Tim Casaday serving Immanuel, East Rutherford; and Rev. William Schmidt serving Zion, Westwood.

**Overtures Submitted by the District to the 2019 Synod Convention**

As part of its convention business, the New Jersey District approved and respectfully submits these overtures to the 2019 Synod Convention for its review and convention action:

- to overrule CCM Opinion 14-2724 … it is the contention of this overture that CCM Opinion 14-2724 incorrectly restricts the mission outreach ministry of LCMS congregations in their efforts to give bold witness by word and deed to the love and work of the triune God. The primary resolve of this overture is that LCMS congregations, auxiliaries, RSOs, and districts be authorized and empowered to send missionaries and provide funding to those ministries, and that CCM Opinion 14-2724 be overruled so that it is declared null and void and of no effect.

- to engage in ministry to transgendered persons … that the Synod in Convention request CTCR to study this issue in more depth and provide Gospel-centered resources on how to engage in ministry to transgendered persons.

- to adopt data privacy best practices … that the Synod establish data privacy best practices, including the protection of identity and contact information for its synod convention delegates, and that the use or distribution of that information be only for official business and with the consent of the persons involved. That is, that Synod adopt best practices that stop the
public disclosure of delegate personal information other than name and congregational membership and require prior consent for any distribution of their personal contact information.

Anthony Steinbronn, President

Notes:

1. *Who I am in Christ* defines my identity (who am I) and my ministry (why I am here) as a Christian; as one baptized into Christ, I am a disciple, servant, priest, witness, salt of the earth, light of the world, temple of the Holy Spirit, etc., and this is how I am to live out my faith in the relationships of life. Moreover, who we are in Christ defines our identity (who are we) and ministry (why are we here) as the Body of Christ, with Christ as our Head; as His people, called and gathered into the assembly of believers, we are the Body of Christ, living stones built into a spiritual house, a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, saints, ambassadors, living letters, etc.

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**North Dakota District**

Many have wondered and asked: Why would the cold north state of North Dakota have a district convention in January with the threat of snow storms and extreme cold? The answer: Because North Dakota has such beautiful spring, summer, and fall months, we have our district convention in January when it is too cold to enjoy outdoor events. Who would want to be confined inside during the pleasant months? Therefore, again, in January 2018, the 83 congregations served by 51 plus or minus pastors of the North Dakota District had their district convention under the triennium theme of “Unity in Christ” from Ephesians 4:1–16.

In light of the convention theme “Unity in Christ” our essayist was the Rev. Lawrence Rast, president of Concordia Theological Seminary at Fort Wayne, IN, with an essay titled “De Ceremoniis Ecclesiasticis” On Church Usages or Ceremonies, Sometimes called ‘Mitteldinge’ or ‘Adiophora’ . The word *adiophora* in church usage means “things neither commanded nor forbidden by God’s Word.” Yet, in our walking together as a Synod we agree to unity in some adiophora things. Other presentations on “Unity in Christ” were Baptism, Confession, and missions as we remain in “unity” with God’s Word and the Lutheran Confessions.

Continuing in this “Unity in Christ” theme was the implementation of the 2016 Synod Resolution 4-04A “To Appeal to the LCMS Congregations, Workers, and Institutions within Christian Freedom and for Love’s Sake to Retain a Common Order of Service for the Lord’s Supper.” This was implemented by the district’s Resolution 3-05 “To be United in the Practice of Closed Communion.” This district resolution directed the district president to establish a task force to prepare a suggested common communion statement to be used districtwide and to encourage pastors to instruct the congregations on the practice of closed communion for the sake of unity of doctrine.

In order to accomplish the implementation of Synod Resolution 4-05A “To Continue and Expand the Koinonia Project,” the District, during the spring and fall pastor’s conferences, uses “the principles of the Koinonia Project, namely, that when there is disagreement regarding doctrine and practice the baptized will come together through their unity in Christ to live out that unity as they study the Word of God and pray” (the last Resolve of Resolution 4-05A).

The ND District passed a resolution, Resolution 3-04 “To Unite in a Common Marriage Policy.” This resolution directed the district to include “The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod’s Sample Marriage Policy” in the District Handbook and to encourage district congregations to include it in their bylaws and policy manuals.

Also, in convention, under the theme of “Unity in Christ,” Resolution 2-04 was passed to “Establish a North Dakota District Handbook.” This handbook will make clear to the workers and congregations our agreed upon policies, procedures, and guidelines, fully aware of freedoms allowed by the Scriptures, and also fully aware that some practices are essential to our walking together.

The North Dakota District only has two pastors on candidate status. Both of them have secular jobs and they are both serving vacancies regularly. One candidate has been traveling over a hundred miles one-way for over a year to serve a vacancy each Sunday with Word and Sacrament. He is well liked by the vacancy congregations and has been asked and nominated to be on their call list (a practice we do not do) but I do use his name on other call lists in the district. Thus the district is in support of and fulfilling Synod Resolution 12-02A, “To Encourage Calling Church Workers on Candidate Status.” The North Dakota District board of directors heard the need and desire from the district to continue the campus ministry at the University of North Dakota campus, at Grand Forks, ND, and so we went from a part-time campus pastor to a full-time position. It was seen as important to keep before our youth “faith in Christ Jesus and Him crucified” for our salvation as we travel through what has become a very secular world.

“Joy:fully Lutheran” is expressed in the district’s desire to continue to support “Christ Care for Children-Kenya” and mission support of part of a pastor’s salary in the Maule Region of the Iglesia Luterana Confesional de Chile. The “Christ Care for Children-Kenya” project is a financial support of $10,000/year for the support of about 10 orphaned children to attend the orphanages that the district has been involved with the construction of through Project 24 in the past years. The Chile mission support is for $25,000/year as this Chile mission is definitely “Joy:fully Lutheran” in their confessional presence in their schools and churches.

The North Dakota District remains “Joy:fully Lutheran,” even though pastors and congregations are in a changing congregation demographic within the state. We remain “Joy:fully Lutheran” as we see the Lord working through God’s people with its faithful pastors serving them with Word and Sacrament ministry. In the past triennium, we have had a closing of four congregations. Although it is a sad thing to have a congregation close, this is a mobile society and traveling a little farther for the “Joy” of God’s Word and the Sacraments is done by God’s “Fully Lutheran” people to “Rejoice, Pray, and Give Thanks” for the salvation won for them.

We remain “Joy:fully Lutheran” with all of you; for, God gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints
for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into Him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love (Ephesians 4:11–16, emphasis added).

Arie Bertsch, President

North Wisconsin District

“In your light we see light!” These were the words of our theme for our 2018 district convention and are from Psalm 36:9. These words were fitting at the time they were written and still are today. The psalmist pleads for a continuation of the Lord’s love. It is there he refers to in your light God is the bright light needed into today’s world, into our communities. Apart from Him, we are in darkness. It is the difference between life and death. “For with you is the fountain of life” the psalmist proclaims at the start of verse 9. Today, more than ever we need to cling to God’s steadfast love. We need a Savior who calls us “out of darkness into His marvelous light.” All people need to know and believe in Jesus who died for the sins of the world, who is “the way, the truth, and the life.” Jesus stated it clearly: “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life” (John 8:12).

We need to hear God’s words of assurance proclaimed to the members of our congregations so that they can stand strong in their faith as they live in this world that is not “Jesus friendly” the way it used to be. We need to encourage each other, band together so that God’s Word continues to be proclaimed in our neck of the woods in north Wisconsin and Upper Michigan. We need to encourage each other and be a bold witness in our communities. We need to share the love of Christ in word and deed inside and outside our churches. We need to share what we believe and confess, the way, the truth, and the life. That’s the mission. That’s why I’m doing what I’m doing, encouraging, network and equip Lutheran congregations of the NWD—LCMS to vigorously make known the love of Christ. Our latest district statistics tell us that we have 216 congregations (over 45 are dual parishes), 92,729 baptized members, and 73,267 confirmed. We have 42 preschools, 19 elementary schools, and 3 high schools.

So what are the challenges facing congregations? In February 2018, First Vice-President of the LCMS Rev. Dr. Herbert Mueller, representing President Harrison, met with the circuit visitors of the North and South Wisconsin Districts. He asked what are the issues facing our districts? Below are the responses I received from my circuit visitors.

- Worship attendance
- Aging membership—and they are getting tired
- Church conflict
- Our society’s indifference toward church
- Level demographics in our communities (North Wisconsin and the Upper Peninsula)
- Stewardship
- Church worker debt
- Compensation

In 2019, we will have eight pastors retiring. We presently have 23 congregation vacancies. It is getting tougher to fill the vacancies as congregations look to the seminaries and learn that there are not enough candidates to fill all of the requests. The congregations are facing rising salaries and benefit costs and budgets that they cannot support. Therefore, more and more congregations are looking at becoming dual parishes and/or looking for a retired pastor that will work at a reduced rate.

Congregational support for the work of district and Synod is decreasing. In 2018, the congregations contributed close to $1.742 million to our district. In 2007, we received close to $2.3 million. So as you can see, the district is forced to make tough ministry decisions in an effort to be good stewards with dwindling support.

Many of our congregations are not getting any bigger. In 2002, we had 13 congregations averaging less than 35 in worship. In 2017, that number had grown to 45 congregations. The result is some of our congregations are closing. That is unfortunate as we need our congregations to let their light shine and proclaim that Jesus is the light in that community. Is there hope? As I shared at our convention: “If the answer to this is no, then it is time to ask some other questions that get you to the real anatomy of hope. What reason is there to have hope that tomorrow is going to be different? What in the picture is changing that I can believe in?” God’s Word has not changed, however, our communities and demographics are changing. We need to encourage and help the leaders of our congregations as they move into the future.

Congregations and circuits have been gathering to discuss how they can work better and smarter into the future. Various circuits have been offering the “Every One His Witness” workshop to help equip the members of their congregations to reach out to those they come in contact with and live our convention theme: “In your light we see light!” We have attempted to encourage and support our congregations by:

- assisting with vacancies of called workers which includes the support of the circuit visitors working with call committees,
- providing support to boards and committees as they deal with board governance,
- offering guidelines to help churches and schools,
- assisting in conflict situations, and
- offering one-on-one support to leaders and workers.

In January we offered a leadership training workshop to deal with servant leadership, strategic planning, critical handbook and policies, financial issues, conflict, change, and com-
munication. We had over 100 leaders sign up for this event and are planning to offer it again.

We have also encouraged our laymen with our annual adult gathering. Rev. Dr. Paul Maier, Rev. Dr. Patrick Ferry, and Rev. Dr. Dean Nadasdy were our featured speakers. We averaged 200 in attendance.

DJ Schult, my education assistant, has been working to encourage our schools, their boards, principals, and teachers in various ways. Some of which include:

- Expansion of the school choice voucher program available in Wisconsin.
- Increased accreditation participation with over 16 schools having achieved the five-year recognition.
- Creation of a regional training event for potential principals to combat the shortage of school leaders.
- New funding for non-rostered teachers to participate in the colloquy certification program in an effort to develop Lutheran identity of the increasing number of non-rostered teachers in our schools.
- Financial support for teacher technology training cohorts to improve professional practice.
- Financial support for online curriculum mapping tools to develop and align written curriculum.
- School board training in best practice roles, responsibilities, and strategic planning.

Our district recently switched to the new Concordia Plan Services compensation tool. We believe this will give good, reliable information to our congregations to make good decisions on salaries and benefits for their church workers.

The convention addressed the student debt of our district professional church workers and passed a resolution asking the district board of directors for recommendations to address this concern. Our church workers are required to earn degrees at the college and seminary levels, thus incurring student debt. Many of our teachers do not receive salaries commensurate with those working in the public sector with a comparable level of education. Presently the board is putting a plan together to assist our church workers as many face sizeable student debt coupled with salaries that are not in line with the guidelines.

The district continues to offer scholarships to college students from our district who intend to go into full-time church work. This past year we were able to assist 30 students by distributing $118,600 in scholarships.

Camp Luther in Three Lakes, Wisconsin, continues to thrive in the north woods with around 400 children attending during the summer along with many other offerings throughout the year. Presently there is a campaign going on called “Filled with the Spirit” with the majority of the funds raised to build a new dining hall. Construction is scheduled to begin in Fall 2019 and be operational in 2020.

Besides supporting Camp Luther, the district also supports mission outreach, three campus ministries, the chaplaincy position at Wisconsin Veterans’ Home at King, deaf ministry at various locations, a French African outreach in Appleton, Hmong support, LCMS mission work in Peru, mini-grants to congregations for outreach, national and state youth gatherings, disaster relief, the parish nurse program, and PALS.

Finally, we have been blessed to have Dennis Johnson serve twenty-six and a half years as LCEF Vice President and the district in various capacities including stewardship, business manager, and building supervisor to name a few. He has been a faithful servant to the North Wisconsin District and we have been blessed with his presence, care, concern, and wit. His vacant position will be filled by William Jordan from Stevens Point. Bill will join our team at the end of March. We look forward to welcoming Bill to our district and joining our staff.

In closing, I shared with the convention delegates that they are not alone in ministry. Ministry can be tough, frustrating, or even depressing. However, ministry can be one of the greatest joys you will ever experience. The following reminders were shared with them:

1. Your church address is not an accident. God placed you there for a reason.
2. Your community is no accident. God wants you to embrace and reach out; celebrate your community.
3. Your calling is no accident. Serve.

May the light of Christ shine through us and declare the wonderful deeds of Him who called us out of darkness into His marvelous light.

Dwayne M. Lueck, President

Northern Illinois District

Greeting from your sisters and brothers in Christ in the Northern Illinois District!

The Northern Illinois District covers 24 counties in the northern third of Illinois. Only one of those counties, Carroll County in western Illinois, has no LCMS congregation. We are made up of 206 active congregations, 47 elementary schools, 3 high schools, and 44 stand-alone preschools and early childhood centers. We are also blessed by our regional camp, Walcamp, located in Kingston. We are united in Christ and under Christ and His Holy Word. These places of worship and education are for the faithful and a beacon of Light and Truth for those who are unchurched or “under churched.”

Thousands of laymen and laywomen, young and not quite as young, serve Christ, His Church, and His mission in so many places. We give thanks for their witness, prayers, and generosity in congregations, schools, care centers, and in our communities. In addition to our laity, the NID has 243 called ordained ministers and 462 called commissioned workers. We thank God for our called workers and heed the word of Jesus, “Ask the Lord of the harvest to send workers into the harvest” (Matthew 9:38).

While there are many places where the workers are trained and raised up, Concordia University Chicago and the School for Missionaries at Iglesia Luterana San Pablo in Aurora are two special places. Concordia University Chicago reports record enrollment and we give thanks for the service of Rev. Dr. Daniel Gard who retires in July of 2019. The latter is raising up Spanish-speaking workers and blessing Hispanic ministry in the NID and beyond. Many of these workers continue their education at the Center for Hispanic Studies at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis.
A bold initiative of former District President Dan Gilbert was “New Starts...New Believers.” The goal was that congregations would start one new way of reaching out with the love and forgiveness of Jesus to the community. The staff has provided consulting assistance, and congregations and individuals, through the NID, have provided Partnership Grants. These grants have reached congregations in all demographics of the NID.

Urban Ministry remains important, especially with the struggles of many of our congregations and schools. The NID is grateful for several initiatives which assist urban ministry including Lutheran schools. We also recognize our diversity, and in that the challenges facing our rural congregations. In fact, all our congregations are facing the challenges and opposition of the devil, the world, and our sinful flesh. Christ stands with us and for us! As it has been said, “We don’t fight for victory, we fight from victory.”

In March 2018, the 59th Convention of the LCMS Northern Illinois District was held at Concordia University Chicago. The theme was “Chosen, Appointed, Sent” based on John 15:16. President Dan Gilbert completed his four terms of office and was granted the title, President Emeritus. Pastor Allan Buss, Senior Pastor of Immanuel Lutheran Church in Belvidere, was elected 14th president of the NID. He and the newly elected officers were installed on June 3, 2018. A key resolution adopted was Res. 2-07 “To Establish a Task Force on Stewardship District Resources.” A committee appointed by the board of directors will present a report at least one year before the 2021 convention. Some of the questions to be studied include but are not limited to: 1) The need for a full time or part time District President 2) Ways in which volunteers and circuit visitors may be utilized to carry out the functions done by District Staff. 3) The stewardship of maintaining the current District Office Building. 4) The potential partnership in sharing resources with neighboring districts. The convention also reduced the terms of district president from four to three.

Since taking office, the current president has focused on visitation to congregations, ministries, schools, workers, and laity of the NID. In his first few months, he visited most of our urban Chicago congregations. He has also visited some of our most rural congregations. Yes, he has also visited suburban and small town congregations as well. A theme has emerged, “We are in this together.” Our togetherness comes from Christ and His reconciling work, our unity in the Body of Christ, and our strong Lutheran Confession of the Gospel. The Mission of Christ among us is stronger when we are working together and our confession is clearer.

Our prayer and vision is that we “Flourish Together” in three areas: Word, Wellness, and Witness. Empowered by the Holy Spirit, we can be more deeply engaged with the Word of God in all areas of our life together. The physical, emotional, relational, financial, and spiritual wellness of our called workers, congregations, schools, and ministries are of vital importance. There is much struggle in this area in the NID and beyond. We can be proactive rather than reactive. Witness, yes, vigorous witness, is our Lord’s will! We bear witness to Christ and His saving gifts for us, people in our communities, and the world. It’s still all about Jesus!

This spring (2019), the NID is engaging with Lutheran Church Extension Fund Ministry Support as we go through a Vision Clarity process. Six regional gatherings will be held to gain Spirit-led input for consideration of our life together in the Northern Illinois District as we look forward—together. May the good and gracious will of God be done among us! Yes, in Jesus Christ, we are and remain, “Joyfully Lutheran”!

Allan R. Buss, President

Northwest District

The Northwest District is comprised of the 265 congregations, 86 preschools, 30 elementary schools, 4 high schools, and one university in the states of Oregon, Washington, Idaho, and Alaska with one congregation in Hong Kong (Church of All Nations).

Our district continues to operate on the principle that the role of the Synod and district is advisory to the congregations, and that congregations have the freedom and the responsibility to discern and carry out their ministry to the community in which they are located. We are committed to encouraging the movement of the Gospel in a region of the country that is disconnected from the institutional church and needs to encounter the love of God in Jesus Christ. The theme for the 2018 Northwest District convention was “Being a Blessing to a Changing Culture.” This theme was chosen to acknowledge God’s call to bring the Gospel to this increasingly unchurched culture through the opportunities of service He provides to us in being a blessing to them. The NOW District staff continues to invest itself in strengthening local ministry leaders through coaching, providing resources, connecting them with one another, and offering opportunities for continuing education.

A significant effort is our collaboration with the California-Nevada-Hawaii and Pacific Southwest Districts in helping new first-call pastors make the transition from being students to being practitioners with the Ministry Applied Practice (MAP)—West Coast program. From there, pastors have the opportunity to continue their professional development through a coaching/collaborative process called GPS-Northwest (Grow, Practice, Sent to Serve).

Resources include the Gospel DNA toolkit (based on Texas District President Mike Newman’s presentation to the 2018 district convention), the Legacy toolkit, the Essential Participants toolkit (helping congregations build bridges into their communities), the NOW Leading podcast, the NOW Start Network (helping congregations envision when and how they can plant mission starts), and annual reports related to our activities and finances. These resources are all available on the Northwest District website—nowlcms.org. An important ministry for the district is the Catalyst Grant effort which seeks to reinvigorate mission dollars in new ministry ventures across the district by applying a focused set of guidelines developed and administered by the district executive staff. Congregations and workers continue to be supported personally and professionally through our Consultation to Clergy effort. The President’s Office has a close relationship with Concordia University Portland’s Center for Applied Lutheran Leadership (C.A.L.L.) and Mission Training Center (MTC). MTC provides online leadership training for Licensed Lay Deacons in our district and throughout the Synod.
Immediately prior to the last triennium the leaders of the Northwest District gathered for a conference focusing on the issue of Holy Communion and our practice within the district. The principles of the Koinonia Project and the practice of addressing issues and differences in doctrine and practice have been in use in the circuit meetings throughout the district. The Northwest District board of directors issued a report entitled Workers for His Harvest that began as a document of dissent regarding the theological assumptions behind 2016 Synod Res. 13-02A. While the board maintains its position of disagreement with those assumptions, the document has been withdrawn as a dissent and is now available to the church at large for conversation and study. It is also available on the NOW District website—nowlcms.org. Leaders from the district were invited to the November 2018 Council of Presidents’ Meeting to make a presentation and participate in further conversation. The district has been participating in the implementation of Res. 13-02A as its president was a part of the COP implementation committee. To date, 14 men have applied for the SMP regional colloquy process and a number of others are participating in the general colloquy process.

The Northwest District seeks to bring the heart of Lutheran doctrine and teaching to a culture that is often hostile to the institutional church. At the same time, we recognize our partnership with other members of the Synod and seek to walk together with them. God is blessing our efforts by opening new opportunities to reflect the blessing of His love to those who do not know Him yet. The district board of directors has identified the following ends policies, which serve as both a target for our ministry and as a standard by which we measure our effectiveness.

1.0 The Northwest District exists so that congregations and church workers live fully as committed followers of Jesus to reach the lost, disciple the saved, and be essential participants and witnesses in their communities. Matthew 28:19–20, Matthew 5:13, Ephesians 1:9–10

LIFE TOGETHER

1.01 Congregations actively provide Word and Sacrament ministry in every corner of the District.

WITNESS

1.02 Congregations intentionally engage the people in their communities and surrounding areas. This vision includes:

- Laity and church workers serve together as full partners in ministry within the congregation and communities.
- Congregations are encouraged to develop and implement strategic bridges into their communities.
- Congregations freely disseminate and share resources and ministry ideas with sister congregations.

MERCY

1.03 Congregations boldly work with congregations of various Christian bodies to:

- Provide needed services to communities.
- Share God’s love, comfort and grace through Jesus.
- Share resources which may grow Christ’s church.

Paul A. Linnemann, President

Ohio District

The Ohio District selected a Bible passage for the triennium that speaks to why we are “Joy:fully Lutheran.”

“Now to Him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work in us, to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.” (Ephesians 3:20)

The district president’s ministry of visitation the last triennium discovered reasons for rejoicing. Ohio District schools’ staffs were committed to teaching their subjects with an eye toward God and His creation; our pastors preached Christ and His love for His people as shown by His atoning death on the cross and glorious resurrection. A number of the congregations were blessed with solid growth spiritually, as well as numerically. More of them are looking for new ministries to start in their communities, and that has revived excitement among their members.

The Ohio District has provided support and encouragement where congregations are willing to venture outside their walls to involve themselves in their communities. We pray that those who have done so will be an inspiration to those who are still unsure of themselves. It is clear God has given our congregations the precise mix of gifts to accomplish what He wants to accomplish through them in their communities. There are tangible reasons we are “Joy:fully Lutheran.”

That is not to say that everything is rosy. We have an aging clergy. 70 of our Ohio District pastors are between the ages of 60 and 70. Another 70 are between the ages of 50 and 60. 28 of our pastors are between the ages of 30 and 40. Only 24 are between the ages of 30 and 40, while only one is in the 20–30 category. While we are all living better as we age, there’s no denying that a 30-year-old pastor has a bit more energy than one in his 60s. We will see many more retirements in the next ten years. Are we seeing an equal number of younger men entering our ministry fields? Not yet.

One reason for that is that a continuing number of Ohio District congregations will not be able to afford a full-time pastor. Health care costs, incoming educational debt loads, and shifting demographics will continue to play a large role. Close to half of our congregations are or will soon be facing financial pressures that will force them to merge, form partnerships, or close. Synodical statistics project that our LCMS will lose another 500,000 members before we “hit bottom” in the next decade.

But, it’s not just that we’re aging and seeing one generation die off in large numbers. Our statisticians also report that we as a Synod lose two-thirds of our children and young adults in other ways. Congregational quarrels that offend, young people graduating from college but not returning to their faith, or finding doors closed for them to use their talents in their congregation so they go elsewhere, and not enough well-placed LCMS churches available to serve an increasingly mobile society are but three reasons why this is so.

Yet God is able to do immeasurably more, despite our inefficiencies and inadequacies. Rev. Terry Cripe, district president-emeritus, noted that during the 12 years I served as District Pres-
ident, over 3,000 adults were baptized and/or confirmed. Praise God for His work through the congregations who brought these people to God’s Kingdom! We have welcomed urban, inner city, and Ethiopian congregations into our fellowship. All the more reason for joy!

The Ohio District is impressed by the quality of pastors who are graduating from our seminaries. They want to continue to grow in their skills and abilities so they can do a better job serving God’s people and witnessing to those who are without a Savior. To that end, the Ohio District sponsors their involvement in PALS, a three-year, post-seminary learning; and by co-sponsoring a group of younger pastors in PLI, the Pastoral Leadership Institute. Still others have grown by their participation in Doxology. We have many exemplary lay people who love the Lord and want to see His Church prosper. They have not backed away from difficult situations but continue to work for the growth of God’s kingdom and have applied and been accepted in Synod’s SMP (Specific Ministry Program) where they serve in various capacities. Our directors of Christian education and directors of family life ministry are among the best and work to provide inspiration and educational opportunities to our people. Our schools, especially in the Cleveland area, have been spared, thanks to the Ed Choice program, which has enabled numerous families to enroll their children in our parochial schools. Deaconesses continue to minister in various congregational settings around our district as well.

Finally, the Ohio District is blessed by a talented staff. Mr. Kevin Creutz, superintendent of schools, is a recognized top-notch administrator. Karen Dutton continues to provide some of the best youth gathering experiences that are both fun and faithful to Scripture. Lisa Rachul serves very competently as the district treasurer. She brings a wealth of tax knowledge. She is eager to help our congregations understand the budget process and provide financial reviews when asked. We are now a part of the Lutheran Church Extension Fund and blessed with the service of LCEF DVP Lisa Janik.

Being “Joyfully Lutheran” is much easier with a committed and positive administrative staff. Mrs. Cheryl Ohradzansky, administrative assistant to the district president, brings a cheerful disposition to any who call the district office for assistance and keeps the district president on track. Deb Klusak faithfully dispositions to any who call the district office for assistance and keeps the district president on track. Deb Klusak faithfully keeps our website and e-source blasts up-to-date and serves as a friendly face to all who enter the Mission Support Center. Linda Borsuk, assistant bookkeeper, always asked me for missing receipts with a smile. Sara Krek serves with distinction as administrative assistant to Kevin Creutz.

Kevin Wilson, President

R45

Oklahoma District

The 81 congregations of the Oklahoma District of the LCMS met in convention April 20–21, 2018 under the theme: “You are witnesses of these things” (Luke 24:48). The members of our district congregations take seriously the privilege of being a witness of the risen Lord Jesus Christ. The saints of Oklahoma rejoice in the ongoing ministry, mission, and witness entrusted to them, and work to fulfill it by dependence on Christ’s grace to change lives and eternities.

The structure of the Oklahoma District consists of an all-volunteer staff of lay and called workers. This volunteerism also applies to the office of the district president. Within the district there are many dedicated and gifted people committed to the work of the district while continuing to serve in their specific full-time calling. The only salaried and stipend positions include an administrative assistant, an outdoor ministries director, a mission assistant, and a business manager. Whether salaried or volunteer, the district staff is composed of people who freely and readily share their gifts and time in extending the work of Christ’s kingdom.

In spite of the all-volunteer staff, the ministry is being furthered and the ecclesiastical supervision defined in the Synod’s Constitution (Article XII) and Bylaws (Bylaw 1.2.1 [i]), is being carried out in a reasonable and timely manner. As a full-time pastor, the district president cannot visit each congregation and pastor within a triennium; however, his representatives make themselves available for such contacts within the three regions and nine circuits. The Oklahoma District works to ensure that each congregation and professional church worker has available to them sufficient resources to encourage them in mission and ministry, new starts, school development, stewardship endeavors, and mission challenges. The district works to help congregations and church workers through the struggles experienced within a parish, especially during difficult economic times. Even though the district spans the entire State of Oklahoma, these distances do not seem to break down a unity of spirit and purpose within the district mission. The Oklahoma District is able to designate three-fourths of its budget for mission work, with the remaining one-fourth used for administrative, professional growth, and ministerial wellness. The district board of directors steadfastly pledges one-fourth of its budget as a financial commitment to the Synod.

The district continues to promote and implement revitalization efforts for many congregations. Equipped with the effective Word of God, many new people groups are being touched with Christ’s grace, among which are Burmese Karen, Hmong, Latino, and Liberian populations. The Oklahoma District is indeed a viable entity in fulfilling the mission of Christ.

In the Western Region, which includes the Enid, Kingfisher, and Panhandle circuits, outreach has continued among the Burmese Karen people resulting in multiple Baptisms and Confirmations, as well as new work begun among the Latino population. Lutherhaven Retreat Center suffered a major setback when raging grass fires spread through western Oklahoma destroying several structures at the center. Afterward, torrential rains fell upon the denuded landscape causing extensive erosion and damage to the earthen dam of the small lake. However, the hard work of the saints in the Panhandle have worked to restore and refine Lutherhaven and continue to use it as an outdoor ministry for youth and adult groups. The hidden blessing is that there have been needed improvements at Lutherhaven Retreat Center.

In the Central Region, which includes the Oklahoma City, Lawton, and Norman circuits, the Hispanic ministry continues to grow and flourish. The district continues to finance a worker-priest for outreach to the growing Islamic community with a special focus on the OKC metro area. The future growth of these ministries projects exciting potential.

The Eastern Region, which includes the Tulsa, Miami, and

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Pacific Southwest District

“After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, ‘Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!’” (Revelation 7:9–10 ESV).

The Pacific Southwest District celebrated diversity under the theme, “Rejoicing with the Nations,” based on Revelation 7:7–10 during our 45th Regular Convention June 27–29, 2018. One of the significant highlights of the convention was the celebration of the retirement of District President, Rev. Dr. Larry Stoterau after 18 years of Christ-centered leadership to our district and Synod. The PSD extends its continued thanks to God and prayers of blessing to Larry and Linda Stoterau for their faithful service.

As a district, we have been blessed by God with a ministry which reflects people of many languages and cultures celebrating together in Southern California, Arizona, and Southern Nevada. Within the churches and schools of the district are the people of God who have come from all corners of the kingdom. Over 80 of the 300 congregations in the district have worship services in languages other than English.

These past three years have been filled with challenges and opportunities which reflect the post-churched world in which we live. The center of Christianity has moved from the Western Hemisphere to South America, Asia, and Africa (The Global South). The decline in membership in many congregations has reflected the trend experienced in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod as well the decline of the Christian Church in general. The challenge for our churches is to find ways to get into the community and connect with the hurts and challenges of the community. People do not come just because the church is there but come because they see the churches care. We have experienced the closure of seven congregations during the past three years, the opening of three new congregations, and two new congregations which are the result of congregations merging. In addition, we have started several cross-cultural ministries in existing congregations.

One major change, which will affect our district for years to come, is the loss of our licensed deacons. Those men who have been licensed deacons for a minimum of two years, are actively involved in Word and Sacrament ministry, and are over 50 years of age are currently in the process of applying for the SMP Colloquy Program. We look forward to 20 or so of these men completing the application and interview and being called and ordained later this year as Specific Ministry Pastors serving in the congregations they currently serve. Other men who have been licensed and serve as Assistants to the Pastor will continue to serve as they are. The women who serve as Parish Ministry Assistants are not affected by this change. Thanking God for those who serve, we will continue to train men and women to serve in supporting roles in their congregations through our Lay Training Program.

Congregations, circuits, and gatherings of ordained and commissioned ministers have a renewed commitment to work TOGETHER to strengthen relations in ministry and mission, reflecting the expectations of the Koinonia resolution (4-05A) of the 2016 convention. A 2018–2019 emphasis, "It Takes All Kinds of Churches to Reach All Kinds of People,” celebrates our unity and the uniqueness of ministry expressions in the “micro-contexts” of the Pacific Southwest District.

Circuit visitors and Vice-Presidents of PSD received the list of rostered church workers who are on candidate status (12-02A). They have been asked to encourage congregations to consider these individuals on their call lists. Circuit visitors are additionally seeking ways to connect with ordained and commissioned candidates to ensure ongoing pastoral care on behalf of their district.

Through the combined efforts of our leading ordained and commissioned ministers, the PSD is improving the “Lutheran ethos” in our 155 schools (8-10A) by working to improve the partnerships between ordained and commissioned ministers, celebrating the unique gifts and talents of all who serve Christ and His church. The annual Lutheran Educators’ Conference included, for the first time, a “pastor’s track” which sought to improve partnerships between congregations and schools. Over half of the 2,200 educators in PSD schools are non-rostered. We work diligently to enroll additional teachers in the Teacher Colloquy program but find that the high cost of the program lim-
its the number of participants. We believe that making Teacher Colloquy less expensive (free?) will remove this cost barrier and significantly improve Lutheran identity in our schools across Synod.

District initiatives currently being pursued in this triennium include expanded emphasis on: (1) Worker Care (creating a recommended list of counselors and therapists through the district, steps to encourage congregations to improve worker salary and benefit packages, increased support and care for the large number of retired workers in the district); (2) Circuits Organizing for Mission (circuit congregations working together to evaluate and reinvigorate ministry within their communities, developing specific plans to intentionally and effectively target their context and communities), (3) Formation of a District President’s “Culture Specific and Immigrant Ministry Advisory Team” to expand mission starts and assist existing congregations in engaging our significant multicultural context, (4) Increase 2019 Giving to District by 5 percent (improved communication with district congregations through tools like an annual report, new accounting and reporting software), (5) Two staff positions will be added in 2019 to assist in resourcing congregations and schools and fulfilling our initiatives: Chief Operating Officer and Mission Developer Executive.

The Pacific Southwest District continues its commitment to serve faithfully through over 300 congregations and 150 schools—so that the world might hear and believe in the saving work of Jesus!

Mike Gibson, President

R47

Rocky Mountain District

The major initiative for the Rocky Mountain District (RMD) centers around the relatively new district focus: “Know the Truth; Understand the Culture; Live the Faith.” The focus encourages congregations and individuals to become vital, powerful witnesses and servants of Christ in their communities and vocations.

We have an eternally important message. Even as God desires that all people would be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth, so do we. We “know the truth” in that Jesus Christ is the way, the truth, and the life, and that no one comes to the Father except through Him. God’s Word is truth. We preach and teach truth in our 176 congregations; we teach it in our 53 preschools, 28 elementary schools, and one high school.

While we celebrate the truths of the gospel, we are saddened that there are those outside the church who do not know the truth of the gospel. We lament the fact that most unchurched people in our communities do not seek a church in which to receive God’s blessings.

Yet, upon leaving worship, we connect with people in our communities, in our occupations and vocations. As we desire to be witnesses for Christ, it’s important to “understand the culture,” and develop relationships with individuals.

Demographically speaking, we have significantly contrasting cultures in the far-flung reaches of our district: from farm and ranch to urban and suburban; from Hispanic ministry in various district locations to across the border in Ciudad Juárez; and from Native American to heavily Mormon populations. The RMD includes the states of Colorado, Utah, and New Mexico, with parishes also in El Paso, Texas; Paige, Arizona; and Venango and Big Springs, Nebraska.

We are challenged by the fact that increasingly rapid changes in culture are sometimes contrary to biblical values. Disregard for the sanctity of human life, the sexual revolution, and technological changes bringing about fewer close relationships with people are but a few examples.

In the midst of this culture, we “live the faith,” as the baptized children of God. We love and serve our neighbor. Jesus gave a new commandment, “to love one another as I have loved you.” We have opportunities to do that not only in occupation, but also in vocation whether it be husband, wife, parent, child, member of an organization, a volunteer, classmate, friend, or neighbor.

Although the unchurched may not enter the church doors, they sometimes come to our schools and preschools. That presents significant opportunities for connecting students and their families with Christ.

During the triennium, the RMD has provided “gospel gap grants” to congregations for Word and Sacrament ministry, for human care, and for church worker education.

The RMD presents various opportunities to assist our church workers in their work and their faith life. “Nurturing the Faith” workshops (one day) are conducted throughout the district to uplift and encourage workers. A debt assistance fund continues to provide support to pastors who have completed seminary training with debt. Youth gatherings are conducted to strengthen the faith of our youth.

The RMD looks beyond its border as it supports Rev. Duane Meissner in Belize. Through Together in Mission, the district has also supported Rev. Adam DeGroot in Albuquerque, NM. Ysleta Lutheran Mission Human Care serves people in Mexico.

Two RSOs conduct ministry beyond the borders of our district: the Lutheran Hispanic Missionary Institute (LHMI) trains future Hispanic ministry leaders and the Biblical Orthodox Lutheran Mission (BOLM) reaches Arabic-speaking people around the world.

The Rocky Mountain District remains committed to faithfully knowing and proclaiming the truth of Jesus Christ, understanding the post-church culture in which we live, and living out our Baptism as we love and serve our neighbors through words and deeds.

Roger Schlechte, President

R48

SELC District

Jesus said, “Go make disciples” (Matthew 28).

Jesus said, “Feed my sheep” (John 21).

As we find ourselves in a rapidly changing world and in a cultural climate that is ever more skeptical of religion and Christianity, the SELC District of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod is ever more assured of the centrality of the mandate our Lord has given to His Church to gather sheep into His fold and to care for them in the Name of Jesus. Both the disciple making and the care and nurture of the flock find the source of their power in the same place: “baptizing and teaching.” God’s Holy Spirit is at work through Word and Sacrament to draw all peo-
ple to Jesus. God’s Spirit uses us, His Church, both pastors and people to be the means by which His mission is accomplished.

The mission of the Gospel and the work of Christ’s Church is incarnational, that is, it happens through real, live human beings in a particular historical context. Our Slovak forbears understood this when they moved beyond their Slovak language to worship and do the work of the church in the English language, and when they moved beyond their Slovak identity to become the Synod of Evangelical Lutheran Churches in 1959. Sixty years later, it is still the goal of the SELC District to fulfill our Lord’s calling and to honor those who faithfully laid the foundation before us. We will continue to seek new and better ways to understand the world in which we live and to speak in the language and culture of the people whom we serve, in order that we might more zealously reach out to the lost and more faithfully care for those entrusted to us.

For the last century, the ties that have held the SELC together, and the Missouri Synod for that matter, have largely been ethnic, familial, and cultural. As that generation of people and pastors is now passing, the “new SELC” is setting a course to continue to nurture and build new networks among congregations and a new sense of mission and purpose among the pastors and people of our SELC District. The gifts of modern technology and the freedom of being a “district without borders” enables us to take advantage of the vast resources of the Internet, email, social media, and a host of media platforms available to our generation to unite congregations and people across the United States and missionaries around the world. Our goal in the next three years is to unite the congregations of the SELC, and their respective members, in a common mission to share the Good News of Jesus Christ in their congregations and communities across North America by supporting local congregations and planting new missions.

The witness of the Early Church has defined so much of the SELC’s identity as a church body and as a district of the LCMS:

“And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. And all who believed were together and had all things in common” (Acts 2:42–47 ESV).

Congregations and pastors of the SELC enjoy a deep level of fraternity and trust. This unity in Christ cultivates respect and mutual love in our district, which results in healthy conversation and dialog among pastors, allowing the ability to express both agreement and disagreement while both maintaining and deepening personal relationships between and among the brothers.

The administrative structure of the SELC District continues to be both blessing and challenge. The part-time district presidency, no paid professional staff, no ownership of property, no rental expenditures, and all administrative functions carried out by pastors and laypeople who continue serving “where they are” has been the workable, good stewardship administrative model for all the years of the SELC’s existence. This intentional stewardship of our resources frees up the largest portion of our district offerings to go directly to mission in supporting the Synod, our seminaries, and starting new missions.

It is the goal of the SELC District to focus our outreach efforts in the next decade on starting many new missions, particularly in the growing number of ethnic and immigrant communities in the United States. Even as the SELC District and the LCMS have our roots in ethnic immigration to America, so now our focus is on new groups seeking opportunity among us, including: Chinese, Indian, and Spanish-speaking missions.

Finally, the SELC is unique in that we “own and operate” the Lutheran Haven, an independent-living adult retirement community in Oviedo, FL. It also includes an assisted-living facility, memory care, home health care, and a skilled nursing facility. The Lutheran Haven just completed the first phase of what will be a decades-long upgrade and expansion of their ministry with the dedication of The Landings, a state-of-the-art Independent Living Facility for Seniors.

The SELC is zealous to “Show Everyone Life in Christ by Showing Everyone Love in Christ.” We are excited for what our Lord is doing in His Church in this next generation.

Waldemar R. Vinovskis, President

South Dakota District

“Called into Partnership for Mercy” was the South Dakota District’s theme and emphasis from 2015–2018. As such, the congregations and schools of the district sought to reflect the mercy we have received from God into the lives of the people around us, as His grateful sons and daughters, especially as we serve our neighbors with good works to meet their needs.

In order to help ignite mercy and witness projects, the district board of directors began a Harvest Grant program in 2017, with $60,000 set aside for congregations and $40,000 for schools, each year from 2017–2019. To date, more than 100 Harvest Grants have been awarded, and thousands of people have experienced God’s love for them through Harvest Grant projects.

LCMS members in South Dakota have also shown mercy through their generous mission dollar support, with our 107 congregations remitting about $1 million to the district in each of the last three years. For every dollar a congregation remits to the district, thirty-three cents are sent to the Synod to support the Lord’s work in other places. The offerings we retain go to work to show mercy in many ways, including through the Native American mission work we do on the Rosebud and Pine Ridge Reservations. Rev. Andrew Utecht (Rosebud) and Rev. Albert Sutton (Pine Ridge) preach God’s Word to a growing number of people. Baptisms are increasing in number too. And myriad are the other ways people are being helped through these pastors and the laypersons who assist them.

In addition, because of congregations’ mission dollar commitment to the district, the deaf are receiving God’s Word and hospital patients in Sioux Falls are being visited by Rev. Matthew Nix, and college students at South Dakota State University and the University of South Dakota are being served through district-supported ministries. In the 2015–2018 district triennium, in addition to the ministry carried out through the mission dollars the district receives, many of our congregations, Sunday Schools, and other groups and individuals rallied to the aid of Zion Lutheran Church, Delmont, after the devastating tornado in 2015, which destroyed the church and parsonage. Thousands of dollars were given in a great show of mercy. The result is
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that Zion now has a new parsonage and church building, dedicated in August 2017. The South Dakota District and the Zion congregation gratefully acknowledge the many gifts received for re-building from LCMS members throughout the United States, through the efforts of LCMS Disaster Response.

The South Dakota District, in our new triennium (2018–2021), is operating under the theme “Behold Your God! What Help! What Hope!” This district convention and triennium mission theme was inspired by Isaiah 40:9, where the prophet implores the people of Judah to urge their neighbors to behold God and all He wants to do for them as the all-holy, almighty, and all-gracious Lord of creation and the One who would redeem them by the Suffering Servant He would provide (Isaiah 52–53).

We, the people of God of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, who live in South Dakota, who have experienced our Lord's help in countless ways, understand that we have countless opportunities to witness to those around us: “Behold your God! Know that He has an immeasurable supply of grace for you in Jesus Christ.” But such witness is a challenge in this sin-filled, broken world.

Moreover, we South Dakotans face the same demographic challenges you likely face in your part of the country. Rural towns and churches, for the most part, are getting smaller and older. Even in places of population growth, like Sioux Falls and Rapid City, church membership and worship attendance have plateaued. LCMS folks are moving to these cities, but many are choosing to worship in other churches, or not at all. In other places in the state, big and small, our church members are moving away, or, if they stay, they are less frequent in their worship attendance. About a generation ago, in 1994, the average congregation in the South Dakota District had 302 baptized and 231 confirmed members; 115 souls were in worship. At the end of 2017, the 107 LCMS congregations in the district had an average baptized membership of 268, an average confirmed membership of 208, and an average weekend worship attendance of 83. Over the twenty-three years from 1994 to 2017, while the number of souls in our congregations declined by 11 percent, worship attendance declined by 28 percent. It’s no wonder that 71 of our 107 congregations are in dual and triple-point parish arrangements in order to keep their doors open and support a pastor. As an example, in 2017, three congregations in the district, which had stood alone for an average of 104 years each, made the decision to partner with other churches in response to having fewer members and lower worship attendance and offerings for the Lord’s work.

If this decline is true for many of our district congregations, it should not surprise us that demographic studies reveal that a large number of the people in the rural areas and cities of South Dakota today are not connected to a church. How many of these folks don’t know or trust the help and hope given by the Savior? Only God knows! And He calls us to be the “salt of the earth” and the “light of the world” (cf. Matthew 5:13–14). Praise God that He uses individual Christians as “salt” and “light” in their various vocations to draw people to Himself! God wants to use congregations and circuits and a church district too. And so the South Dakota District is partnering with the Center for U.S. Missions, so that we are guided in planning for mission plants or other outreach ministries in Belle Fourche and Sioux Falls in the very near future.

Finally, a word about how our district has carried out some of the directives of the 2016 LCMS convention. 2016 Res. 4-04A, which encourages a retention of a “common order for the Lord’s Supper,” has been a point of discussion in one of our circuit visitors’ meetings and a part of my district president’s report to the fall pastors’ conference in 2016. I can report that we in South Dakota enjoy great unity in using the traditional liturgies of the Church, while allowing for appropriate expressions of freedom in the Lord’s Supper liturgy and other aspects of worship. Regarding 2016 Res. 12-02A, concerning calling church workers on candidate status, I have often included such pastors on appropriate call lists and have made the availability of candidate status workers in South Dakota known to the other district presidents. And regarding 2016 Res. 8-01A, which concerns encouraging and strengthening a “Lutheran ethos” in Lutheran schools—this is something our school administrators and boards of education have diligently sought to do. I would cite the successful efforts to have several of our teachers go through the colloquy process in the past triennium as an example of our commitment to maintaining a Lutheran ethos in our schools.

Your brothers and sisters in Christ in the South Dakota District count it an honor and a tremendous blessing to walk together with you in joyful service to our gracious God.

Scott C. Sailer, President

R50

South Wisconsin District

Under the tagline of “Confessing Christ for the Next Generation,” the South Wisconsin District has been blessed over the past three years. We have a gracious and generous God who has poured out His blessing upon us. What follows is the report of the SWD president to the 2018 district convention.

As Lutheran Christians our vocation is to confess Christ, confessing salvation by grace through His name in this generation, doing so we are also ...

“Confessing Christ for the next generation”

That phrase has become our strategic direction for the past several years. Wherever I go, I share it, along with the four priorities.

1. This is our time to be distinctly Lutheran,
2. This is our time to honor our vocation as the people of God,
3. This is our time to embrace our communities, and
4. This is our time to plant new congregations and schools.

1. This is our time to be distinctly Lutheran.

What does this mean? That is the penultimate Lutheran question and it has a distinctly Lutheran answer. An answer from someone no less than Martin Luther himself. In his book Church and Ministry, C. F. W. Walther quotes these words from the Reformer on being Lutheran:

So you must say: “Luther may be a scoundrel or a saint, for that I do not care; yet the doctrine

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is not his but that of Christ Himself.” For you see that the tyrants have in mind not [merely] to kill Luther but to destroy his doctrine. It is on account of his doctrine that they attack you and ask you whether you are a Lutheran. Here surely you must not reply evasively, but you must frankly confess Christ, whether He be preached by Luther, Claus, or George. The person you may ignore, but the doctrine you must confess.¹

Being a Lutheran is about doctrine and confession. Being a Lutheran is about doctrine and practice. Being a Lutheran is a matter of life and living.

That all begins with the chief article of our Lutheran Christian faith. It is said, rightly so, that Article IV of the Augsburg Confession is the article of faith on which every church stands or falls;

**ARTICLE IV: OF JUSTIFICATION.**

1] Also they [the Lutherans] teach that men cannot be justified before God by their own strength, merits, or works, but are freely justified for 2] Christ’s sake, through faith, when they believe that they are received into favor, and that their sins are forgiven for Christ’s sake, who, by His death, has made satisfaction for our sins. 3] This faith God imputes for righteousness in His sight. Rom. 3 & 4.²

We are Lutheran Christians: Lutheran in our doctrine and confession. Lutheran in our confession of the divine service. At our core we are a liturgical church. We recognize that as we gather in the name of the triune God’s saving name, the triune God Himself comes to us through Word and Sacrament with His gifts of forgiveness, life, and salvation. We are Lutheran in our Communion practices, each person receiving “the very body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins,” or they receive the precious gift to their soul’s harm. Hence our practice of Closed Communion. Lutheran Christians we believe, teach, and confess that the world and everything in it was created by God’s spoken Word, in six normal, ordinary days. Lutheran Christians we believe, teach, and confess that God knit us together in our mother’s womb giving us each an immortal soul from the day of conception. Lutheran Christians we believe that our God has given each of us our unique identity in the waters of Holy Baptism. Each life is so precious that our Lord Jesus suffered and died to redeem your body and soul from hell. Lutheran Christians we uphold the sanctity of marriage and the traditional family: a father, a mother, and children.

Being Lutheran Christians sets us apart from the rest of Christianity as unique. With time limitations here, I point you to the Lutheran Confessions, to Luther’s Small Catechism, to Lutheran Service Book. Each, a wonderful and fresh resource for us as Lutheran Christians. For me it is gratifying to see how quickly Lutheran Service Book and the newest version of the Small Catechism have become so popular, so widely used. My challenge to you is, to dig into the Lutheran Confessions. These Confessions define who we are as Lutheran Christians. Every home should have a dog-eared copy.

2. This is our time to honor our vocation.

Vocation is about living out your life as a baptized child of God. You are the baptized people of the Living God. What will you do with that gift? What will you do with your vocation? Catechism: “Daily a new man should come forth and arise who shall live before God in righteousness and purity.” There your vocation. Vocation is the opportunity to live life for the glory of God and for the benefit of others. Vocation links beliefs with lifestyles, with actions.

Our Lord has called you to be His people, both individually and corporately. While you share a common confession, you belong to different Lutheran congregations, part of one church. You all have different occupations in life. You all have different talents and abilities. You are the forgiven people of God. You are fathers or mothers, children or adults, retired and grandparents, plumbers or electricians, factory workers or office workers, employees or administrators, clergy and laity. But you all share the same vocation. Paul tells the Thessalonian believers: “He called you to this through our gospel, that you might share in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.” St. Peter says, “You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.” Our God has set you here in this time for His purpose, so that people around might see that being Christian matters, being Lutheran matters.

God wants us to let the righteousness that we have received in faith break forth, demonstrate itself, and benefit others, so that false faith becomes known and rooted out. God gives no one His grace so that it may lie down and be of no benefit, but so that it would give a good return, and through knowledge and outward public demonstration entice everyone to God. Christ says, “Let your light shine before people, so that they see your good works and praise your Father in heaven” (Matthew 5:16). Otherwise it would be like a hidden treasure and concealed wisdom, and what benefit are either of them?³

It has been amazing for me to witness how all that has unpacked in the aftermath of the fire at Trinity MKE. The outpouring of phone calls and messages, the expression of prayers and concerns in support of the Trinity congregation.

It is amazing for me to see God’s people honoring their vocation, displaying mercy. An example of that can be seen from the various trips that people from SWD made to Texas in the wake of Hurricane Harvey. Countless man-hours mucking out homes and putting up sheet-rock. All organized by our Mission Executive, Rev. Jonah Burakowski.

We honor our vocation as the people of God as we join together with the church at large to proclaim the saving name of our Lord Jesus in faraway places. That’s the reason we have asked Rev. Ted Krey and Rev. Joel Fristche to be here with us during this convention. The story of the mission plant in the DR is an amazing story of God’s grace! Earlier this past spring a new church and school building was dedicated in Licey. There are churches and schools, a group home for the developmentally disabled, a training center for deaconesses, and a seminary training pastors who will serve throughout Central America and beyond. Honoring your vocation as the people of God, your generosity both in dollars and in man-power from many
mission trips have been a great blessing in making that church plant in the Dominican Republic a reality. I thank the pastors and members of congregations like Bethlehem Sun Prairie, St. John’s Plymouth, St. Paul’s Oconomowoc, Brookfield Lutheran, and others; I thank all who have helped!

3. This is our time to embrace our communities.

As I am sure you know, times have been changing in South Wisconsin. Growing up in SWD, most everyone shared the same Northern European heritage. But no more. Go into a restaurant and take a peek at who is cooking. Who is working the jobs that our ancestors used to work: in the barns and behind the lawn mower, doing the house keeping? The faces are different. Hispanic, Karenni and the Hmong from Southeast Asia. Chinese. African immigrants from the Congo and other places in Africa. And the list grows. Do you see them? Are you concerned about their spiritual well-being? Our Lord Jesus is.

As a result of your generous mission gifts, we are able to have pastors working among each of those immigrant groups right here in SWD.

I commend the three Sheboygan circuits, their pastors, and people. Those three circuits have come together determined to reach out to a growing people group in their midst, the Hispanic immigrants. They noticed that Hispanics are a growing demographic in Sheboygan County. With the help of a few friends in Northern Illinois, we were able to make arrangements for David Blas who was studying at the Concordia Hispanic Institute in St. Louis to serve as a vicar, to reach out to the Hispanic community. David has spent time in barns and bakeries talking with Hispanic immigrants about the Gospel. Because of the passion of those three circuits, later this Vicar Blas will become Pastor Blas, ordained June 24th to be associate pastor at Good Shepherd Sheboygan, tasked with planting a Hispanic congregation in the midst of all of Sheboygan’s historically German congregations.

Then, there is Trinity Lutheran Church in Freistadt. You know their heritage. 1839. German Pomeranians. [my heritage]. They have opened their school to the Karenni, a very small people group from Southeast Asia. The Karenni children board a bus very early in the morning and are transported to Trinity’s elementary school. This has happened as the result of several missionaries sent from faraway mission societies like those organized by the likes of Rev. Wilhelm Loehe from Germany. Each of us is reaping the blessings of the generosity of faithful generations before us. Now it is our time to pass that blessing on.

There is no doubt that the world in which we live desperately needs the Gospel, the good news of forgiveness and life for the sake of Christ Jesus. Look around, we find ourselves in a culture where up has become down, where wrong has become right, where the gross sins formerly scorned are now openly paraded for all to see. To exacerbate that situation, we live in a society where the church, our Christ-centered confession of faith, a proper distinction of Law and Gospel, our Christian morality are increasingly challenged, and even despised. In this kind of world, it bears upon us as church to proclaim, to confess, and to plant.

Our Lord provides us direction in Luke 12, “What you have said in the dark will be heard in the daylight, and what you have whispered in the ear in the inner rooms will be proclaimed from the roofs.”

In his 1879 essay to the Iowa District, titled “Duties of an Evangelical Lutheran Synod,” C. F. W. Walther quotes Martin Luther who states:

Our beloved Luther cries out, “Help, whoever is able!” Second, he reminds us to remember our descendants. It is a shameful thought if a congregation says, “We have our church and school now, so let others worry about [their churches and schools]!” No, God demands that we assist others in getting churches and schools. A Christian and also a congregation are plants that have grown from the seed sown by other Christians and congregations. Therefore this congregation and every individual Christian is to be a seed from which new Christians and congregations can ever again grow. That is why the apostle says so emphatically, “The church is the mother of us all” (Galatians 4:26; [Luther Bible]). Just as surely as we are now members of the Church, so surely we should also be fruitful mothers; and if we are unfruitful mothers, i.e., we do not produce spiritual children, or fail to do those things whereby such children can be produced, then we are not obeying our calling, and God will not say, “You pious and faithful servant,” but rather, “You unfaithful servant!” God grant that we never need to hear Him say those words to us!
This is our time to plant new Lutheran congregations and schools. Some of that is beginning to happen:

1) Cross Lutheran Middleton is preparing to charter. Their weekly attendance at divine service is at 100. They gather in a local community center, with Rev. Joel Brandt serving as their pastor. They have plans to chart on the 501st anniversary of the Lutheran Reformation.

2) Bethlehem Sun Prairie is moving forward with plans to begin a new LCMS congregation in Columbus.

3) There is chatter about the southwest side of greater Milwaukee.

4) Madison is growing in several directions, places where we have no LCMS presence.

5) Plans are moving forward to start a Chinese speaking congregation. We have a French Congolese vicar learning English to colloquize into the SWD.

6) The SOS Center, our SWD mercy ministry in MKE, is back up and running, as it serves the youth of the city with after school tutoring, providing a safe place for a great many activities.

7) “Free at Last Ministry,” which works hand in hand with our ministry at the House of Correction, continues to produce wonderful stories about God working through Word and Sacrament.

That brings us back to the question: what will the next generation say about us? What will we pass along to them? This is our time. Now. Our time to be faithful to our Confessions. Our time to be generous with our Lord’s precious gifts. Our time to plant new Lutheran congregations. This is our time for us to work together to plant new churches where we have little or no LCMS witness. Time for pastors and people, congregations to work together with circuits, our South Wisconsin District with our LCMS to sow the seed, to lay the foundations; to plant a new generation of LCMS congregations here in SWD and beyond.

Yet this is also a very different time compared to the last several generations. A more hostile time for our Christ-centered confession. The words of the Apostle Paul in Romans 1 are being lived out before us: “They exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.”

Anti-Christian sentiment is afoot. Worship attendance is declining. Indifference has set in. We live in a culture that has accepted Satan’s lie. Sin is no longer serious; it is merely a choice to live differently, a choice to indulge one’s own selfish desires, and death is the end. To that Hermann Sasse comments: “Where man denies that he and others are dying, the terrible dissolation [of his culture] is held up as a glorious ascent, and decline is viewed as an advance, the likes of which has never been experienced.” Such is the present nature of our American culture.

What are we to do? At times like this a confessional Lutheran church like our LCMS ought not fall prey to the enticements of neo-evangelicalism. We are confessional Lutherans. A confessional Lutheran church, we are called to care about people both in the church and out of the church. This is our time to show mercy. A confessional Lutheran church we ought not wring our hands as if we don’t know what to do. This is our time to confess Christ Jesus as Savior, humbly and yet boldly.

A confessional Lutheran church we have an obligation to be the people of God in this time where our Lord has placed us. We have an obligation to the generation among whom we live, and to the generation of people who follow after us. Martin Luther writes: “God also wants the pure doctrine to be passed on to our descendants.”

“Confessing Christ for the Next Generation.” This is our time to be intentionally and distinctly Lutheran, honoring our confession of God and His Word. This is our time to honor our vocation as the people of God in our various life stations. This is our time to embrace our communities with the Gospel. This is our time to plant new Lutheran congregations and schools as we seek to share the saving Gospel of our Lord Jesus with people around us. Remember, “God also wants the pure doctrine to be passed on to our descendants.”

Much more needs to be done. May God help us!

John C. Wille, President

Notes


Southeastern District

“Let’s Go Fishing.” The Southeastern District gathered in Convention in May 2018 under the theme “Let’s Go Fishing.” There, the delegates recognized the Lord’s bookend stories in which He first called the disciples and then, following the resurrection, commissioned them. We celebrated that not only are we those who are caught in the net of His love, but we, too, are called and commissioned for the Lord’s high purpose.

In John 21:5, Jesus asks a probing question: “Friends, haven’t you any fish?” His inquiry resonates with us now because there is no lack of “fish” to catch. The population of the United States continues to multiply, now measuring 327 million people. The Southeastern District is a geographical area that has an ever-expanding population and includes 216 congregations and 83 schools across Southeast Pennsylvania (York County), Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, District of Columbia, North and South Carolina. Three years ago, more than 32,225,000 people lived within the borders of the Southeastern District. That num-
ber has grown to 32,500,000. No other LCMS district serves a greater number of people. We have 10 percent of the United States living next to us in 3,878 zip codes.

Around 80 percent of the population no longer attends church—meaning that almost 26 million people in the Southeastern District are not being spiritually fed. That’s a lot of fish. The United States is the third largest mission field in the world (now for almost 50 years). The waters we fish are stocked by the Holy Spirit. The mission waters around our churches, schools, homes, and places of work are teeming with hungry fish.

**Our Mission.** The Southeastern District has probably the largest concentration of people who do not know Jesus, even though much of our district resides in the Bible Belt. For that reason, the Southeastern District delegates in convention reaffirmed our mission and vision:

- **Mission:** In grateful response to God’s grace and empowered by the Holy Spirit, it is the mission of the Southeastern District to connect people with Jesus.
- **Vision:** As we work together to connect our neighbors to Jesus, lives are transformed and God’s Kingdom is growing.

**Witness**

**The Work of the Holy Spirit.** The Southeastern District in Convention joyfully celebrated the start of nine new congregations, five of which were ethnic congregations (including Hmong and Ethiopian). One of the strengths of the Southeastern District historically has been the diversity found within our borders. Our District has been enriched over the years through the history and journey of our African American congregations and population. Our immigrant churches recognize that just as Lutheran missionaries came to their various continents last century, they are now responding to the call to serve as missionaries to the United States. Many of the older members of these churches bear the actual scars of persecution, imprisonment, and other tragedies under governments not friendly to the Christian faith. As we hear their stories, we recognize the work of the Holy Spirit as He moves people groups to our shores and within our Southeastern District.

**Back to the Future.** With the blessing of the Holy Spirit we are seeking to expand our mission and ministry presence into 500 new neighborhoods where the 32.5 million people live. Among the 2012–2021 objectives set by the Southeastern District in convention is the goal to plant 50 new house churches formed out of those neighborhood ministries. The house churches are developed and supported by the congregations who are raising up “Aquila and Priscilla” lay leaders to serve as church planters with the support and supervision of their pastors and home congregations. It is noteworthy that almost 100 percent of our present congregations began in the living rooms of one of the charter members before they built a church structure.

**Mercy**

**Hurricane Florence.** Just months after our convention ended, North and South Carolina were inundated by Hurricane Florence. The cities of Havelock, Jacksonville, Wilmington, and North Myrtle Beach were devastated by three feet of rain when the low pressure stalled. Some areas were impacted by wind, others the ocean surge, and yet others by long-term flooding. We now are working in neighborhoods where the homes were underwater from foundation to roof. The people of the LCMS (including the Southeastern District) were very generous with prayers, offerings, and assistance. And we still need your prayers and assistance as we will be working on recovery in this area for at least two years. As a hurricane-prone district in the Mid-Atlantic region, we have made it a priority to develop a proactive strategic response to weather-related disasters through our organization, training, and communication systems. We give thanks to God for the partnership with LCMS Disaster Response, whose staff acted immediately and provided support in many ways.

**Life Together**

Koinonia. In the midst of a contentious culture, we are called to live differently. Therefore, the Southeastern District is putting into practice new ways in which koinonia can be used as a tool to assist church workers, congregations, and circuits in handling sensitive and divisive concerns in a God-pleasing and edifying way. By providing reconciliation training for our circuit visitors and by forming a team of assistant reconcilers to support our district reconcilers, we seek to encourage congregations and church workers to actively engage in the koinonia process. Through the teaching and the work of these people, miracles occur—broken hearts and broken relationships are ultimately healed.

**Lay Deacons to Colloquy SMP Pastors.** Over the last triennium, we have had ten Licensed Lay Deacons certified to become SMP Pastors through the LCMS Regional Colloquy Program. Since our district is made up of many small- and medium-size congregations, we continue to be blessed by lay men and women who have pursued the theological education to serve as lay deacons. At a time when many of our smaller congregations struggle during a pastoral vacancy, a number of our male deacons have been willing to make themselves available to serve outside of their home congregation in support of those ministries.

**Our Lutheran Schools.** The Southeastern District recognizes the incredible opportunities that the mission fields of our schools provide for congregations. Each year new schools are becoming accredited through National Lutheran School Accreditation. We continue to encourage the calling of rostered workers and provide assistance in preparing call lists for schools. Our educator and administrator conferences in the past triennium have focused on themes related to the Lutheran ethos of our schools. We are at work to develop and provide resources for our child development centers that will guide them in their ministry with families and young children.

**Triennium Focus.** As part of our Life Together—a Synod walking forward in mission—the Southeastern District continues to be:

- Partnering with global mission support through the mission work in Peru
- Exploring congregations’ use of a common order for the Lord’s Supper
- Developing new leaders for the mission field and for supporting existing ministries
- Encouraging worker wellness through the appointment of a District Worker Care Team and working
with Grace Place Ministries to develop Congregational Worker Care Teams

Our Financial Stewardship. Our SED gives a double tithe (20 percent) of the mission partnership support received from the congregations to the LCMS for its work. In addition, we’ve added 2 percent of our mission partnership support to provide offerings for our international work. Our mission and ministry budget, largely supported by our congregations, continues to be robust, but we also recognize new stewardship strategies are needed for the next era of the church.

Our Prayer. “Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.” 1 Thessalonians 5:16–18

The Southeastern District staff and board of directors have been praying over these verses as we move forward with God’s mission. Specifically, we have committed to praying at 5:17 each day (either a.m. or p.m.) as we remember to “pray without ceasing.” We invite you to join us as we commit to being “Joyfully Lutheran: Rejoice, Pray, Give Thanks.”

John R. Denninger, President

R52 Southern District

Grace, peace, and mercy be unto us all in the name of our triune God; Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen!

The Southern District is a large geographical district that encompasses Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and the Panhandle of Florida. Within this large geographical area, we currently have 158 LCMS congregations, 3 new mission church plants, 32,000 baptized members served by 212 called and ordained pastors. In addition, we currently have 14 early childhood development centers, 10 elementary schools, and 1 high school. All told these 25 schools serve 2,000 students through the ministry of our 250 teachers. The Southern District staff includes the president, education executive, part-time mission executive, three full-time administrative assistants, and one part-time assistant.

In the short time I have been president, it has become increasingly clear that we need to focus on four important and interconnected areas.

1. Clergy Health
2. Congregational Health
3. Outreach/Evangelism/Witness
4. Prayer

Our clergy are under stress from a myriad of issues including crushing student loan debt, shrinking congregations and the corresponding financial burden that creates, health and weight issues, and a lack of awareness and willingness to engage the help that is available. Pastors experience burnout and depression at higher rates than other professions. For a congregation to be healthy, its shepherd/pastor needs to be healthy.

Congregations can become unhealthy and turn inward upon themselves. Unhealthy congregations do not normally grow as they most often do not have a heart to reach the lost and do not intentionally reach out to their community with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The Gospel is the power of God unto salvation; healthy congregations led by healthy pastors reach lost people in Christ’s harvest fields.

Once the LCMS had a vital outreach and mission heart for those in our communities who are lost, dying, and going to hell without coming to faith in Jesus Christ. A people who are “Joyfully Lutheran,” are a people who have the joy of the Lord’s salvation and joyfully desire to share the hope we have in Jesus Christ alone with their family, friends, neighbors, and community. We as confessional Lutherans have what our world is looking for. Too often our pastors and congregations do not make reaching the lost with the Gospel that has been given to us a priority.

All these things we bring to the Lord in prayer. We cannot face the difficult road ahead on our own. In prayer we confess our dependence upon the Lord, cry out to Him for His mercy, strength, and grace, and beseech Him to use us, His church, His baptized children, as His witnesses in our world where people desperately need Christ, His Gospel, and His church. We pray to the Lord of the harvest to raise us up to be workers in His fields that are ripe for harvest in every community.

Over this triennium, we in the Southern District will be working to help our pastors and professional church workers to become healthier in body, soul, and spirit so they can lead healthy congregations that will in turn reach outside the walls of the church building and into the community with the saving Gospel of Jesus Christ. To be “Joyfully Lutheran” is to share the hope we have in Jesus with others. Being “Joyfully Lutheran,” we receive from our Lord Jesus Christ His good gifts in the Divine Service, being filled to overflowing with Christ’s Word and Sacraments, the Holy Spirit overflows those good gifts out of us to others who don’t yet know Jesus as Christ. “Joyfully” Lutherans are faithful to Christ’s Word, “Go.” “Joyfully” Lutherans want to share the gift of the Gospel; they want to go and be workers in the Lord’s harvest fields. “Joyfully” Lutherans pray for the church, the world, their family, friends, neighbors, and community to come to faith and they pray to be used by the Lord as servants in His harvest fields all around us. Being faithful in Word and Sacraments, we are faithful to the Word “Go” and we desire everyone to be saved and do all we can to share the Gospel with people who are lost in the world without God.

We have many struggles and problems facing the church today. We in the Southern District believe that addressing the four main issues of clergy health, congregational health, outreach/evangelism/witness, and prayer, the Lord would be pleased to use us as His servants to speak His life-giving Gospel to the world around us, trusting Him to cause the growth of the Gospel seeds we sow and to help us face the struggles on the road ahead with grace and mercy as His church and witnesses in our communities.

Eric Johnson, President

R53 Southern Illinois District

“Joyfully Lutheran”; Confessing Christ: Jesus Is Lord!

The rapid changes of the modern world highlight the need
for a strong and bold confession of the Lord Jesus Christ. During the past triennium, Christians worldwide observed the 500th anniversary of the Reformation. We are heirs of an astonishingly rich treasure of biblical and confessional theology. As with all that God has revealed in Holy Scripture, it is both our privilege and responsibility to literally hand over (1 Corinthians 11:23) what we have received from the Lord to the current generation. We have a body of truth, the faith, delivered once to the saints (Jude 3), to pass on to our children and grandchildren. It is not ours to alter, edit, embellish, diminish, or bury in the ground (Matthew 25:25). It is ours to preach, teach and proclaim with great patience (2 Timothy 4:2), confident that the Lord uses His living Word to accomplish His purposes (Isaiah 55:10–11). He alone creates faith where and when He will in those who hear the Word of God (Romans 10:17). This is the time for the Church to be strong, confident, and persistent in confessing Christ. Jesus is Lord!

In Southern Illinois, we are witnessing a steady decline of congregations able to support their own full-time pastor. Five new dual parish arrangements have formed in this triennium. The congregations of the district strongly support parochial education. Changing demographics impacts schools too. By God’s grace faithful congregations, school boards, principals, and teachers meet these challenges with a fervent desire to teach the faith to the next generation. Graduates from our schools form the backbone of leadership in many parishes.

The Southern Illinois District supports an extensive prison and jail ministry. In any given week, some 25 pastors serve around 30 institutions on one day of the week. Prison ministry leaders from our district work closely with the LCMS Office of National Mission in promoting prison ministry throughout the Synod. Another bright mission outreach of our district is with campus ministry. Both campuses of Southern Illinois University are served by Our Savior Lutheran Church in Carbondale and Trinity Lutheran Ministries in Edwardsville respectively. Both ministries include a focus on international students.

District office personnel underwent several changes this triennium. Mr. Roger Sprengel retired as the school and general executive (SAGE) after 9 years in the office. Mrs. Donna Wiesen retired from the administrative assistant to the district president after 16 years of service. Mr. Dan Roth retired after 9 years with the Lutheran Church Extension Fund. Previously, he served as the SAGE for 22 years. Mr. Jeff Fick, formerly of Elm Grove, WI, accepted the call to be the new school and general executive in 2017. Mrs. Leslie Sramek, the district bookkeeper since 2011, added the administrative assistant responsibilities to her duties with the district.

“Confessing Christ: Jesus is Lord” was the theme of the 2018 district convention. Delegates were reminded that Jesus is passionate for your salvation. He humbled Himself taking the form of a servant. He died in your place that you may live in His eternally. The world around us is starving for truth that is not afraid to call something what it is. Sin is sin and always will be. God in Christ forgives your sins and purifies you from all unrighteousness. At His return, the whole world will be held accountable to Him. Now is the time to confess that Jesus is the Christ. He is the living Lord who rules over all things on behalf of His Church. He alone transfers us from the dominion of darkness and into His blessed kingdom (Colossians 1:12–13). All of these are reasons for us to be “Joyfully Lutheran,” confessing Christ that Jesus is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

Timothy J. Scharr, President

Texas District

Texas District Identity

The Texas District of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod was organized in 1906 as a mission district, planted by the Southern District of the LCMS. A movement of the Gospel continues in Texas through the planting of new churches, bold outreach into communities by congregations and schools, and a joyful witness to the Good News of Jesus Christ by church workers and members of congregations. The mission of the Texas District is to strengthen congregations to reach the lost, disciple the saved, and care for one another locally and globally. Witness, mercy, and life together are embedded in the Texas District DNA.

Witness, Mercy, and Life Together

The objectives of the LCMS articulated in LCMS Constitution Article III were beautifully evident in the Texas District during the last triennium. Built upon the Reformation message of sola gratia, sola fide, and sola scriptura, the district has sought to put God’s Word to work through active mission outreach districtwide. To that end, the district has:

- Celebrated the 500th anniversary of the Reformation in local events, area gatherings, and at the 2018 district convention.
- Given generously to the Synod through regular offerings and special gifts (more than $4 million during the triennium).
- Poured more than $8 million into church planter training, church multiplication, new church worker scholarships, and returnable new church-planting seed funding.
- Saw the development of 30 new Word and Sacrament ministries during the triennium.
- Continued to fuel more than 100 missionaries in the district who are reaching more than 9,000 people every week with the love of Jesus across cultures, languages, and generations.
- Rejoiced in sending more than 50 students to be trained as pastors and deaconesses in the residential and alternate route tracks at the seminaries.
- Celebrated the development of 49 commissioned ministers of the Gospel for service to the church.
- Provided nearly $200,000 over the past triennium to assist church workers in need through counseling and financial support.
- Studied and discussed the living relationship between Confession and Mission at nine regional pastors conferences in 2018.
Rejoiced in the Texas District Church Extension Fund disbursement of $62 million in loans to assist 55 ministries and $175,100 in mission support gifts during the past triennium.

It is imperative that the impact of Hurricane Harvey is mentioned in this report. August 2017 saw the most geographically far-reaching natural disaster in the history of the United States devastate Texas. The generous response from LCMS brothers and sisters from around the nation was a testimony to our life together and to our loving devotion to one another. The heroic action of congregations, individuals, and agencies in Texas gave bold witness to our triune God and His outstretched arm of grace and salvation. The district’s partnership with LCMS Disaster Response has been effective and encouraging. One year after Harvey, more than 100,000 volunteer hours have been logged. More than 325 households have been helped. Tens of thousands of pieces of sheetrock have been hung. More than $1.5 million has been donated and distributed to people and ministries in need. The Texas District thanks all who have given and continue to give time, talent, treasure, and prayer to bless many.

The Texas District has also diligently implemented 2016 LCMS Convention resolutions. It has

- Upheld the balance of unity and freedom in worship through conversation and confessional gatherings in the district (Res. 4.04/A).
- Seen the pursuit of the Koinonia project on the circuit level and in Council of Presidents gatherings (Res. 4.05/A).
- Realized a strengthening of Lutheran ethos in schools through the dedicated work of Dr. Bill Hinz, district director of school ministry, and the many confessional events that encourage, train, and provide leadership for schools and educators throughout the Texas District (Res. 8-01A).
- Assisted church workers on candidate status with pastoral care and in receiving calls (Res. 12-02A).
- Rejoiced as four lay deacons became ordained pastors, and saw nearly every licensed lay deacon become enrolled in a track toward ordination (Res. 13-02).

Goals for the Future

The Texas District is joyfully implementing the Synod’s vision and purpose in the unique context of Texas. From the West Texas plains and oil fields to growing metropolitan areas, and from the U.S.-Mexico border to coastal ports and the piney woods, LCMS congregations and members are extending the Gospel witness far and wide. As the state of Texas experiences dramatic population growth and an increasingly diverse landscape, the new goal of the district, paying tribute to the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, is to see the development of 500 new servant-leaders who will reach 500 new communities with the Gospel by the 125th anniversary of the district in 2031. In addition to church planting and local congregational outreach, this goal includes heeding the 2013 Res. 4-06A Task Force Report to the Synod that recommended “a major emphasis in lay training programs be placed on the role of evangelist and the task of outreach in the increasingly diverse and challenging world of the U.S.”

This new Texas District goal is also founded in part on implementing 2016 Res. 13-01A as we make every effort to “facilitate lay training on both local and district levels and to establish new opportunities for lay people to make use of their gifts in evangelism and service to the church.”

Our prayer is that to the greatest possible degree, by God’s grace and through the power of the Holy Spirit, the Texas District will give bold witness by word and deed to the love and work of God, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and extend that Gospel witness into all the world.

Michael W. Newman, President

R55

Wyoming District

“So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation [koinonia] in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind” (Philippians 2:1–2). Truthful doctrine and humble obedience to God’s Word gives us great joy, because thus we live in God’s will for us. In the Wyoming District we rejoice in the mercies of God that we are able to preach God’s Word purely and freely. Our pastors are free to practice closed communion without constraints, in public witness of the pure doctrine of Scriptures and in our love to our neighbors. Our congregation members gather faithfully to hear and study God’s Word, to receive the sacraments, to pray for their churches and communities, to give generously to support their congregations and the mission commitments of the district, and to offer their talents and their lives in love to their neighbors in home, church, and community.

We rejoice that we are part of a Confessional Lutheran Synod that strives to honor her commitment to the clear, verbally inspired Scriptures and her unconditional, quia subscription to the Symbols contained in the Book of Concord of 1580. We are particularly grateful to Synod for resolving in the 2016 Convention to restore among us a faithful confession and practice concerning Augsburg Confession Article XIV (13-02A). We are thankful that our Synod continues to teach and confess what God teaches us in Holy Scriptures regarding marriage, life, and family, and that our Synod seeks to defend our ability to worship freely, live with clear consciences bound by God’s Word, and confess these convictions publicly in our communities (14-01, 14-02A, 14-03A, 14-04, 14-08A). We are privileged to share in the Synod’s mission labors that begin on our own doorstep, stretch across our country, and extend to many places throughout the world.

The Wyoming District rejoices to join in the work approved and urged in the resolutions of the 2016 LCMS Convention:

- Congregations and the district support mission work in various places, calling and providing for a missionary to the Wind River Reservation in Wyoming, supporting our campus congregation at the University of Wyoming, and sending our pastors to teach pastors in Liberia and Sierra Leone (2-02).
• All our congregations make full use of our Synod’s hymnals and catechisms for liturgy, hymns, catechesis, and prayer (4-04A). The district enjoys remarkable unity in its preaching, teaching, and worship life.

• All of our congregations practice closed communion, admitting members of LCMS congregations and those in fellowship with the LCMS, declining to commune the uncatechized and those having a different public confession, and exercising faithful discretion in those rare, emergency situations of pastoral care (5-15).

• District schools faithfully embrace and practice a fully Lutheran ethos, continue to strengthen their Lutheran character, and eagerly embrace the classical pedagogical content and method of the Western tradition in support of Lutheran doctrine and practice (8-01A).

• The district president, assisted by the vice-presidents and circuit visitors, gives pastoral care to the pastors of the district, as they also care for one another. The district had no pastors on candidate status except for a very small portion of the triennium (12-02A).

• The district holds an annual evangelism conference designed to strengthen both laity and pastors in outreach, daily living, and faithful confession of the truth, while also providing occasional leadership training (13-01A).

• The district designates 6 percent of its congregational receipts for church worker student scholarships and active church worker school debt reduction (18-03A).

Koinonia meetings (2016 Res. 4-05A) between the Wyoming and Atlantic Districts continued in February 2016. Since that time, each district has worked to answer questions posed by the other district. A follow-up meeting had not yet been scheduled at the time of this writing. District leadership has also engaged in conversation with the faculty of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, following a resolution of the Wyoming District Pastors’ Conference addressing its seminary journal. The district expects this conversation to be ongoing. The district pastors and congregations act on the conviction that true koinonia and unity in the Church is received and kept only by way of unity of doctrine and practice. Our koinonia finds expression in this very unity among our congregations and pastors and is sustained by way of regular congregational visitations and well-attended and doctrinally rich circuit and district pastoral conferences.

In carrying out biblical visitation, the district examines and attests to the faithfulness of its congregations and pastors in preaching and teaching, the right administration of the sacraments, and the practical matters of the congregations’ life and conduct. We regularly study the Lutheran Confessions in meetings of the district leadership in order to deepen and strengthen our common confession of the doctrine given to us in Holy Scripture. We have given particular attention to the following doctrinal matters in our conferences, winkels, and leadership:

• The Office of Visitation in the Church: With the election of a new district president in 2015, we studied the biblical and confessional sources and articulated an understanding of the work of ecclesiastical visitation. The district continues its salutary, long-standing practice (more than 30 years!) of congregational visitations.

• Preaching: The wellbeing and growth of the church require clear, doctrinally rich, sound preaching. This was the subject for a district pastoral conference, as also for some of our winkels (cf. 2016 Res. 17-04).

• Scripture as the only source of Christian doctrine (principium cognoscendi): In response to instances in Synod in which the Scriptures were questioned or not clearly taught to be the sole source and norm of divine doctrine (see the Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration, Rule and Norm), the district pastors reviewed this teaching.

• The Internal and External Clarity of Scripture: We studied this salutary doctrine at a pastoral conference in response to an incident in the Synod in which the doctrine of the external clarity of Scriptures was in doubt.

• The Holy Ministry, Divine Call, and Ordination: As our Synod returns to a faithful practice regarding call and ordination to the Holy Ministry (Augsburg Confession Article XIV), many of our circuits and congregations have joined in studying the doctrine of the Holy Ministry.

• Priesthood and Office: The district board of directors responded to a dissenting opinion from a sister district with a brief paper reiterating the teaching of Scriptures and the Confessions.

• Third Use of the Law: The district pastors are studying the place and use of the law for Christians, responding to challenges in government and culture and concerns about teaching in the Synod regarding antinomianism and the Third Use of the Law (Formula of Concord Article VI).

• The Church and the Civil Realm: The district pastors are discussing among themselves the relationship and role of Christians and the church to government and civil concerns in our communities and states. The district has exercised leadership in Wyoming in speaking to our communities and government leaders regarding matters of marriage, life, family, and the free expression of conscience and faith.

The 60 congregations and one mission station of the Wyoming District serve a population of about 670,000 in Wyoming, the Nebraska Panhandle, and one congregation in Colorado. The district is richly blessed. It is also addressing challenges. We are experiencing gradual population loss and aging, like the rest of the nation, in our farming and ranching areas. Low prices in oil, gas, coal, and other resources have caused the departure of a part of our workforce, affecting also the railroad industry. Many of our congregations have begun planning for a future that requires new partnerships with sister congregations to provide for their pastors. We have held meetings of groups of congregations to explore future work together and changes in parish alignments. Our pastors are deeply committed to serving all the congregations of the district, thus confessing their
personal commitment to the doctrine of Augsburg Confession Article XIV. The district supports two treasured mission commitments in the district: our campus ministry at the University of Wyoming in Laramie, and our mission to the Eastern Shoshone and Northern Arapahoe tribes around Fort Washakie and Crowheart, Wyoming.

We pray that God would continually grant to our Synod a zeal for the true doctrine of God’s Word, an eagerness for outreach and service, and a fervent love for one another. “Finally, brothers, rejoice. Aim for restoration, comfort one another, agree with one another, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you. Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the saints greet you. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all” (2 Corinthians 13:11–14).

John E. Hill, President

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International Lutheran Laymen’s League
(Lutheran Hour Ministries)

Introduction:

The International Lutheran Laymen’s League (Int’l LLL) serves as one of the two grassroots auxiliaries of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and Lutheran Church—Canada by focusing its energies on a mission of Bringing Christ to the Nations—and the Nations to the Church. While the International Lutheran Laymen’s League is the corporate name under which the organization does business, Lutheran Hour Ministries (LHM) is the public identity under which it conducts worldwide Gospel outreach each day.

LHM has identified two areas of emphasis for its ministry efforts that currently reach into more than 50 countries on six continents:

- **Gospel Proclamation:** Proclaim the message of Christ in a way that generates an opportunity for people to respond, encourages people to ask questions or for resources, and/or request more information. The ultimate goal is to connect people to the church.

- **Equipping the Church for Evangelistic Activity:** Build and strengthen relationships with all constituent groups, including the existing church to create a new identity where sharing the message of Christ in our communities is a major part of who we are.

**God’s Blessings upon Lutheran Hour Ministries’ Outreach in the Past Triennium:**

For more than 100 years, LHM has been sowing seeds of biblically inspired hope, love, and transformation throughout our communities and around the world. But this work is FAR from complete—and some of our greatest challenges lie ahead.

Two-thirds of the world’s population does not know Christ. More and more Americans—both inside and outside the church—are pledging allegiance to the “morality of self-fulfillment,” which is rapidly becoming the culture’s moral norm.
ferings, designed to target LHM’s 75,000 current supporters as well as new audiences of young Christians and non-Christians.

**Bring the Gospel to the Unreached around the World:**

Modern communication tools offer the potential to proclaim the Gospel to every unreached person on the planet. LHM is poised to do just that by expanding global outreach to the furthest corners of the earth.

But how can we reach so many and speak truth when we may not even speak the same language? LHM has developed a unique approach: from the inside out.

While many ministries send missionaries to foreign countries, LHM lifts up and equips local staff and volunteers who know the language, understand the culture, and can most effectively communicate the Gospel in their context. LHM seeks these local believers in three specific places: by finding areas in our world where unreached people have little or no possibility of hearing the Gospel; in urban areas which statistics show have a higher concentration of people who have yet to hear the Good News; in the emerging global youth culture, where there is a growing population of unreached.

Through expanded radio and online ministry, as well as strategic personal and holistic outreach, millions of lives are being reached—including people in new areas of the world. A media partnership with SAT-7 broadcasts new TV programming to Arabic, Farsi, and Dari speakers in most of the Middle East and North Africa. The launch of new social media platforms in the Middle East, as well as South and Central America and eastern Europe, reaches hundreds of thousands of people with God’s message of hope and love. New ministry efforts in southeast Asia and Puerto Rico are proclaiming the Gospel to the multicultural and multi-ethnic communities who have not yet been introduced to the Good News of Jesus Christ in these areas.

**Engage Communities in the Digital Mission Field:**

Statistics show that our country’s younger generations—even those raised within the walls of our churches—are choosing to walk away from church. Today, society teaches us that truth isn’t timeless … it’s relative.

But there is one thing that isn’t changing. People everywhere are hurting and seeking more from this life. How do we start deep, authentic conversations with people about life’s tough topics?

How do we connect with a younger generation that would rather search for truth on Google?

At LHM, the answer started with a bold, new idea. If we want to change tomorrow’s statistics, we must start with those who will live them out—our children and grandchildren. After extensive research, LHM launched THRED, a network of online content that ignites conversations with non-churched people on digital platforms to create personal connections that lead to community.

Since THRED’s launch in February 2017, the site has made more than four million unique impressions, a number that grows daily. Videos, articles, and discussions cover everyday topics that can have eternal ramifications. These people have made thousands of posts, shares, likes, and other forms of dialogue. Also, the THRED forum has engaged churched and non-churched people in discussions that open their eyes to Jesus and His message of love and hope.

THRED’s first year proved that the thirst exists for this type of discussion in the online space. Now, as we look to the future, LHM is determined to drive those conversations deeper and strengthen the emerging online community.

**The Results of God’s Blessings:**

- By God’s grace, LHM’s various outreach programs and resources reach more than 125 million people around the world each week with the Gospel;
- The Lutheran Hour radio program reaches one million listeners per week;
- Outreach through LHM’s international programs has, by the power of the Holy Spirit, netted nearly 550,000 responses and more than 65,000 referrals to congregations this past year;
- LHM trained nearly 70,000 people to witness this year through online curriculum and on-site programs offered by its more than 35 ministry centers around the world;
- More than one million copies of our eight pocket-sized children’s booklets have been shipped to congregations and individuals;
- Nearly 75,000 individuals are active donors to LHM; and
- More than 64,000 individuals around the world enrolled for the first time this past year in Bible correspondence courses that introduce people to Jesus and biblical principles of our faith.

**Goals for the Future/Conclusion:**

In June 1917, a group of 12 men met on the eve of a Synodical Convention in Milwaukee because they felt called to address a serious financial issue in the church body. However, what they soon learned was that the issue could be resolved only through many people who were committed to working together.

That was the spirit in which the Lutheran Laymen’s League was conceived, and it has been our organization’s heartbeat ever since. We are tens of thousands of individuals whom God has called to the task of Bringing Christ to the Nations—and the Nations to the Church—but who by His grace achieve so much more by working together in community. We have one mission—His mission, and we embrace it together as partners.

If God could work through those 12 laypeople in 1917 to lay the groundwork for achieving such incredible Gospel impact over the next 10 decades, imagine what the next century of ministry can be like with not 12, not 1,200, not 12,000, but 120,000 or more called, equipped, and SENT people driving forward in faithful service to make the Gospel known!

With billions of people still unreached with the Gospel message around the world, our work is not done. Therefore, we will not rest until …

- Every person has the opportunity to hear the Gospel in an understandable way;
• New believers are connected to a faithful Christian community where they can grow in their faith and witness;

• All Christians reach out in love to those who don’t yet know the Savior.

It will take the “power of many” to achieve this vision. God has shown us that He can do more through people like you and me than we could ever imagine—if we only allow ourselves to go where He is sending us. With billions of people around the world living without the hope of Christ—not only in foreign lands but also in our communities here at home—declining church membership, and the hesitancy of many believers to share their faith, LHM’s mission of Bringing Christ to the Nations—and the Nations to the Church is more relevant now than ever before.

We know that bold new strategies are required for sharing the love of Christ. That’s why we feel called to expand our vast global reach into new areas previously unreached by the Gospel. It’s why we are reaching out to new generations through digital platforms to speak to them about the issues they struggle with most—and then making the personal connections that are vital to supporting them in their faith journey. And it’s why we continue to leverage new mass media technologies to meet new audiences wherever they’re consuming information.

We realize that no one person or organization can reach the world’s entire unreached population on its own, which makes it more important than ever for us to continue walking side-by-side with laypeople and church workers like you to spread the Good News of salvation and eternal life through Jesus. We are all SENT!

Phillip Johnson, Chairman
Kurt Buchholz, President & CEO

Lutheran Women’s Missionary League

The Lutheran Women's Missionary League (LWML) is the official women's auxiliary of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. Since 1942 the object of our auxiliary has been mission education, mission inspiration, mission service, and financial grants for mission needs.

• Mission Statement: The mission of the LWML is to assist each woman of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod in affirming her relationship with the triune God so that she is enabled to use her gifts in ministry to the people of the world.

• Vision Statement: The LWML is the leading group for LCMS women where each woman is welcomed and encouraged to use her unique God-given gifts as she supports global missions and serves the Lord with gladness.

• LWML is made up of 38 geographic districts and two non-geographic districts.

• Executive Committee members serving four-year terms are President, Vice President Christian Life, Vice President Communication, Vice President Gospel Outreach, Vice President Organizational Resources, Vice President Special Focus Ministries, Recording Secretary, Treasurer, and two Pastoral Counselors. Three appointed officers complete the Executive Committee. Officers are volunteer and receive no salary.

• National conventions are held every two years in the odd-numbered years at varied locations. The 75th anniversary convention was held June 22–25, 2017, in Albuquerque, New Mexico, and had a registration of 3,472.


• A new two-year mission goal and grants to be funded will be chosen at our June 20–23, 2019, convention in Mobile, Alabama.

Mission Grant Recipients for the 2017–2019 Biennium were as follows:

• Mercy Meals of Siouxland $40,000
• Mercy House Franklin, Michigan $100,000
• Christ for Veterans LCMS MAF $27,750
• Tanzanian Sewing Center $25,000
• Mission Central Current Missionary Need $100,000
• Worldwide Children’s Books LHF $100,000
• Christian Hope through Mass Media Egypt LHM $100,000
• NOLA 4H, New Orleans $100,000
• Quilt and Kit Shipping Fund LWR $80,000
• ElderCare Home, Haiti $100,000
• Training Lutheran Middle Eastern Missionaries BOLM $93,000
• Lukonda Lutheran School Buildings, Uganda $48,000
• Equip Youth to Witness for Life-LCMS Y4Life $25,000
• ESV Braille LBW $100,000
• Sharing Jesus with People with Disabilities Bethesda $100,000
• Loan repayment grants $100,000
• Nursing Students with Mercy Medical Teams $25,000
• Native Hawaiian Restoration Programs LIM $75,000
• RECONNECT, Circuit 28, Texas $25,000
• Prison and Jail Ministry Synod-wide Conference LCMS $36,500
• Family Scholarships for Short Term Mission Trips, MOST Ministries $60,000
• Raising Pastors and Deaconesses $97,000
LWML women continue to actively bring mission awareness to their congregations along with their acts of service. Bible studies and devotions produced through the LWML include daily emailed devotions, DVD Bible studies, yearly prayer services, and special services to recognize and promote the work of the organization on LWML Sunday. Bible studies and devotions give women experience in writing.

The LWML has a long history of supporting both monetarily and through prayer and gifts our church workers, seminarians, and pastors. Our grants, both national and district, support seminary and deaconess programs in our partner churches as well. October 2018, we moved our offices from Concordia Publishing House to the Concordia Seminary campus in Loeber Hall.

Our women also are urged to be out in their communities engaging with the local population giving them opportunities to witness about Christ while serving His people. In 2016 we partnered with Synod to hold “Every One His Witness” workshops as the program got started.

Our special outreach ministries to engage with multicultural women, young women, teens, church workers, and added this year, the deaf women in our congregations continue to bring these special women into participation and leadership roles in our organization.

Since last report of 2016 we have held a strategic planning conference and also an Assembly of Leaders event involving women from all 40 of our districts. We have also had 40 district conventions in 2016 and again in 2018.

We continue our media presence through our website, Facebook and Twitter conversations, Pinterest and eNews mailings. Our publication, Lutheran Woman's Quarterly, published quarterly, is the highest circulated women's magazine in the LCMS. Our editor and staff are part of our volunteer force. At the 2017 convention, we adopted a new logo using a new icon and reinstating the original gold and purple colors along with using LWML—Lutheran Women in Mission.

Our 2019 convention will have taken place in Mobile, Alabama, June 20–23. The convention in 2021 will be in Lexington, Kentucky. We invite everyone to join in this celebration.

Supporting our church for 76 years, LWML—Lutheran Women in Mission have had as their motto, “Serve the Lord with Gladness.” We have always been “Joy:fully Lutheran.”

Patti Ross, President
I. Opinions of Commission on Constitutional Matters

Discussion of Correspondence (16-2793)

A member of the Synod sent a lengthy letter to the commission (and to others in the Synod) regarding his concerns with CCM Op. 16-2791. The letter made a number of assertions and accused the commission of not following proper procedures and of failing to do adequate research in reaching its conclusions. It also posed questions regarding conflict(s) of interest. The commission will address this letter under three headings: proper procedures, adequacy of research, and the application of Bylaw Sections 1.5.1.3, 1.5.2, and 1.5.7.

Proper Procedures: Specific mention was made of Bylaw 3.9.2.2 (b), which requires the commission to notify an officer or agency of the Synod if a request for an opinion involves “an activity of that officer or agency.” The request that led to Op. 16-2791 came from the chairman of a floor committee following May 2016 floor committee meetings. The request was prompted as a result of discussion at the May floor committee meeting, when a question was raised as to the constitutionality of a practice that had been operative in the Synod from 1956 until 2004, the reinstatement of a portion of which was being contemplated in a proposed resolution. The specific question addressed to the CCM was regarding the constitutionality of these historical practices between 1956 and 2004, which were no longer in place. Because the question posed to the commission pertained to the constitutionality of a past practice of the Synod, and not to a present activity of an officer or agency, the commission determined that Bylaw 3.9.2.2 (b) did not apply.

Adequacy of Research: The letter also made assertions regarding the adequacy of research used by the commission in Op. 16-2791. Specific reference was made to the introductory floor committee remarks preceding the introduction of 2004 Res. 8-01A, which significantly changed the suspension and expulsion process of the Synod. In those remarks it was stated: “Specifically regarding paragraph g, the study group raised the question whether the President of the Synod is granted authority in the Constitution to suspend or expel a District President or anyone else from the roster of Synod” (2004 Proceedings, p. 161). The introduction goes on to state that references to the Praesidium should be eliminated since the vice-presidents of the Synod are not given the role of ecclesiastical supervision. (By way of explanation, neither the President of the Synod nor the district presidents have ever had the power to expel from the Synod. They only had authority to suspend, which started a process that could lead to expulsion. Over the course of its history, the Synod has used a variety of processes to finally determine expulsion.)

The reference in the introduction was to 2001 Bylaw 2.27 (g), which reads:

Because the President of the Synod has ecclesiastical supervision of all District Presidents, the President of the Synod shall proceed in the same fashion as a District President if he receives a complaint relative to a District President. In cases under this subparagraph the synodical President shall not participate as a member of the Praesidium (section a, 1 and b). If disqualified for the reasons set forth in section b, the next qualified officer of the Synod shall function in the place of the President.

The study group was composed of four district presidents, and while the study group raised the question as to the constitutionality of the President of the Synod having authority to suspend a district president, the proposals as they were presented in Resolution 8-01A and adopted by the convention actually did the opposite and affirmed the authority of the President of the Synod to suspend a district president. While 2001 Bylaw 2.27 (g) was eliminated, the same function was incorporated under 2004 Bylaw Section 2.15, which specifically enables the President of the Synod to suspend a district president or officer of the Synod, and gives him the sole responsibility to do so. In addition, the new section of the 2004 bylaws spelled out the process in detail.

By adopting these significant Bylaw revisions in 2004, the Synod did not in any way comment on the constitutionality of the practice that had been in place from 1956–1989, which the 1956 convention determined was inherent in Article XI B 1–3.

The conclusion of CCM Op. 16-2791, that the 1956–1989 provision providing the mechanism of appeal to the President of the Synod in the case of inaction of district officials and enabling him to act was an organic clarification in the bylaws of a power the Constitution already granted the President under Constitution Article XI B 1–3, is consistent with and reflects the long-standing position of the Synod.

While the original 1847 constitution did not address the matter of suspension, the actions of a certain Pastor Pöschke, one of the original members of the Synod, prompted President Walther to consult with the St. Louis Pastor Conference and then suspend him from membership in the Synod prior to the 1849 convention. The 1849 Synod Convention concurred with President Walther’s action and remedied the situation by adopting an amendment to the Constitution, authorizing the president of the Synod to suspend a member until the next convention, which would then take action, either expelling from the Synod or lifting the suspension. It was reported to the 1850 convention that this amendment had been ratified by all the congregations of the Synod.

When the Synod divided into districts in 1854, virtually identical supervision wording was used for the duties and authority of both the district presidents and the President of the Synod. Article VI E 1 of the 1854 constitution specifically placed the supervision of the doctrine and practice of synodical officers, all pastors and teachers of the entire synod, the individual districts, the pastoral conferences and the congregations of the Synod into the hands of the president of the Synod, who was charged, if at all possible, to visit each. At the same time, the authority to temporarily suspend an individual member or a congregation was given to the district presidents. The assumption seemed to be that the district presidents were the agents of the President of the Synod and would take care of it. In the event that the President of the Synod became aware of a problem, he would generally refer the matter to the appropriate district president for action. By the time of the publication of the first edition of the Synod Handbook in 1873, the wording in the section on the duties of the Synod President had changed somewhat. Specific reference to the Synod President’s direct supervision of all pastors, teachers, and congregations of the
entire Synod had been removed (1873 Handbook, pp. 21–22). However, it is clear that this change was not intended to alter the supervision responsibility of the president of the Synod. Ultimate supervision for all those who are a part of the Synod still remained with the President of the Synod.

The 1873 Handbook’s instructions state: “The Synod declares that, because the President of the Synod is appointed inspector of the district presidents, the same right and power would be attached (to him) in situations, where he is convinced that a district president erred in his handling of a case, so that in the local congregation involved, at his own discretion, he could convince himself of the facts” (1873 Handbook, p. 89). The change in wording was adopted by the 1864 convention (1864 Proceedings, p. 4, the proposal having been published in the August 15, 1863 Der Lutheraner). The reason for the change was stated to be a result of the growth of the Synod, which made the former general visitation duties impossible for the President of the Synod to carry out. What did not change, however, was that the ultimate responsibility for supervision still lay with the President of the Synod, and, if he was convinced that the district president had erred in his handling of a matter, the President of the Synod could go directly to the individual member or the congregation. Thus the procedures the Synod adopted in 1956 simply reflect what had been the long-standing position of the Synod, and were in no way a novelty.

The research of the commission leading to Op. 16-2791, referenced only in part in the opinion, and the further research reflected above fully support and in no way contradict the conclusions of Op. 16-2791.

Application of Bylaw sections 1.5.1.3, 1.5.2, and 1.5.7: In regard to other issues raised by the member of Synod with regard to potential conflicts of interest, the CCM is well aware of the conflict of interest provisions of the bylaws and of the responsibility incumbent upon the CCM to review a potential conflict of interest. Bylaws recognize that conflicts of interest can occur, and place the responsibility on every board, agency, or commission to determine whether or not a conflict of interest is present and the appropriate manner to proceed if such a conflict of interest is found to exist (by vote of the other impartial members of that particular board or commission). However, an individual member of the commission may informally explain an opinion, correct a misunderstanding of an opinion, and provide sound (or challenge unsound) constitutional interpretations related to a pending resolution without conflict of interest. (See, e.g., Bylaw 3.9.2.2.2, which requires commission members to provide such guidance at convention floor committee meetings.)

It is still instructive to rehearse the relevant bylaws concerning conflict of interest, as the commission carefully considers and applies in this and every such instance:

1.5.1.3 Every board or commission member, officer, and all staff of corporate Synod and any agency of the Synod shall be sensitive in their activities to taking or giving offense, giving the appearance of impropriety, causing confusion in the Synod, or creating potential liability.
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(2) Information acquired in the course of carrying out duties of the Synod shall not knowingly be used in any way that would be detrimental to the welfare of the Synod.

(3) No one shall vote on any transaction in which the individual might receive a direct or indirect financial gain.

(4) The Board of Directors shall establish policy regarding the acceptance of gifts, entertainment, or favors from any individual or outside concern which does or is seeking to do business with corporate Synod or the agencies of the Synod.

c) Individuals, prior to accepting elected, appointed, or staff positions, shall initially and annually thereafter sign statements stating that they have received, understand, and agree to abide by this bylaw and the Synod’s conflict of interest policy.

[...]  

Removal of Individual Members from Board or Commission Membership

1.5.7 Individual members of the Synod’s commissions and the boards of its agencies, as well as the individual members of its Board of Directors, shall discharge the duties of their offices in good faith. The following are considered cause for removal pursuant to this bylaw:

- Incapacity
- Breach of fiduciary responsibilities to the Synod or agency
- Neglect or refusal to perform duties of office
- No longer satisfying any of the qualifications for directors set forth in the articles of incorporation or bylaws of the entity as in effect at the beginning of the member’s term
- Conviction of a felony
- Failure to disclose conflicts of interest to the Synod or agency
- Conduct evidencing a scandalous life
- Advocacy of false doctrine (Constitution Art. II)
- Failure to honor and uphold the doctrinal position of the Synod
- Accumulation of three unexcused absences within any term of office

1.5.7.1 Unless otherwise specified in these Bylaws, the procedure for removal of a member of a commission, agency board, or the LCMS Board of Directors, except for those persons subject to Bylaw sections 2.15 and 2.16, shall be as follows:

(a) Action for removal shall require written notice to each member of the relevant commission, agency board, or LCMS Board of Directors at least 30 days prior to a special meeting of the commission, agency board, or LCMS Board of Directors called for that purpose. A copy of such notice shall be sent to the President and the Secretary of the Synod and to the ecclesiastical supervisor, if applicable.

(b) The special meeting shall be held no later than 60 days after the provision of the written notice, unless extended by the mutual agreement of the parties.

c) Removal shall be effected by

(1) recommendation of such to the Synod’s Board of Directors by a vote in favor of removal by at least three-fourths of all current members (excluding the person whose membership is in question) of the applicable commission, agency board, or LCMS Board of Directors; and

(2) by a vote in favor of the recommendation of removal by at least three-fourths of all current members (excluding the person whose membership is in question) of the Board of Directors of the Synod.

(d) Removal may be appealed by a member who has been removed from a commission, agency board, or the LCMS Board of Directors through the use of the Synod’s dispute resolution process as provided in Bylaw section 1.10.

e) From the time that written notice is given until the commission, agency board, or the LCMS Board of Directors takes action with respect to the removal, the member(s) subject to removal may not vote on matters before the commission, agency board, or LCMS Board of Directors.

1.5.7.2 To the extent that the application of this bylaw is limited by applicable law with respect to the removal of members of a commission, agency board, or the LCMS Board of Directors, the commission, agency board, or LCMS Board of Directors on which the member serves may recommend the removal and attempt to cause the appropriate procedures under applicable law, these Bylaws, and the governing documents of the affected entity to be followed to permit the removal of such commission, agency board, or LCMS Board of Directors member.

Adopted November 18–19, 2016

Questions Regarding Candidate Status Bylaws

(16-2795)

The Secretary of the Synod has requested an opinion regarding the impact of 2016 Res. 12-03 on Bylaw 2.11.2.2.

Background: The 2016 Convention directed the following in Res. 12-03:
Resolved. That all references to non-candidate status be removed from the Bylaws (Bylaws 2.11.2.3, et al); and be it further
Resolved. That with the adoption of this resolution all current candidates and non-candidates be granted candidate status, effective immediately; and be it further
Resolved. That candidate status will be for a period of ten years, and may be renewed for a five-year period upon the recommendation of the applicant’s district president and the approval of three-fourths (75 percent) of the Council of Presidents; and be it finally
Resolved. That the Commission on Handbook make all necessary Bylaw changes consistent with this resolution.

In removing non-candidate status (striking Bylaw 2.11.2.3), originally intended for those “eligible to perform the duties of any of the offices of ministry … but who is not currently an active member or an emeritus member and who chooses not to be a candidate member,” the convention transferred such members to candidate status. The terms of candidate status and its extension have also been adjusted (requiring the Commission on Handbook to make changes to Bylaw 2.11.2.2 [a], and all candidates and former non-candidates have been granted a new candidate status, for a term of ten years, effective July 13, 2016.

Candidate status, however, comes with criteria “for determining whether candidate status should be granted or continued” on an annual basis, see Bylaw 2.11.2.2 [b–c]. Included among the criteria is “a demonstrated willingness to consider a call or appointment to any of the offices of ministry …” Previously, those on candidate status “choosing not to be a candidate member” could be counseled to apply for non-candidate status. That option is no longer available.

It does not seem the intention of the convention was to transfer members from non-candidate to candidate status, only to have them removed entirely from the roster because they do not wish, at the time, to consider calls, and there is no more non-candidate status for them to resort to. The convention’s action bestowed candidacy upon members whose time of candidacy ran out, who then sought to extend their membership through non-candidate status, but who the whole time sought a call. The convention’s action also bestowed candidacy upon those who were properly (by election and not by the clock of Bylaw 2.11.2.2 [a] running out) non-candidates. The following question arises from the change in status of those members:

**Question:** What impact does 2016 Res. 12-03 have on the text and application of Bylaw 2.11.2.2, including especially its subparts (b) and (c), and especially with regard to those now placed on candidate status who, for whatever reason, are temporarily not demonstrably willing to consider a call or appointment to any of the offices of ministry specified in Bylaw section 2.11?

**Answer:** Though the action of the Synod in the 2013 Convention removed non-candidate status as a category of inactive membership, it did not alter the other portions of this bylaw as it related to qualifying for inclusion in candidate status. The effect of the 2016 Convention’s action essentially deleted the category of non-candidate status and moved the individuals then contained in that category into the candidate status. Instead of there being three categories of membership for inactive members (emeritus, candidate and non-candidate), there are now only two categories of inactive membership (emeritus and candidate)—a return to the situation prior to June 1, 2000.1 The qualifications for being in either category have not changed:

**Emeritus**

2.11.2.1 An “emeritus” member is one whose membership is held for retention on the roster upon retirement after reaching the age of 55 or for reasons of total and permanent disability. Any unusual case shall be decided by the Council of Presidents if the appropriate district president so requests.

(a) The emeritus member or a representative identified by his district president shall, by January 31, make an annual report to the member’s district president.

(b) This report shall include current contact information and address the criteria for remaining an inactive member of the Synod.

**Candidate**

2.11.2.2 A “candidate” member is one who is eligible to perform the duties of any of the offices of ministry specified in Bylaw section 2.11 but who is not currently an active member or an emeritus member.

(a) A candidate may be continued on the roster for a period not to exceed ten years by act of the president of the district through which the person holds membership. A candidate may be further continued on the roster for a period not to exceed five additional years upon recommendation of the applicant’s district president and approval of three-fourths (75 percent) of the Council of Presidents.

(b) The candidate shall, by January 31, make an annual report to the district president who shall evaluate the member’s eligibility for remaining on candidate status. The candidate’s report shall include current contact information and address the criteria for remaining on candidate status.

(c) Among criteria for determining whether candidate status should be granted or continued are:

(1) The health of the applicant;
(2) A spirit of cooperation in any efforts to address any unresolved issues involving fitness for ministry;
(3) The extent of current involvement on a part-time and assisting basis in his/her respective ministry; and
(4) A demonstrated willingness to consider a call or appointment to any of the offices of ministry specified in Bylaw section 2.11.
The purpose behind the creation of non-candidate status was to “establish appropriate designations for those who for some reasons are not desirous of a call, or are in some way unable to fulfill a call” (Synod Board of Directors minutes June 1–3, 2000 re: agenda item 190— Adoption of Bylaw Change re Roster Status). The “Whereas” portions of the resolution creating non-candidate status indicated that candidate status should be “… reserved for those qualified individuals who are desirous of receiving a call and are ready to reenter the active roster.…” (1998 Res. 7-16A).

Though an inactive member with non-candidate status and in good standing had been “eligible to receive a call” (CCM Op. 09-2546), the service of such members in ministry situations was subject to the requirement that

Non-candidate members are eligible to serve in ministry situations upon approval of their district presidents and according to guidelines established by the Council of Presidents. (ibid., cited in 2016 Res. 12-03, referring to Synod Bylaw 2.11.2.3 [c])

Several overtures were combined and subsumed within Res. 12-03 (Ov. 12-07, originating from Circuits 16 and 17 of the Southeastern District; Ov. 12-08, from Our Savior Lutheran Church, Carmi, IL [2016 Convention Workbook, p. 418]; and Ov. 12-10 and 12-43, from Emmaus Lutheran Church, South Bend, IN [idem, pp. 418 and 436]) as presented for consideration by the Synod in Convention. None of these overtures gave any suggestion that the criteria for candidate status should be deleted or changed, nor did they give any suggestion that non-candidate status should be eliminated. Rather, the focus of the overtures dealt with allowing the extension of time for remaining in candidate status. Overture 12-07 specifically asserted a level of unfairness in the amount of time then allowed to remain in candidate status:

**Whereas,** Eligibility for candidate status for many inactive pastors who have patiently waited, hoped, and prayed for a call back into active ministry and who otherwise meet the criteria enumerated in Bylaw 2.11.2.2 (c) expires through no fault of their own; and

**Whereas,** Expiration of eligibility for candidate status for no other reason than the passage of time spent faithfully waiting, hoping, and praying is very demoralizing and discouraging for the pastor and his family (his wife in particular); and

**Whereas,** Reclassification to non-candidate status unnecessarily compounds the very real and unjustifiable stigma already suffered by the pastor and his family associated with candidate status, incorrectly implying to prospective call committees that the pastor fails to meet the criteria for continued candidate status (Bylaw 2.11.2.2 [c]); and

**Whereas,** Non-candidate status should be reserved only for those pastors who, given the option of continuing candidate status, instead choose non-candidate status or who fail to meet the criteria for continuing candidate status (Bylaw 2.11.2.2 [c]), and not for those pastors who have patiently waited, hoped, and prayed for a call back into active ministry and who otherwise meet the criteria for continuing candidate status (Bylaw 2.11.2.2 [c])… (Overture 12-07, 2016 Convention Workbook, p. 418).

It is apparent that the overtures giving rise to Resolution 12-03 asserted no requirement that the criteria contained in 2.11.2.2 (c) should be altered or removed. In fact, clear statements within the overtures acknowledged and made reference to the criteria such that there were individuals within the non-candidate status who, given the option for candidate status, might not meet the criteria.

With the removal of non-candidate status for inactive members, the effect of Res. 12-03 is to place each of these individuals immediately into candidate status. Both individuals in candidate status at the time Res. 12-03 was passed and non-candidate individuals brought into candidate status at the passage of Res. 12-03 may now continue in candidate status during a period of ten years from the passage of this resolution, which can then be extended over a period of five years thereafter upon recommendation of their respective District President and approval of three-fourths (75 percent) of the Council of Presidents. This is a change from the four-year period of candidate status previously allowed (2013 Bylaw 2.11.2.2 [a]).

Annual reporting by individuals on candidate status to their respective District President remains a requirement. The District President remains responsible for evaluating annually such an individual’s eligibility to continue on candidate status [see Synod Bylaw 2.11.2.2 (b)] and for reviewing with the member, in a pastoral manner, the member’s status (2016 Res. 12-02A). It is important to note that the criteria set forth toward evaluating and reviewing an individual’s eligibility to continue in candidate status are not exclusive or singularly determinative as the bylaw clearly notes that those listed are “among criteria” the District President should consider in annually evaluating an individual’s continued eligibility. (That is, a deficiency relative to a given criterion may be offset by a candidate’s fulfillment of other criteria in favor of candidate status, whether those listed in the bylaw or otherwise considered by the District President.)

Consequently, all individuals now assigned candidate status remain responsible for meeting the requirements of Synod Bylaws 2.11.2.2 (b)–(c) and are subject to their respective District President’s annual evaluation that they exhibit sufficient criteria (either by those listed in Bylaw 2.11.2.2 [c] or otherwise) to merit such individual remaining in candidate status during the period allowed by Synod. Adopted November 18–19, 2016

**2016 Res. 12-14 and the Constitutionality of Referral Panels (16-2794)**

The Secretary of the Synod posed three questions regarding the use of Referral Panels and 2016 Res. 12-14. Two of the questions are based on CCM Op. 16-2791 and pertain to the constitutionality of the use of Referral Panels as described in Bylaws 2.14.5–2.14.5.1 (and, by possible implication, the use of Referral Panels in Bylaw Sections 2.15, 2.16, and 2.17, as well). The third question pertains to whether or not 2016 Res. 12-14 authorizes or requires the Bylaw 7.1.2 process it initiated to address the matter of Referral Panels in Bylaws 2.4.5 and 2.14.5.1.
The Secretary of the Synod provided background for his question:

**Background:** In a case where a district president fails to act, CCM Op. 16-2791 finds unconstitutional the Bylaws’ present direction of an accuser’s appeal for action to a Referral Panel (e.g., Bylaw 2.14.5.3). In such a case (or when the district president declines to suspend, and the accuser appeals for action) it is the President of the Synod who has the right and responsibility to address such an appeal for action. 2016 Res. 12-14 requires the Secretary of the Synod to initiate a Bylaw 7.1.2 process to bring the Bylaws into conformity with the Constitution in this regard, “in order to implement clear bylaw procedures regarding this aspect of ecclesiastical supervision.”

Referral Panels, however, are constituted not only when a district president fails to act and an accuser appeals for action. They may be formed voluntarily by a district president, in accord with Bylaws 2.14.5–2.14.5.1, for the Referral Panel to make the decision whether or not to initiate formal proceedings. Three questions, below, result from this observation.

**Opinion Background:** CCM Op. 16-2791 addressed the constitutionality of provisions that were in Synod’s Bylaws from 1956 until 2004. These provisions allowed for an appeal by an accuser, if a district president declined to suspend a member or failed to act. Between 1956 and 1989 the appeal of the accuser was directed to the President of the Synod. After 1989 the appeal was directed to the Praesidium of the Synod. The 2004 convention of the Synod eliminated an appeal to either the Praesidium or the President of the Synod and instead allowed for an accuser to appeal to a Referral Panel, should the district president fail to act. The 2004 convention also defined its use of “fails to act” in the new bylaw.

CCM Op. 16-2791 concluded that the 1956 convention of the Synod interpreted Synod’s Constitution, specifically, Article XI B 1–3, to grant the President of the Synod the power to initiate proceedings in the event that a district officer failed to act. That same convention adopted bylaws acknowledging and facilitating that authority. Therefore, CCM Op. 16-2791 concluded that the practice of the Synod as it existed between 1956 and 1989, which allowed an accuser to appeal to the President of the Synod in the event a district president did not suspend a member, was constitutional. The opinion further determined that this authority was inherent in the powers given to the President of the Synod by the Constitution.

Regarding the practice of the Synod between 1989 and 2004, which directed that an appeal could be made to the Praesidium of the Synod, CCM Op. 16-2791 concluded that this practice was unconstitutional. The opinion notes that the decision to initiate the process and to suspend or not to suspend is part and parcel of ecclesiastical supervision, which the Constitution assigns only to the President of the Synod and to the district presidents. Because the decision whether or not to proceed and initiate the expulsion process was given in 1989 to the Praesidium of the Synod, and because the Praesidium is not given ecclesiastical supervision authority by the Constitution of the Synod, therefore, the practice between 1989 and 2004 of allowing an accuser to appeal to the Praesidium in the event that a district president declined to suspend the member, or failed to act, was determined to be unconstitutional. (Prior to Op. 16-2791, the Commission never specifically addressed the general constitutionality of referral to the Praesidium [see Op. 16-2791].)

Referral Panels were implemented in the Bylaws in 2004, after the period addressed by CCM Op. 16-2791. While these were not a part of the original question of Op. 16-2791, the opinion’s conclusion that referral to the Praesidium is unconstitutional (because it deprives the President of the Synod of his authority to initiate proceedings in the case where a district president has failed to act or declined to suspend) applies equally to those Referral Panels formed to deal with an accuser’s appeal for action. These Referral Panels are mentioned only in the concluding section of CCM Op. 16-2791, where the opinion states, “Moreover, this review finds the change of the Bylaws in 1989 and subsequently (namely, to remove the right of appeal for action to the President, should district officials fail to act, and to replace it first with an appeal to the Praesidium and then with an appeal to a Referral Panel) to conflict with the Constitution of the Synod. This change unconstitutionally deprived the President of the Synod of procedures for exercising a power granted him in Constitution Art. XI B 1–3.”

Question 1: Does CCM Op. 16-2791 find unconstitutional the use of Referral Panels in the manner described in Bylaws 2.14.5–2.14.5.1?

**Opinion:** Bylaws 2.14.5–2.14.5.1 allow a district president to form a Referral Panel of three circuit visitors, which conducts an investigation and then makes the decision either to suspend or not suspend. CCM Op. 16-2791 does not explicitly address use of Referral Panels as described in Bylaws 2.14.5 and 2.14.5.1.

**Question 2:** If CCM Op. 16-2791 does not apply to their constitutionality, are they constitutional, as used in Bylaws 2.14.5–2.14.5.1?

**Answer:** Bylaws 2.14.5–2.14.5.1 allow a district president to form a Referral Panel of three circuit visitors, which conducts an investigation and then makes the decision either to suspend or not suspend. While CCM Op. 16-2791 does not directly address the use of Referral Panels in Bylaws 2.14.5 and 2.14.5.1 (likewise, 2.17.5 and 2.17.5.1), it does apply to them. Because the decision to suspend or not to suspend is part and parcel of ecclesiastical supervision, and because the Constitution of the Synod does not give ecclesiastical supervision authority to Referral Panels, the use of Referral Panels as they are constituted in Bylaws 2.14.5 and 2.14.5.1, 2.17.5, and 2.17.5.1 is unconstitutional for the same reason that CCM Op. 16-2791 declared that an appeal to the Praesidium of the Synod was unconstitutional, namely, that they assign otherwise than the Constitution itself assigns it the authority and responsibility to make the decision to suspend.

Responsibility for ecclesiastical supervision is assigned by the Constitution of the Synod only to the President of the Synod and to the district presidents. Bylaws appropriately provide that, in the exceptional circumstance wherein the ecclesiastical supervisor is disqualified because he has a conflict of interest or is unable to act, the next qualified officer acts in his stead [e.g., Bylaw 2.14.4.1]). The Constitution, however, allows no delegation of this decision, in the ordinary case, to a Referral Panel or to anyone else.

The commission notes that Bylaws 2.14.4 (a) and 2.17.4 (a) do allow the ecclesiastical supervisor to appoint an investigation committee. This committee after its investigation may make a recommendation to him, but it remains the responsibility of the
ecclesiastical supervisor to make the decision whether or not to proceed.

**Question 3:** Does 2016 Res. 12-14 either authorize or require the present Bylaw 7.1.2 process to address the use of Referral Panels in the manner described in Bylaws 2.14.5–2.14.5.1?

**Opinion:** The title of Resolution 12-14 is “Regarding the Right of an Accuser to Appeal When a District President or President of the Synod Fails to Act or Declines to Suspend.”

The first *whereas* states: “CCM Opinion 16-2791 has indicated that portions of the expulsion processes of the Synod’s Bylaws are presently in an unconstitutional state with respect to Constitution Art. XI B 1–3 and Constitution Art. XIII 2.” The first “Resolved” states: “That the Synod in convention direct the Board of Directors to act in this manner in order to implement clear bylaw procedures regarding this aspect of ecclesiastical supervision.” While the focus of the attention of Res. 12-14 is on the right of appeal when a district president or the President of the Synod fails to act or declines to suspend, it simply states that CCM Op. 16-2791 found that portions of the expulsion process are in an unconstitutional state. The resolution itself does not designate which portions those are; this is to be inferred from the opinion itself.

In addition, while the first *whereas* references only appeals to the President of the Synod, the title of the Res. 12-14 also indicates a right of an accuser to appeal should the President of the Synod fail to act or decline to suspend, broadening the scope of revision to be performed. By the same token, the Bylaw 7.1.2 process initiated by the resolution may include other unconstitutional aspects of the expulsion process, the unconstitutionality of which proceeds from CCM Op. 16-2791.

While CCM Op. 16-2791 does not specifically address the use of Referral Panels in Bylaws 2.14.5 and 2.14.5.1; 2.17.5 and 2.17.5.1, the principle established by CCM Op. 16-2791 is that ecclesiastical supervision decisions are to be made by ecclesiastical supervisors and not by those the constitution does not invest with ecclesiastical supervision, i.e. the Praesidium of the Synod. This principle is also applicable to the use of Referral Panels in Bylaws 2.14.5 and 2.14.5.1; 2.17.5 and 2.17.5.1. Since this use of Referral Panels is found unconstitutional based on CCM Op. 16-2791, and since Res. 12-14 authorizes the Bylaw 7.1.2 process to address those issues found unconstitutional as a result of CCM Op. 16-2791, the Bylaw 7.1.2 process must address this question also.

Adopted November 18–19, 2016

**Voting for Seminary Board of Regents Appointments (16-2805)**

On Nov. 30, the Secretary of the Synod responded to a request by a member of a seminary board of regents and of the Synod for clarification of Bylaw 3.10.5.2 [4], made in conjunction with an imminent meeting of the seminary board of regents. The Secretary requested that the CCM review his response and provide an opinion. (While this is obviously neither the normal nor the preferred process, the urgency of the question suggested a response. In such an instance, should the commission's eventual opinion contradict the advice given, corrective action might then be required.) The commission ratified the response of the Secretary of the Synod, which is as follows:

A member of the Synod and of a seminary board of regents posed questions regarding the board’s upcoming vote on additional board appointments under Bylaw 3.10.5.2 [4], specifically, whether the member designated by the President of Synod and/or the member appointed by the Council of Presidents could vote on such appointments.

**Question 1:** Does Synodical Bylaw 3.10.5.2 [4] apply only to those appointed by the board of regents itself?

Bylaw 3.10.5.2 gives the composition of a seminary board of regents, reading (as it has since the production of the 2010 Handbook):

3.10.5.2 The board of regents of each theological seminary shall consist of no more than thirteen voting members:

1. Three ordained ministers, one commissioned minister, and three laypersons shall be elected by the convention of the Synod.

   (a) Elected and appointed seminary boards of regents members may serve a maximum of two consecutive six-year terms and must hold membership in a member congregation of the Synod.

   (b) Not more than two of the elected members shall be members of the same congregation.

2. A vice-president of the Synod shall be designated by the President of the Synod.

3. A district president other than the geographical district president shall be appointed by the Council of Presidents.

4. Four members may be appointed as voting members by the board of regents. Appointed members may not vote on the appointment of other members of the board.

In order to achieve continuity, a plan of staggered terms for the appointed board members will be adopted by each board of regents.

The provision in question (that “[a]ppointed members may not vote on the appointment of other members of the board”) was added in 2007 Res. 3-05A, when the bylaw was outlined differently (2007 Proceedings, p. 139):

3.8.2.5.2 The board of regents of each theological seminary shall consist of no more than thirteen voting members:

1. Three ordained ministers, one commissioned minister, and three laypersons shall be elected by the convention of the Synod.

   (a) Elected and appointed seminary boards of regents members may be elected to serve a maximum of two consecutive six-year terms and must hold membership in a member congregation of the Synod.

   (b) Not more than two of the elected members shall be members of the same congregation.
2. A vice-president of the Synod shall be designated by the President of the Synod.

3. A district president other than the geographical district president shall be appointed by the Council of Presidents.

4. Four members may be appointed as voting members by the board of regents.

5. Appointed members may not vote on the appointment of other members of the board.

6. In order to achieve continuity, a plan of staggered terms for the appointed board members will be adopted by each board of regents.

The 2007 Proceedings note that the fifth above provision was added by amendment, with the comment: “After the Commission on Constitutional Matters reported that the amendment would affect other appointed members of the board such as the officers of the Synod, discussion continued until debate was terminated, the amendment was adopted, and the resolution was adopted as amended [Yes: 742; No: 214].” There is no record of any opinion of the commission to this effect; it is merely advice offered to the convention. Nonetheless, it seems reasonable to conclude from this note in the minutes that the convention accepted generally the literal sense of the language it was adopting, that “other appointed members” (i.e., beyond those appointed under the fourth provision) would not be able to vote on the appointment of other members (i.e., under the fourth provision). This is, of course, the literal sense of the By-law: that “appointed members may not vote on the appointment of other members of the board.”

Question 2: It has been suggested that editing changes made to the bylaws between 2007 and today have caused the current Bylaw 3.10.5.2. Do the 2007 Synodical Bylaws bear substantially the same meaning as that suggested by the CCM at the 2007 Convention?

The change in outline of the bylaw in question appears to have occurred as part of the carrying out of 2010 Res. 8-12A, in which the Secretary of the Synod, under review by the Commission on Constitutional Matters and with the approval of the Board of Directors, finished the incorporation in the Bylaws of the Convention’s restructuring of the Synod (in this case, 2010 Res. 8-08A, 2010 Proceedings, pp. 161–64; see also the referenced 2010 Today’s Business, p. 280). No record of this change in outlining, let alone of any substantive intent behind it, could be located. (Presumably it was an attempt to reconcile the organization of this Bylaw with others designating the membership of boards, in which each element in the numbered list refers to a category of board members—in such a scheme, the former fifth and sixth elements had to be incorporated otherwise.) Thus it seems there is no reason to discern any sense but that none of the appointed members (i.e., that appointed by the Council of Presidents or those potentially appointed by the board) may vote on additional appointed regents. The sense is the same as in 2007.

Question 3: Is the word designated in Bylaw 3.10.5.2 [2] simply a synonym of the word appointed or does it convey a different concept than the word appointed? If the latter, would it then be exempt from the application of Bylaw 3.10.5.2 [4]?

The words designated and appointed are not the same, nor are they the same as the word elected.

Election, in the present usage preferred for clarity’s sake by the Commission on Constitutional Matters and Handbook, refers to election by a district or Synod Convention only. Appointment refers generally to placement of persons in terms of office by other entities (the President, the Praesidium, the Council of Presidents, boards of the Synod, etc.). (Cf. Bylaws 1.5.1.2 and 3.2.5–3.2.5.1.)

It is important to note that the Bylaws recognize board members that are neither elected (to that position) nor appointed (e.g., ex officio members and their representatives on the boards of directors of the Synod, of Concordia University System, and of Concordia Publishing House—with regard to which, see CCM Op. 12-2662). So it is incorrect to assume that because a member is not elected, he must be appointed.

Designation, a less formal term, does not connote a formal appointment process or a fixed term of service. The President designates a vice-president—perhaps, constitutionally speaking [Const. Art. XII C 1], “upon his request” … to represent him in [one of] his functions,” namely, with regard to Synod’s educational institutions, to “exercise supervision over the doctrine taught and practiced in those institutions” and to “exercise oversight over their administration” (Bylaws 3.3.1.1.1 [c] and 3.3.1.2 [a]).

Referring to 2007 Bylaw 3.8.2.5.2, above, the designation of a vice-president by the President of Synod, the third provision, pre-existed the fourth through sixth provisions, added that year, all of which deal with appointment. Indeed, with reference to this vice-president, the word appointed was changed to designated in that Bylaw as part of the sweeping 1981 revision of the Handbook (1981 Res. 2-18B). (Note that at this time there were no other appointed members of the board, and therefore no prohibition of appointed members voting on appointment of others.) The fact that the word was then changed from appointed (a common and “standardized” term in the Bylaws) to designated (a less common word) itself suggests strongly that there is a distinction to be made within the difference. Moreover, with regard to this vice-president, the word designated was not changed to appointed when the term used for the district president member was changed from elected to appointed (2004 Handbook), nor when other appointed members were added to the boards of regents in 2007 (along with the noted prohibition)—nor has it been changed since.

The clear impression is that there is a purposeful distinction between designation and appointment, a distinction with a difference, regarding the fourth provision above—and a difference that, given the President of Synod’s intimate responsibility for supervision and oversight of Synod’s educational institutions, makes sense.

Question 4: Does Synodical Bylaw 3.10.5.2 [4] prohibit the appointee of the Council of Presidents from voting on the appointments of new Regents to a seminary Board of Regents?

By the reasoning given above, Bylaw 3.10.5.2 [4] prohibits the appointee of the Council of Presidents from voting on the appointments of new seminary regents, but not the designee of the President of the Synod. This would also (and more impor-
Claplain Endorsement Requirement (17-2809)

An individual member of Synod requested an opinion regarding the authority of the Synod, through its Office of Specialized Pastoral Ministry, to establish particular requirements (beyond the general requirements for Synod membership) for those to be endorsed by the Synod for specialized ministries (Bylaw 2.11.1 [i]). The request was specifically for an application to this question of Const. Art. VII:

**Chaplain Endorsement Requirement (17-2809)**

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**Article VII Relation of the Synod to Its Members**

1. In its relation to its members the Synod is not an ecclesiastical government exercising legislative or coercive powers, and with respect to the individual congregation’s right of self-government it is but an advisory body. Accordingly, no resolution of the Synod imposing anything upon the individual congregation is of binding force if it is not in accordance with the Word of God or if it appears to be inexpedient as far as the condition of a congregation is concerned.

The commission notes that membership in the Synod is an issue distinct from endorsement by the Synod for a specialized area of service under Bylaw 2.11.1 [i]. The Constitution, Bylaws, and resolutions of Synod provide no standards for endorsement of ministers for specialized, non-congregational ministry; the Commission on Constitutional Matters is therefore unable to evaluate the specifics of such policies. The Board for National Mission is charged by Bylaw 3.8.2 to “serve as a calling agency for institutional and agency chaplains and other nonforeign specialized ministers (e.g., Veterans Administration chaplains, Bureau of Prisons chaplains, hospital chaplains, pastoral counselors, and teachers of chaplaincy and pastoral counseling).” The Board for National Mission, therefore, through its policies and the Office of National Mission, and under the supervision of the President of the Synod, authorizes the Religious Endorser for Specialized Pastoral Ministry to endorse ministers for service in specialized pastoral ministries. The endorsement manual indicates:

Ecclesiastical endorsement is the recognition by the LCMS that a rostered person has met LCMS SPM standards for theological and ministerial competence to serve in ministries in chaplaincy [institutional or emergency services], pastoral counseling and clinical pastoral education [supervision]. It attests to the church body’s assessment that an individual possesses the suitability, readiness, competence and aptitude to serve as its representative in a particular ministry. Ecclesiastical endorsement also signifies good standing on the church’s roster of ordained, commissioned and consecrated ministers, and as such is subject to the ecclesiastical authority of the church body. (Ecclesiastical Endorsement: Standards and Procedures, Oct. 2014, p. 1, emphasis added)

Here, no “legislative or coercive” power is being applied with regard to a member’s membership in the Synod as such. Instead a properly designated office of the Synod is applying standards for which qualifications a particular member must have to be endorsed (as defined above) for a specific, specialized area of service. Self-evidently, requirements for service in specialized ministries are not coterminous with requirements for Synod membership, and endorsement by the Synod for a particular, specialized area of service is not a right implied in Synod membership. Not every minister is suitable, ready, competent, and apt to represent the Synod, for example, as a military chaplain or in teaching pastoral counseling. In the determination of who is to be endorsed by the Synod (Bylaw 2.11.1 [i]) for each specialized ministry, the endorser “on behalf of [Synod’s] member congregations administers [some of] those ministries that can be accomplished more effectively in association with other member congregations through the Synod.” (Bylaw 1.1.1 [b]). Such administration, with its attendant standards, is not contrary to Const. Art. VII’s statement that “in its relation to its members the Synod is not an ecclesiastical government exercising legislative or coercive powers.”

Adopted May 5–6, 2017

**Res. 9-02A and Bylaw 1.5.3.6 Compliance Requirements (17-2811)**

The commission, as it begins its review of Synod agency governing documents “to report on the status of compliance to the 2019 convention of the Synod,” feels it necessary to note its understanding of Bylaw 1.5.3.6, which reads:

Notwithstanding anything in the Bylaws to the contrary, the Articles of Incorporation or other governing documents of each agency shall provide … (emphasis added)

While one possible reading of this bylaw is that the inclusion of the language of the bylaw’s subsections [a] and [b] in any one place in the governing documents of an agency (i.e., articles, bylaws, etc.) would suffice for “compliance,” the commission determines that this is not the correct reading. The content of provision [a], for example, which indicates that “all provisions of the Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws are subject to the provisions of the Constitution, the Bylaws, and the resolutions of the Synod in convention,” surely belongs in an agency’s foundational governing document, where it will in fact govern all provisions of the Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws. The commission, therefore, finds this to be the sense of the phrase other governing documents: those documents, in the absence of articles of incorporation, which, in fact, govern to the extent appropriate the language required to be included therein.

Should agency articles exist, inclusion of the required provisions only in the bylaws or other subsidiary governing documents of an agency might introduce uncertainty as to whether the agency articles or other most fundamental governing document(s) are, in fact, governed by such language. The commission therefore determines that the sense here is that if an agency has articles of incorporation, those articles are to contain the language of Bylaw 1.5.3.6 [a, b]. If, and only if, an agency has no articles in which to include the stated language (for example, if it was incorporated by a charter or some other means), then the language of Bylaw 1.5.3.6 [a, b] is to be incor-
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Question Regarding Two Calls in Different Districts (17-2820)

The Secretary of the Synod brought to the commission a situation posed by two district presidents:

A district missionary from District A (called by the district) has been serving a pastoral vacancy in a congregation that is a member of District B. After some years of this arrangement, the congregation has determined it would like to extend a call to the missionary also to serve as its pastor. This ordained minister would then be both a district missionary in District A and a called pastor in a District B congregation, with the calling bodies sharing salary and benefit responsibilities. This poses a number of questions:

**Question 1:** Can a called worker have two or more calls simultaneously, or must they be structured as a single call, issued together by the various calling entities?

**Opinion:** The Constitution and Bylaws of the Synod nowhere prohibit a called worker from holding two or more calls simultaneously. The CCM has previously held (Ag. 2104, May 15, 1998) that in a dual parish, each congregation has, in fact, issued a call to the shared pastor; whether the congregations issued calls individually or called the pastor together under a parish arrangement (see also Ag. 1275, A, B). This is consistent with CCM Opinions dating back at least to 1970 and to historical practice much earlier.

**Question 2:** Considering the posed situation and Bylaws 2.12.1.2 and 2.12.1.3, if two or more simultaneous calls are permissible, can they be from different districts?

**Opinion:** Yes. This has been permitted for many years, and the CCM has previously held (e.g., Ag. 1959, Oct. 16, 1993), for example, that nothing prohibits a dual parish composed of congregations in different districts from calling a common pastor:

There is nothing in the Constitution or Bylaws of the Synod which prevents a pastor from serving two congregations which are in different districts. However, it would be appropriate in such a circumstance for the district presidents involved formally to clarify the responsibility for ecclesiastical supervision. As you have indicated, the pastor holds membership in a specific district with that district president as his ecclesiastical supervisor. Nevertheless, one of the congregations which he serves and which is a member of another district is responsible to the district president of that other district (Article XII 7; Bylaw 4.21 b; 4.73; 4.75). Consequently, it is absolutely vital, because of the unique inter-relationship, that there be a formal understanding between the involved district presidents regarding ecclesiastical supervision.

The simplest approach would, of course, be for one of the congregations to request a change in district membership.

The commission notes, however, that this is being done, at present, only by overlooking the plain sense of Bylaw section 2.12, which does not contemplate such an arrangement. Bylaw 2.12.1.2 does not address the situation of a pastor called by congregations in different districts, seeming to imply that he should be a member therefore of two different districts—which cannot be the case, as membership in the Synod is held through exactly one district (e.g., Bylaw 2.12.1).

The commission notes that Bylaw section 2.12, in general, does not contemplate ministers simultaneously holding multiple calls, sometimes involving different districts or modes of ecclesiastical supervision, and sometimes suggesting both voting and advisory participation in the district and Synod. Given the existence of such situations, this deficiency needs to be addressed...
by a convention of the Synod, and is referred to the attention of the Commission on Handbook.

**Question 3:** Considering the posed situation and Bylaws 2.12.1.2 and 2.12.1.3, of which district would the missionary/pastor be a member, and which district president would have ecclesiastical supervision?

**Opinion:** A member of the Synod may have membership in only one district at any given time (Ag. 1511, Sept. 11–12, 1981). For active members, a change in district membership is generally occasioned when a call in one district is concluded and one in a new district is taken up (Bylaws 2.12.1.2, 3, and 6). (Only certain active members can transfer voluntarily between districts, as provided in Bylaws 2.12.1.4 and 5).

The normal expectation of Bylaw 2.12.1.3 is that a member called by a district will hold membership in that district—the situation now pertaining to the member in question. If that call were to be relinquished in the taking up of a call to a congregation in another district, Bylaw section 2.12 would provide a clear rationale for a change of district membership. In this case, however, the first call to District A is not being relinquished; a call to a congregation in District B is being added to the first. That being the case, Bylaw section 2.12 as a whole does not provide a clear rationale for a change of district membership; Bylaws 2.12.1.2 and 2.12.1.3 conflict, and no indication of precedence is given. The commission therefore can give no guidance on this issue until clearer bylaws have been implemented to provide such guidance. Neither does Bylaw 4.4.7 seem to account for the situation at hand.

Given that ecclesiastical supervision of the congregation clearly remains with District B, while the district membership of the missionary-pastor may remain with District A (given that Bylaw section 2.12, taken as a whole, provides no clear rationale for a change in district membership), there is also a degree of unclarity as to who has the ecclesiastical supervision of the member. Bylaw 2.12.1 implies that ecclesiastical supervision of a member shall normally be exercised by only one district president (Const. Art. XII 7). However, circumstances have arisen which raise questions about this assumption, especially where a called worker may serve across more than one, and even, many districts. The matter of ecclesiastical supervision of called workers whose duties cross district lines is also referred to the attention by the Commission on Handbook. Until a clarification should be made in the bylaws, the district presidents are expected to formulate a formal (written) understanding of ecclesiastical supervision of such a member (Ag. 1959, above). It seems a reasonable principle that each district president has ecclesiastical supervision over what goes on within his district (Const. Art. XII 7, Bylaw 4.4.4.5). Should such a designation be necessary, it should be by the agreement of the involved district presidents, under the supervision of the President of the Synod.

**Question 4:** If a called worker has two or more calls simultaneously, may one be designated as primary (i.e., determinative of district membership, supervision, etc.)?

**Opinion:** The Constitution and Bylaws never speak of a primary or secondary call and make no provision for assigning one as primary or others as secondary.

**Question 5:** Considering the posed situation, in which district(s) would he be advisory to the district convention?

**Opinion:** The Bylaws make no provision for membership in more than one district. Since the missionary-pastor might presumably retain membership in District A, which he serves as missionary (Bylaw section 2.12 providing no clear rationale for a change in membership as a result of his acceptance of the second call to District B), he would in that case be an advisory delegate to that district convention (Bylaw 4.2.3).

**Question 6:** Since he would be the congregation’s sole pastor, could the congregation send him as its (voting) pastoral delegate to the District B convention?

**Opinion:** Once the missionary pastor accepts the call to the congregation, he no longer fits under the definition of an “advisory member only” under Const. Art. V B. Const. Art. V A defines the voting members of the Synod as being “all organized congregations that have joined the Synod.” “At the meetings of the districts of the Synod every congregation or parish is entitled to two votes, one of which is to be cast by the pastor and the other by the lay delegate. At the meetings of the Synod a number of congregations shall form a group which shall be represented by two voting delegates, one a pastor and one a lay delegate.” Const. Art. XII A and B designate the same status within the Districts of Synod (with the exception of the word only with regard to advisory members).

Prior CCM opinions dealing with multi-congregation parishes crossing district boundaries have set a precedent for the pastor not voting outside the district in which he holds membership, but the situation at hand is not a multi-congregation parish and the precedent has not heretofore denied to a congregation or parish the pastoral vote granted it by the Synod Constitution. This vote, while exercised by the pastor of the congregation or parish, belongs natively to the congregation or parish and not the pastor. The CCM dealt with a related matter in its meeting of Oct. 14–15, 1971 (Ag. 282):

President Herman Scherer of the Missouri District had asked whether synodical staff men and others in similar positions could serve as voting pastoral delegates from those smaller congregations which they serve in a pastoral capacity on the side. After considerable discussion the Commission ruled:

According to Article V of the Constitution every member congregation or parish is entitled to two votes, a pastoral vote and a lay vote.

The Commission rules that voting pastoral privileges shall be extended to any clergyman who is called by a congregation and properly installed as its pastor according to the regulations of the Synod set forth especially in Article XII, 9, c and Bylaws 4.15 to 4.19.

Therefore the missionary of District A who accepts the additional call to become pastor of a District B congregation may cast the pastoral vote of the congregation in District B even though he is not a member of that district.

All this raises further questions (presuming the minister remains a member of District A):

- Would he be counted in District A’s advisory member pool or be eligible to serve as an advisory delegate to the Synod convention from District A (Bylaw 3.1.3.1)? The commission, finding that the minister
would not be an advisory member at the Synod level (being a called pastor of a congregation of the Synod and not falling under any of the “advisory only” categories of Const. Art. V B), answers in the negative.

- Is the minister eligible to serve as the voting delegate from the District B congregation’s circuit? The commission, finding that he would not be, at the Synod level, an advisory member “under Article V B of the Constitution,” and so long as he is not a specific ministry pastor (Bylaw 3.1.2.1 [d]), answers in the affirmative.

The commission notes that these answers pertain only to this specific situation, regarding a minister with a missionary call by one district and a pastoral call from a congregation in another, and may not safely be extrapolated to other situations. It also notes that, given the severe contortions into which the contemplated situation forces the present bylaws, the observance of Ag. 1959 is still apropos: “The simplest approach would, of course, be for [the congregation] to request a change in district membership.” Finally, it reiterates its assessment that these bylaws (Bylaw section 2.12 and Bylaw 4.4.7, perhaps among others) need to provide mechanisms for coming to definitive conclusions in these heretofore unaddressed situations. This issue is referred to the Commission on Handbook.

Adopted May 5–6, 2017

Non-renewal of Non-tenured Seminary Faculty (17-2821)

The faculty of a seminary asked for an opinion regarding Bylaw 3.10.5.7.4 [j], requesting clarification of the process for the non-renewal of the contract of an initial-level member of the faculty. As commission member Rev. Gerhard Bode has a familial connection to a seminary faculty, he recused himself and excused himself from the entire discussion, consideration, and vote on this matter.

Bylaw 3.10.5.7.4 [j] reads:

Faculty members with an initial-level appointment (who have no expectation of continued employment) shall not be entitled to an appeal process following (or prior to) a decision of non-retention. The only exception is that a faculty member with an initial-level appointment may ask the board of regents to assure that appropriate procedures were followed in reaching the decision or the basis on which the decision was made.

Specifically, the faculty asked three questions, to which the commission responds as follows. In responding to the questions it is critical to note the context of the entire section as expounded in the Bylaws for seminaries (especially Bylaw 3.10.5.5 and its subparagraphs [a] and [i][3]; 3.10.5.7.1 [a]; 3.10.5.7.2 and its subparagraphs [d, e]; 3.10.5.7.4 [i, j]; 3.10.5.7.6 and 3.10.5.7.6.1).

Question 1: What are the appropriate procedures to be followed by the board in reaching a decision not to retain a faculty member with an initial-level appointment?

Opinion: The commission notes that Bylaws 3.10.5.5 [a] and [i] [3]; 3.10.5.7.1 [a]; 3.10.5.7.2; and 3.10.5.7.3 [e, f] all refer to various policies and procedures that the board of regents of each seminary is required to put in place. Beyond these references, there are no specific procedures laid out in the Bylaws for the non-renewal of contracts for initial-level members of a faculty. Therefore, the commission rules that the procedures referenced in Bylaw 3.10.5.7.4 [j] are among the various policies and procedures referenced in the above bylaws (especially 3.10.5.5 [i][3], 3.10.5.7.2, and 3.10.5.7.3 [e, f]) which must be established by each seminary board of regents. In essence, when the contract of a faculty member with an initial-level appointment is not renewed, he may ask the board of regents if it followed its own procedures in reaching its decision. Bylaw 3.10.5.7.3 [d] also poses specific timing and notification requirements upon a board’s decision not to re-appoint, with which requirements policies and actions of a board of regents must comply.

Question 2: Must the board of regents respond to the faculty member’s request for assurance that appropriate procedures were followed, and if so, what must that assurance entail?

Opinion: The board of regents must give assurance to the initial-level member of the faculty whose contract was not renewed that it did follow its procedures. However, the bylaw does not require the board of regents to provide documentation, nor does it allow for a challenge regarding the matter of proper procedure being used (compare Bylaws 3.10.5.7.4 [i, j]). An affirmative answer is sufficient.

Question 3: In this context, how is the phrase “or the basis on which the decision was made” to be interpreted, especially with respect to Bylaw 3.10.5.7.6 (“The board of regents may decline to renew the appointment of a faculty members during an initial-level appointment period without a formal statement of cause.”)?

Opinion: The commission notes that Bylaws 3.10.5.7.2; 3.10.5.7.2 [e][1]; 3.10.5.7.3 [d]; 3.10.5.7.6; and 3.10.5.7.6.1 all make explicit that a board of regents may decline to renew the contract of an initial-level member of the faculty “with no formal requirement for a show of cause,” “without disclosure of cause,” and “at the discretion [of the board of regents] and without formal statement of cause.” Bylaw 3.10.5.7.6.1 indicates that for an initial-level member of the faculty the only time cause must be shown is if that faculty member is removed from office while the contract is in effect. Bylaw 3.10.5.7.4 [i, j] specifically contrasts the right of appeal for continuing-level and initial-level appointments to the faculty.

Bylaw 3.10.5.7.4 [j] permits the initial-level member of the faculty whose contract was not renewed to inquire “to assure that appropriate procedures were followed in reaching the decision or the basis on which the decision was made.” An inquiry about basis here must be read in the context of Bylaw 3.10.5.7.3 [d], which states clearly that a board of regents may decline to renew a contract of an initial-level member of the faculty at its discretion, without formal statement of cause. Because the board of regents at its discretion may determine not to renew the contract of an initial-level member of the faculty, in no case is the board required to document its reasons for non-renewal. It is a sufficient response to this inquiry as a whole (i.e., the inquiry of the board of regents “to assure that appropriate procedures were followed in reaching the decision or the basis on which the decision was made”) that the board has followed its own appropriate procedures for renewal of an initial-level faculty contract.

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and that the result was non-renewal.
Adopted May 5–6, 2017

**Request for Reconsideration of Op. 16-2791 (17-2828)**

The commission met by phone conference as arranged during its meeting of May 5–6, with all members attending, to finalize Op. 17-2828 and to address two other items of business (below). The opinion of the commission in Op. 17-2828 is as follows:

A district president, later joined by others, requested the commission’s reconsideration of CCM Op. 16-2791, entitled “Constitutionality of Historical Appeal to President and Praesidium in Expulsion Cases.” A district president requested, was granted, and made an appearance before the commission, under Bylaw 3.9.2.2 [a]. The Council of Presidents was notified of the request for opinion under Bylaw 3.9.2.2 [b], and several other members of the council submitted written comment. All of this was gratefully received and carefully considered by the commission.

The request lists three questions and proposes three answers, to which the commission responds as follows:

**Question 1:** What empowerment does the Synod Constitution give the Synod President as compared to the district presidents in ecclesiastical supervision, suspension, and/or expulsion of an [individual] member of the Synod?

**Background:** Briefly, Op. 16-2791 dealt with the question: “In the event that a district president did not take action in matters of expulsion, was the process operative in the Bylaws between 1956 and 2004, enabling the President of the Synod or the Praesidium of the Synod to initiate proceedings and present charges in an expulsion matter, in violation of the Constitution of the Synod?” While finding that the transfer of this authority from the President to the Praesidium in 1989 “unconstitutionally deprived the President of the Synod of procedures for exercising a power granted him in Constitution Art. XI B 1–3,” with respect to the 1956–1989 provision, the commission ruled: “That this power to receive appeals for action, in case of the inaction of district officials, is one of the means constitutionally at [the President’s] command to promote and maintain unity of doctrine and practice in all the districts of the Synod” (Constitution Art. XI B 3) was the opinion of the Synod in convention in 1956. It expressed this opinion explicitly and with its unique and final interpretive power. It must therefore be the opinion also of this commission.”

The request for reconsideration of Op. 16-2791 argues variously that the President of the Synod cannot initiate formal procedures to expel (that is, in terms of present procedures, cannot suspend) a member from the Synod, in summary:

- Const. Art. III 8–9, seeking “evangelical supervision, counsel, and care” and “protection … and the maintenance of [congregations’, pastors’, teachers’, and other church workers’] rights,” taken together with the requirement of “previous futile admonition” in Const. Art. XIII 1 (it is apparently argued) require suspension to be carried out only by that ecclesiastical supervisor having direct ecclesiastical supervision of a member.
- Const. Art. XI B 1 does not list individual ordained and commissioned ministers of the districts, as does Const. XII 7; moreover, Const. Art. XI B 1 includes only “doctrine and administration,” while Const. Art. XII 7 includes life in addition to doctrine and administration of office. Thus, it is held, the President of the Synod has no ecclesiastical supervision over a member of the Synod. Here CCM Ag. 1970 and Op. 03-2338, 03-2338A, 03-2338C, 03-2354, 10-2581, 13-2669 and 15-2570 [sic 15-2750] are cited in support of the request’s proposed interpretation.
- Const. Art. XI gives, it is held, no specific authority to the Synod President to suspend (as does Const. Art. XII 8)—this, it is proposed, is part of the broader ecclesiastical supervision given only (it is proposed) to district presidents. Furthermore, it is noted that the Const. Art. XI B 2 duties of the President include seeing to, admonishing, and reporting, but not suspending.
- On the basis of Const. Articles XI A 1 and XIV, it is argued that because the President has no explicit constitutional authority to suspend or expel members, the bylaws cannot confer upon him such a right.
- Finally, it is argued that the commission fundamentally misread 1956 Bylaw 5.23 and Res. 6-11, the argument being that the provision there provided applied only to the expulsion of a district president and not to the expulsion of other members of the Synod.

**Opinion:** The commission, having given careful consideration to the arguments advanced in the request for reconsideration, but having found no reason to overturn its previous Op. 16-2791 or the conclusion of the 1956 convention, which is certainly as Op. 16-2791 understands it, responds as follows:

1. **The Meaning of 1956 Bylaw 5.23 and Res. 6-11 and their Constitutional Context**

The request for reconsideration argues that the commission fundamentally misread 1956 Res. 6-11, by which the convention adopted the language of 1956 Bylaw 5.23 (to wit, that “If the District officers fail to act, the President of the Synod, by virtue of the power given him in the Constitution [Article XI, B, 1, 2, 3] may on his own initiative institute proceedings, take administrative action, and, if necessary, present charges to the District Board of Appeals”), as allowing the President of the Synod to lay charges against members other than a district president. The commission notes, however, the rationale paragraph from 1956 Res. 6-11 (already included in the text of CCM Op. 16-2791):

**Whereas,** It is necessary to clarify Article XI, B, 1, 2, 3, concerning the powers of the President if District officers fail to act in cases involving ineligibility for service of pastors, professors, or teachers; therefore be it Resolved, That Section 5.23 be amended to read as follows … (1956 Proceedings, p. 451; emphasis added)
As the italicized portion clearly indicates, the provision adopted does not apply only to the case of a district president “charged with any action that would disqualify him from office” but also (indeed, with the apparent intention to apply primarily) to the cases of pastors, professors, or teachers, in which the “district officers,” inclusive of the district president, “fail to act.” Subsequent developments of this bylaw provision in 1971, 1983, 1986, etc., as already noted in the footnotes to CCM Op. 16-2791, consistently bear out this understanding.5

The commission’s reading of 1956 Res. 6-11 and Bylaw 5.23 in CCM Op. 16-2791 is, thus, the correct reading: the President of the Synod, if the district officers failed to act, by virtue of the power given him in Const. Art. XI B 1–3, was empowered to institute proceedings against members (pastors, professors, teachers, district presidents, etc.), take administrative action (that is, in terms of present procedure, suspend such members) and, if necessary, present charges to the District Board of Appeals. The President of the Synod had this authority explicitly from 1956–1989, when it was unconstitutionally transferred to the Praesidium (1989–2004) and then, in 2004, to referral panels (2004–2016). Prior to 1956, by virtue of the fact that Bylaw 5.23 was adopted as a clarification and not as a grant of new, extra-constitutional power, the President of the Synod had this authority constitutionally, though it was not elaborated in the bylaws of the Synod.

It bears repeated note, as Op. 16-2791 already pointed out, that only since 1965 has Const. Art. XIII 2 read, “Expulsion shall be executed only after following such procedure as shall be set forth in the Bylaws of the Synod.” This replaced the 1924–1965 provision of Const. Art. XIII 2, “Such expulsion is executed as a rule by the Districts of the Synod [meaning the district conventions]; yet those so expelled have the right of appeal to the Synod [meaning the Synod convention].”6 In the post-1965 “modern” era of the expulsion processes of the Synod, the convention has been free to set forth in the Synod Bylaws procedures for expulsion that are not ultimately carried out by the district and Synod conventions; at the same time, that procedure has been required to be fully specified in the Bylaws (present Const. Art. XIII 2). Through that entire period there has been some bylaw mechanism for an accuser to appeal beyond the inaction of a district president on an accusation laid, though the designated recipient of that appeal has varied. Through the entire period, that mechanism has initiated the same due process bylaw procedure that would have been initiated by a district president.

The conclusion is that the conventions have not desired the inaction of a single district officer (who is not elected by the whole Synod) to frustrate in his district—at least until the next Synod convention—the ultimate exercise of ecclesiastical supervision, thereby depriving the congregations and workers of his district of the application of Synod’s one standard for doctrine and practice (Const. Art. II, Bylaw section 1.6) and denying to them the furtherance of Synod’s objectives (Const. Art. III 1, 8, and 9). The Synod, after all, “is not merely an advisory body in relation to a district, but establishes districts in order more effectively to achieve its objectives and carry on its activities. A district is the Synod itself performing the functions of the Synod. Resolutions of the Synod are binding upon the districts” (Bylaws 4.1.1–4.1.1.1).

Op. 16-2791 calls for nothing new in calling for bylaws that allow an appeal for action beyond a district president’s inaction on charges laid. Instead, Op. 16-2791, Res. 12-14, and the bylaws proposed thereunder simply direct that appeal for action to the one constitutionally authorized to act on it—on behalf of the whole Synod—as so clearly stated by the 1956 convention of the Synod: namely, the President of the Synod.

2. Scope of the Power of the President of the Synod under Op. 16-2791, Res. 12-14, and Bylaws Proposed

The request for reconsideration is posed as if Op. 16-2791 and the bylaws proposed to satisfy 2016 Res. 12-14 grant a blanket authority for the President of the Synod to exercise fully and immediately, himself, that supervision assigned to district presidents in Const. Art. XII 7–8. Whether the President of the Synod could be granted that identical authority under hypothetical bylaws is not presently the issue. Neither Op. 16-2791 nor the bylaws drafted, under 2016 Res. 12-14, to satisfy the constitutional requirements posed by Op. 16-2791, give the President of the Synod that immediate and identical authority. What must be dealt with is the actual case, in which the authority of the President of the Synod to take administrative action in the case of a member under district supervision is being dealt with only under two important qualifiers:

- Of present interest is the ability of the President of the Synod to initiate formal proceedings only in a matter involving doctrine or practice. Const. Art. XI B 1–3 grants the President of the Synod supervision over “doctrine [Lehre] and administration of office, Amtsverwaltung.” It does not deal explicitly with life [Leben], which is mentioned along with doctrine [Lehre] and administration of office [Amtsführung] as the “especial” charge of district presidents. Clearly, the standing interpretation is that the President of the Synod has the authority to supervise the life, as well, of those Synod officers and district presidents subject to his direct supervision [cf. Bylaw Sections 2.15 and 2.17], and the commission sees no warrant to challenge this standing interpretation, as “[a]ll officers of the districts have the same rights and duties as those outlined in this Constitution for the officers of Synod but only insofar as these apply to the district and only within the boundaries of their districts” (Const. Art. XII 6). Thus, if a district president supervises the life of an individual member under his supervision, the Synod president, who has the same office, but with respect to the Synod and not a particular district, has the self-same supervision over those individuals he directly supervises. These are surely to be subject to the same standard of expulsion (Const. Art. XIII and VI) as other members of the Synod, which includes offensive conduct and blamelessness of life.

Nonetheless, neither Op. 16-2791 nor the bylaws proposed under Res. 12-14 (reviewed in Op. 17-2828) propose extending a backup supervision of the life of individual members under district supervision to the President of the Synod—only a backup supervision of those matters explicitly treated under Const. Art. XI B 1–3, namely, doctrine and administration of office (a.k.a. 2019 Convention Workbook
The argument, therefore, that because the President of the Synod is granted no explicit supervision of the life of those in the districts, he can have no backup supervision over their doctrine and practice, is clearly without merit.

- Of present interest is the ability of the President of the Synod to initiate formal proceedings only when the district president has failed to act or declined to suspend. This is not a procedurally primary authority, but a backup authority, intended to see to the carrying out of Synod’s objectives (especially Const. Art. III 1, 8, and 9) when a district officer has failed, given every reasonable chance to carry out his responsibility in this regard, to do so—when, that is, he has failed to apply to a particular case within his district the one standard of doctrine and practice the Synod has set forth by its subscription to the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions and elaborated by its doctrinal resolutions and statements.

3. Suspension Power of the President of the Synod under Present Bylaws

It should be noted that in the present bylaws of the Synod, certain individual members of the Synod are already under the direct supervision of, and may be suspended by, the President of the Synod. These include the other officers of the Synod and the district presidents (Const. Art. XI B 1 a and d; Bylaws 2.15.1, 6). Here a power of suspension (extending over certain individual members) has been elaborated in the bylaws as belonging to the President of the Synod—a power that has not been and is not challenged. What is now Bylaw section 2.15, including the suspension of district presidents and officers by the President of the Synod, was incorporated into the bylaws by 2004 Res. 8-01A. The prefatory remarks by the floor committee offer the following:

The renumbered Bylaw 2.27 replaces what had been 2.27 g and provides the recommended procedures for the removal of a District President and seeks to clarify the role of the President of Synod in the process believed to be inherent in Constitution Articles XI B 2 and 7 and XIII 2. This bylaw provides the framework for what is called for in Constitution Article XI B 7 which states, “The President shall perform all additional duties assigned to him by the bylaws . . . ” and Article XIII 2 which states, “Expulsion shall be executed only after following such procedure as shall be set forth in the Bylaws of Synod.” (2004 Proceedings, p. 163)

Thus the 2003 Task Force on Ecclesiastical Supervision and Dispute Resolution and the 2004 Convention answered the question included in the floor committee’s prefatory material, as to whether “the President of the Synod is granted authority in the Constitution to suspend or expel a district president or anyone else from the roster of Synod” (idem, p. 161), clearly in the affirmative (at least in the case of a district president or officer of the Synod, and given the proper bylaw procedure). The constitution’s explicit assignment of the authority of suspension to the district president, within the sphere of his district, in Const. Art. XII 8 was not understood to preclude enactment of bylaws in which the President of the Synod exercised, at least in certain circumstances, the power of suspension. Such bylaws were explained to be permissible under Const. Art. XI B 2 and 7 and XIII 2.11,12 True, the convention actions of 2004 did not enact bylaw procedures for the President of the Synod to suspend members within the districts when district presidents would not. But they did rely on—even on the basis of a cogent constitutional argument, distinct from but compatible with that of Op. 16-2791—the power of the President of the Synod to suspend and initiate formal proceedings against a member of the Synod. Again, the substance of Op. 16-2791, Res. 12-14, and the attendant bylaw proposal is not overthrown but supported by analogy to present bylaws and the constitutional justification offered for their adoption.
4. Suspension Power of the President of the Synod, Constitutionally Considered

The request for reconsideration argues that Const. Art. XII 6 grants to district presidents powers and duties of the President of the Synod, within their districts, and that Const. Art. XII 7 and 8 enumerate additional powers and duties of the district presidents originating in their own unique office, which are in no way derivative of powers inherent to the office of the President of the Synod. The commission finds this analysis to be contrary to the sense of Const. Art. XII 6, which clearly states that the district presidents, among other officers of the districts, “have the same rights (Rechte) and duties (Pflichten) as those outlined in this Constitution for the officers of the Synod but only insofar as these apply to the district and only within the boundaries of their districts.” The commission also finds reasonable the argument advanced in 2003, that Const. Art. XI B 2 and 7 and XIII 2 provide constitutional allowance for (and indeed, as Op. 16-2791 indicates, warrant) the existence of bylaws outlining the manner in which the President may carry out his duty and responsibility of ecclesiastical supervision by initiating formal proceedings against a member who is under district supervision where the matter involves doctrine or practice and the district president has failed to act or declined to suspend.

Const. Art. XII 7 does indeed indicate: “The district presidents shall, moreover, especially exercise supervision over the doctrine, life, and administration of office of the ordained and commissioned ministers of their district . . .” (emphasis added). An examination of the underlying parallel German indicates these words provide no basis to understand that the power of supervision within the district is an extraordinary power given only and finally to the district presidents. Const. Art. XI speaks of the “rights (Rechte) and duties (Pflichten)” of the officers of the Synod, to which the “same rights and duties (dieselben Rechte und Pflichten)” of the district officers correspond (Const. Art. XII 6). “Insofar as these apply to the districts and within the boundaries of their districts.” Const. Art. XI 1 has that “The officers of the Synod must assume only such rights as have been expressly conferred upon them by the Synod (haben nur solche Rechte in Anspruch zu nehmen, welche ihnen ausdrücklich von der Synode übertragen sind).” The word right is used of a power conferred on an office, and the word duty, in a corresponding but distinct way, of an obligation expected of an office. Officers are to assume only those rights expressly conferred by the Synod (no distinction is made whether this assignment is by Constitution, Bylaw, or resolution, excepting of course that Bylaws must be consistent with the Constitution and that resolutions must be consistent with the Constitution and the Bylaws).

Const. Art. XI B 1 states that the President has the supervision (hat die Aufsicht) over those named (including “the individual districts of the Synod.”) This is not delineated either as a right or duty, so it is appropriately considered to be both. Const. Art. XI B 2 spells out a duty (hat die Pflicht) to see to it, etc., not a right per se. Const. Art. XI B 3 speaks of the President’s power (Gewalt, here apparently a synonym for right) to advise, admonish, and reprove, etc.—note that it is not an exhaustive description of his power, as it does not say “only”—but that it does say “has and always shall have,” extending into the districts of the Synod, as the last phrase indicates (“in all the districts of the Synod”). Finally, with regard to Const. Art. XI B 7 the phrase “all additional duties” is not a straight translation of the German for “all other work” (alle weitere Arbeit), which implies that additional (i.e., such as are not enumerated explicitly here) duties and powers or rights (consistent, of course, with constitutional authority) can be conferred on the President by the Bylaws or special resolutions of the Synod.

When we compare Const. Art. XII 6 and 7, dealing with the rights and duties of the district presidents, we see the “same rights and duties” of the President of the Synod conferred on the district president, confined to the matters of his district, as noted above. But in Const. Art. XII 7, we find not an additional right conferred, to supervise the members of his district, but that the district president is, moreover, especially obligated (noch besonders verpflichtet) to carry out such supervision. There is no language of right here, only language of duty. Const. Art. XII 7 underscores an obligation district presidents, in particular, have within their districts, on behalf of the Synod. It does not grant them a unique right. It expects of them chief responsibility. The expectation of the district presidents chiefly to act in these matters does not preclude a right of the President, asserted by 1956 Res. 6-11 as present in Const. Art. XI B 1–3, to exercise his own authority in these matters should they fail in their chief responsibility. Indeed, such was the sense of the instruction (included in footnote 13, below) that was appended to the Constitution from 1864 to at least 1899, and perhaps up to the thoroughgoing revision of 1924.

Finally, Const. Art. XII 8 begins in the German, “Die Distriktspräsidenten sind ermächtigt, den Nebengezetzen der Synode gemäss Prediger … zu suspendieren.” Here an immediate reference to “in accordance with the Bylaws of the Synod,” deferred in the modern, post-1965 English to the end of the paragraph, indicates a strong connection of the empowerment of district presidents to suspend with the elaboration of the expulsion process in the bylaws. As noted above, the association of suspension with the district presidents is not absolute (that is, they do not exercise it on a raw constitutional basis but in accordance with the bylaws of the Synod, with significant expectations and limitations). It is not absolutely limited to them (there is no “exclusive particle” in this empowerment) or explicitly treated as an added power (neither is there an “also”). It has been reconfigured and supplemented variously over many revisions of the disciplinary system (often, the district president himself has not been able to suspend without the concurrence of a district board of appeals). Given all these factors, and especially the fact that Const. Art. XI A 1 and B 7 permit bylaws to allow additional work (rights and duties) to the President of the Synod, the commission does not find the history of interpretation or application of this paragraph to preclude the President of the Synod receiving and handling an appeal for action in a matter involving a member under district supervision, in a case involving doctrine and practice, and where a district president has failed to initiate the disciplinary procedures warranted under Const. Art. VI and XIII and applicable bylaws.

The commission also notes Const. Art. XI B 1 c, that the President of the Synod “has the supervision regarding the doctrine and administration of ... the individual districts of the Synod.” While the ordinary expectation is that:

- “[i]n the districts of the Synod, he shall carry out his ecclesiastical supervision duties through the district's president” (Bylaw 3.3.1.1.[b])
he meet regularly with district presidents “to see to it that they are in accordance with Article II of the Constitution, adopted doctrinal statements of the Synod, and doctrinal resolutions of the Synod” (Bylaw 3.3.1.1.1 [d]), “to see that their administration is in accordance with the Constitution, Bylaws, and resolutions of the Synod” (Bylaw 3.3.1.2 [b]),

he, in general, “see that [they] act in accordance with Synod’s Constitution [including the provisions for supervision of doctrine and practice], [...] admonish all who in any way depart from it, and, if such admonitions are not heeded, [...] report such cases to the Synod” (Const. Art. XI B 2)

and that he “advise, admonish and reprove” (Const. Art. XI B 3),

the commission does not find such to exhaust the “means at his command to promote and maintain unity of doctrine and practice in all the districts of the Synod” (Const. Art. XI B 3).

In view of Synod-wide objectives of “conserv[ing] and promot[ing] the unity of the true faith,” “provid[ing] a united defense against schism, sectarianism, and heresy,” “provid[ing] evangelical supervision, counsel and care,” and “protection for congregations, pastors, and teachers, and other church workers in the performance of their official duties” (Const. Art. III 1, 8, 9), the Constitution has granted the President the supervision of the individual districts of the Synod (Const. Art. XI B 1 c). The Synod is not a confederation of thirty-five synods with thirty-five sets of objectives, thirty-five standards for doctrine and practice, or thirty-five standards for when a worker must be confronted with his or her error, or thirty-five standards of how, should he or she refuse to repent, upon repeated futile admonition, he or she be expelled from the Synod—not only for the Synod’s good but as the strongest evangelical admonition against final impenitence (excepting, of course, excommunication). The Synod has one set of objectives and one standard, the application of which is ultimately supervised by and—should the district-level authorities fail to do so—applied by the President of the Synod. This power is inherent in Const. Art. XI B 1–3. The President of the Synod, who is ultimately responsible for the maintenance of doctrinal and practical unity in the Synod, must be provided the means, ultimately, to carry out that responsibility. And, it should be noted, members under district supervision are well afforded the benefit of another overseer, to make not singly but doubly sure that they are carrying out their offices as the Lord of the Church has commanded, under the reliable norms of the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions.

An historical parallel exists in the very early days of the Synod, at the division of the Synod into districts. In the 1854 Constitution of the Synod, the President of the Synod “has the supervision over the doctrine, practice, and the respective administration of all synodical officers, all pastors and teachers within the entire Synod, over the individual Districts of Synod as such, over the pastoral conferences, and over the individual congregations of the District Synods” (1854 Constitution, Chapter VI E 1). “He has the duty to see to it that those who are named in the preceding paragraph conduct themselves in doctrine, practice, and administration of office in accordance with the constitution of Synod. In all cases of deviation it is his duty to admonish. If this is not heeded, it is his duty to report the case in Christian order and according to the proper steps, as befits the nature of the censured matter or person, to the district president or District Synod or finally, if need be, to the assembled Synod” (1854 Const. Ch. VI E 2). While already at this time only the district president was explicitly empowered to suspend a member “between conventions of the district” (1854 Const. Ch. VI A 13), the President of the Synod was able, if the district president would not initiate action, to bring the matter directly to the district convention (or ultimately, the Synod convention) for the case to be acted upon and, if needed, the member expelled. Apart from the fact that expulsion is today procedurally impossible apart from prior suspension, the 1854 state of affairs is actually quite analogous to (in fact, far broader than) the bylaws called for in Op. 16-2791 and Res. 12-14, and presented in the Secretary’s proposal.

5. Evangelical Counsel and Care, Previous Futile Admonition, and the Protection of Rights of Members

Certainly the exercise of a power of suspension (more precisely, historically speaking, the power to initiate proceedings leading to an expulsion from the Synod) is not exhaustive of the responsibility of ecclesiastical supervision. Expulsion from the Synod requires, constitutionally, “previous futile admonition” (Const. Art. XIII 1). Bylaw procedures (Bylaw sections 2.14–17) carefully delineate face-to-face meetings, consultations, investigations, evangelical counsel and care which would not be abrogated if the President of the Synod were to exercise his authority to act on an appeal for action. One of the required factors in a panel’s sustaining a suspension is that these measures be demonstrated to have been carried out in faithfulness to the Constitution and Bylaws of the Synod. The President of the Synod would be held to the same standard as the district presidents, so far as the carrying out of these necessary and evangelical aspects of the process are concerned. Given that, there is no ground here, either, for denying to the President of the Synod the authority to carry out this duty, should a district president fail to.

6. Various Precedential Opinions of the Commission on Constitutional Matters

CCM Ag. 1970 and Op. 03-2338, 03-2338A, 03-2338C, 03-2354, 10-2581, 13-2669, and 15-2750 are cited in the request for reconsideration as concluding “that the Synod President does not have ecclesiastical supervision of an individual member of the Synod.” The commission responds:

- Ag. 1970 (October 16, 1993) concludes that “When the President of a District is properly dealing with a pastor according to the Constitution and Bylaws of the Synod [Emphasis original to Ag. 1970] the Constitution and Bylaws of the Synod do not allow the congregation, the pastor, or the office of the synodical President to circumvent the office of the District President and deal directly with that pastor and the conflicted congregation. The Commission, however, calls attention to Bylaw 2.27 b which allows for a complaint to be brought to the Praesidium [the bylaw procedure between 1989–2004] if there is a call for suspension of a member and if the district president
Op. 16-2791 notes that “the ecclesiastical supervision by the President of the Synod in his district, to advise and admonish, and, if necessary, to take action to discipline up to and including expulsion of a member under his supervision, whether individual or a congregation.” It deals extensively with the ecclesiastical supervision and, if necessary, discipline of congregations, but does not address the relative roles of the Synod and district presidents in that ecclesiastical supervision.

7. CCM Op. 13-2669: Ecclesiastical Supervision and 15-2750: President’s Ecclesiastical Supervisory Duties and Individual Members of the Synod

CCM Op. 13-2669 concerned (among other things, which the commission does not here address) whether Article XI granted to the President of the Synod “authority to supervise the doctrine or administration of individual or congregation members of the Synod not listed in Article XI, [or whether that is] the responsibility of a district president under Article XII 7.” The opinion, produced nine years after the process for appeal for action to the Praesidium was replaced with appeal to referral panels and twenty-four years after the process for appeal for action to the President, with its constitutional rationale, was replaced with appeal to the Praesidium (though not for constitutional reasons), did not take up 1956 Res. 6-11 or the prior bylaw procedure, allowing appeal for action to the President, at all. Of course, given that no such bylaws for a limited appeal for action to the President of the Synod existed in 2013, this may have seemed a moot point. Likewise, what it means, in Const. Art. XI B 1 c, for the President of the Synod to have supervision of the districts (which, like the Synod, have no relevant existence except as unions [Constitution Preface; “Reason for the Forming of a Synodical Union”]) of their constituent congregations and individual members)—in addition to supervision, in Const. Art. XI B 1 c, of the district presidents, specifically—was not addressed.

Bylaw 3.3.1.1.1 [b] was examined, that “in the districts of the Synod, [the President of the Synod] shall carry out his ecclesiastical duties through the district’s president,” but that these duties are, first of all, his, also received no attention. The present commission is not persuaded by those arguments of Op. 13-2669 that might be applied counter to those of Op. 16-2791 (all of which have been dealt with already).

Op. 13-2669 simply did not deal with all approaches to the constitutional question, and to the extent that it has been superseded by Op. 16-2791, it stands superseded. Op. 16-2791 and Res. 12-14 deal with an exceptional case where the front line of ecclesiastical supervision, exercised by the district presidents on behalf of the one Synod, applying one standard, is alleged to have demonstrably failed. The commission finds no conflict between the ordinary assignment of ecclesiastical supervision “especially” to district presidents and the exceptional exercise of ecclesiastical supervision by the President of the Synod in cases where the exercise of that supervision by the district officials has broken down and the unity of doctrine and practice in the whole Synod is, therefore, jeopardized. In that exceptional case he is to operate by the same standard and is subject to the same procedures as the district president. In such a case, by virtue of the power given him in Const. XI B 1-3, he is to have this means (namely, the ability to initiate expulsion procedures,
Question 2: Does the Synod President have empowerment by the Synod Constitution to have ecclesiastical supervision, suspension and/or expulsion authority of a member of the Synod?

Opinion: This question has been sufficiently addressed by CCM Op. 16-2791 and the above.

Question 3: Does the Synod President have empowerment by the Synod Bylaws or resolutions to have ecclesiastical supervision and/or expulsion of a member of the Synod?

Opinion: CCM Op. 16-2791 and 2016 Res. 12-14 have clearly directed the Secretary of the Synod to draft, and the Board of Directors to adopt, bylaws elaborating this constitutional authority of the President, at least in the narrow circumstances indicated—namely, in a matter involving doctrine and practice, when there is a formal accuser who has appealed for action because the district president has failed to act or declined to suspend. The commission, in thoroughly reviewing Op. 16-2791 with regard to the stated challenges, finds no reason to withdraw, rescind, or modify its opinion, and therefore no reason that the Secretary of the Synod or the Board of Directors should proceed otherwise than to adopt the bylaws drafted (by the Secretary, in extensive consultation with the Council of Presidents), and already reviewed, as to content and consistency with Constitution, Bylaws, and resolutions, especially 2016 Res. 12-14, and as to language, by the Commissions on Constitutional Matters and Handbook.

The Secretary of the Synod was directed to share the minutes of this phone meeting immediately with the Board of Directors and Council of Presidents of the Synod.

Adopted May 12, 2017

Relation of Const. Art. VII 1 and Const. Art. XIII 3 (17-2836)

On June 28, a Hearing Panel of the Synod, under Bylaw 2.14.7.8 [k], requested an opinion of the commission consisting of three questions regarding Const. Art. VII 1 and Const. Art. XIII 3:

1. Are the Bylaws resolutions?
2. What was the intent and meaning of inexpedient, as is expressed in Const. Art. VII 1?
3. In a decision to suspend a congregation for failure to depose a suspended [sic] pastor, whose will has greater authority, a member congregation or Synod through its representative?

Background: Const. Art. VII 1, under the heading “Relation of the Synod to Its Members,” reads as follows:

In its relation to its members the Synod is not an ecclesiastical government exercising legislative or coercive powers, and with respect to the individual congregation’s right of self-government it is but an advisory body. Accordingly, no resolution of the Synod imposing anything upon the individual congregation is of binding force if it is not in accordance with the Word of God or if it appears to be inexpedient as far as the condition of a congregation is concerned.

The meaning and history of interpretation of Const. Art. VII 1 is a broad topic, on which much time and effort has been, and could profitably be, expended. For the sake of a timely response, this opinion will confine itself principally to the relation of Const. Art. VII 1 to the constitutional provision referred to in Question 3, namely, Const. Art. XIII 3. The latter reads as follows:

If the member expelled is a pastor or teacher in a congregation of the Synod, such congregation, unless it has already done so, is held to depose him from office and to deal with him in accordance with the Word of God, notwithstanding an appeal. If it persists to refuse to so do, the respective district is to deal with it. If all negotiations and admonitions fail of their purpose, such congregation forfeits its membership in the Synod.

In the following, the commission has revised the questions for clarity and accuracy, as indicated by the bracketed phrases.

Question 1: Are [the provisions of the Synod Constitution and of] the Bylaws resolutions? [That is, are they to be treated as within the right granted a congregation...
in Const. Art. VII to find a resolution to be inexpedient and therefore not of binding force?]

Opinion: No. Leaving aside the question of how the “right of expediency” applies to various types of Synod resolutions, the Constitution of the Synod and its Bylaws clearly do not fall under such a right. The consistent opinion of conventions and the Commission on Constitutional Matters has been summarized in the commission’s Opinion 99-2157 (September 14, 1999):

- It should be noted that the second sentence of Article VII states, “... no resolution of the Synod ...” (emphasis original to Op. 99-2157). It does not speak of the Constitution or Bylaws of the Synod. “The right of a congregation to exercise the right of expediency (Bylaw 1.09b [2016 Bylaw 1.7.2]) applies only to resolutions of the Synod and not to the Constitution and Bylaws” (1969 Res. 5-23 [Proceedings, pp. 119–20]).

The here-quoted preface of the 1969 Res. 5-23 applied this principle specifically to Article XIII of the Constitution, as well as to bylaws of the Synod. These, the preface states, “are binding on every member of the Synod, and refusal to comply with the rules and regulations of the Synod constitutes divisive and unbrotherly conduct which destroys the very concept of the Synod as a ‘walking together.’ The right of a congregation to exercise the right of expediency (Bylaw 1.09b [2016 Bylaw 1.7.2]) applies only to resolutions of the Synod and not to the Constitution and Bylaws” (emphasis added).

Self-evidently, to allow each individual congregation to determine to which of the standards of Synod membership it would conform as “expedient to its condition” would render those standards meaningless, frustrating the collective will of the congregations to assemble and maintain the Synod under such standards. This understanding is consistently reinforced in the Bylaws of the Constitution of the Synod:

- Bylaw 1.7.1: “The Constitution, Bylaws, and all other rules and regulations of the Synod apply to all congregational and individual members of the Synod.”
- Bylaw 1.3.4: “Congregations together establish the requirements of membership in the Synod (Constitution Art. VI). In joining the Synod, congregations and other members obligate themselves to fulfill such requirements and to diligently and earnestly promote the purposes of the Synod by word and deed.”
- Bylaw 1.3.4.1: “Members agree to uphold the confessional position of the Synod (Constitution Art. II) and to assist in carrying out the objectives of the Synod (Constitution Art. III), which are objectives of the members themselves. While congregations of the Synod are self-governing (Constitution Art. VII), they, and also individual members, commit themselves as members of the Synod to act in accordance with the Constitution and Bylaws of the Synod under which they have agreed to live and work together and which the congregations alone have the authority to adopt or amend through conventions.”

A report on the meaning of Article VII, adopted by the 1944 convention, put it succinctly:

It is self-evident that any person or group of persons who apply for, and are received into, membership of any organization thereby have declared their willingness to abide by the constitution and by-laws of that organization. That is in the very nature of the case. Otherwise an organization and affiliation therewith would serve no real purpose. (1944 Proceedings, pp. 205–6)

Question 2: What was the intent and meaning of “inexpedient,” as is expressed in Const. Art. VII?


To understand properly the meaning and use of “inexpedient” constitutionally and historically in the Synod, it is important to realize that the German word ungeeignet in the 1854 Constitution was properly translated “unsuited” into the English (cf. Moving Frontiers, p. 151). An editorial committee in 1923, not the convention of the Synod, changed the word to “inexpedient.” The original word ungeeignet meant “unsuited, not suited for, does not fit.” Therefore it should be noted that the use of the word “inexpedient” in our contemporary culture appears to have a different connotation such as “not advantageous, not profitable, inconvenient.” […]

Likewise, the 1920 English text of Article VII states that no congregation shall be bound by any resolution of the Synod “that to such congregation appears unsuited to its condition” (The Lutheran Witness, XXXVI 20). Therefore, the congregation and not the Synod may assess the congregation’s condition and judge the applicability of any resolution of the Synod. The congregation, not the Synod, determines whether or not a resolution is unsuited. “The Synod, being an advisory body, recognizes the right of a congregation to be the judge of the applicability of the resolution to its local condition” (Bylaw 1.7.2, emphasis added).

A congregation’s “right of expediency”—to determine that “the shoe does not fit,” that something a resolution “imposes on the individual congregation” is “ungeeignet, inapplicable, inexpedient, unsuited,” and, so, to decline to take it on—has, of course, the limits already noted. True doctrine and right practice, drawn clearly from the Word of God and the Lutheran Confessions (the confessional basis of the Synod in Const. Art. II), are never unsuitable to, or an imposition on, any congregation desiring membership in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. “Doctrine may not be accepted or rejected upon the basis of consideration of expediency” (1971 Res. 2-21, Proceedings, p. 118). Likewise, the “right of expediency” does not apply to Synod’s Constitution or its Bylaws—only to resolutions of the Synod, and as to those, only with some significant caveats. Op. 09-2573 concludes:
... the Article VII phrase “inexpedient as far as the condition of a congregation is concerned”:

- is applicable only to resolutions that are adopted by the Synod, not to its Constitution (and, by implication, its Bylaws), which all members have accepted as a condition of membership [emphasis added]. Because the second sentence of Article VII says, “no resolution of the Synod” (cf. also Bylaw 1.7.2), no limitation should be placed on the type or category of resolution that a congregation may wish to consider under this provision. However, because all congregations of the Synod have accepted Article II of the Constitution and thereby have pledged their acceptance of Holy Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions, the Article VII phrase in question may not be applied by congregations to resolutions of the Synod that consist primarily of citations from Holy Scripture or the Lutheran Confessions or simply restate the clear teaching of Holy Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions (cf. also Bylaw 1.6.2 quoted in Appendix II). Similarly, since all congregations of the Synod, in becoming members of the Synod, have subscribed to the Constitution of the Synod, the Article VII phrase in question may not be applied by a member congregation to resolutions of the Synod that are primarily explicit reaffirmations of other constitutional positions or provisions.

- deals only with resolutions of the Synod “imposing anything upon the individual congregation” (Article VII). The many resolutions of the Synod that deal with the management and direction of the Synod and its component parts, as distinguished from resolutions that are addressed to its member congregations (see above), are not included in this provision. Moreover, taking the language of this phrase quite literally, it must be said that very few resolutions of the Synod intend to “impose” anything upon its member congregations, inasmuch as the Synod does not exercise “legislative or coercive powers” (Article VII) in relation to its members and clearly recognizes the congregation’s right of self-government; and

- is limited to a congregation’s judgment that a resolution is unsuited or inapplicable to the “condition of the congregation” (Bylaw 1.7.2). The Synod has not limited in any way what a congregation might consider to be such a condition (whether it be a lack of resources, tension within the congregation, or some other important factor).

If a congregation determines that a resolution of the Synod is unsuited or inapplicable as far as the condition of the congregation is concerned, the congregation has also committed itself to “not act arbitrarily, but in accordance with the principles of Christian love and charity” (Bylaw 1.7.2), as well as to respect the collective will of the Synod as expressed in its resolutions (cf. Bylaws 1.7.2 and 1.8.2).

The commission also notes that Article VII states that no resolution of the Synod imposing anything upon the individual congregation is of binding force “if it is not in accordance with the Word of God.” Should a congregation reach this conclusion about any resolution of the Synod, it should also realize that, by becoming a member of the Synod, it has bound itself (to the extent the congregation wishes to carry out the right of brotherly dissent) to express and deal with its dissent according to the provisions of the Bylaws of the Synod. (CCM Op. 09-2573)

**Question 3:** In a decision to suspend a congregation for failure to depose a [pastor who has been expelled from membership in the Synod], whose will has greater authority, a member congregation or Synod through its representative?

**Opinion:** This question commingles two incomparable spheres of right, which must be distinguished in giving an answer:

- The first is the right of a congregation to call and be served by the pastor of its choosing. Here, Synod and its representatives may advise but ultimately lack the “legislative or coercive power” to make a congregation do what Synod thinks best, such as deposing an expelled pastor. Here the congregation is “free” to act according to its will—but let its will, of course, be that of God in heaven (no one has any rights over against God).

- The other sphere is the right of Synod (i.e., the congregations acting together) to set and enforce standards for Synod membership (Const. Art. II, VI, XIII; Bylaw 1.3.4). Here, conversely, the individual congregation has no right or authority to force Synod as a whole to bow to its solitary interpretation. Should such a congregation ignore Synod’s “negotiations and admonitions,” Synod’s collective will, expressed in its Constitution (Art. XIII 3) and carried out by proper authorities, is conclusive.

The above-cited 1969 Res. 5-23, entitled “To Reiterate in Bylaws that Member Congregations Must Be Served by Members of the Synod” (1969 Proceedings, pp. 119–20), dealt with a topic closely related to that of Const. Art. XIII 3. (The bylaws it enacted stand in only slightly revised form as 2016 Bylaws 2.5.2 and 2.5.4.) The preface of that resolution, while it deals with initial certification for ministry and not with ongoing ecclesiastical supervision, relates obviously to the matter of Const. Art. XIII 3, to the implications of the expulsion of a pastor from membership in the Synod:

One of the very purposes of a synodical fellowship is to provide guidance and help in the exercise of a congregation’s right to call a pastor, and one of the very reasons why a synod exists is to set standards for the parish pastor—so that the individual congregation may be assured that the man whom it calls is qualified to serve as its parish pastor (Charter, Art. II b; Constitution, Article III 3). To this end The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod establishes procedures for determining whether men meet the standards. One of the advantages which a congregation receives when it joins the Synod is the protection against pastors who do not meet such standards. (1969 Res. 5-23, Proceedings, pp. 119–20)

Const. Art. VII provides: “In its relation to its members the Synod is not an ecclesiastical government exercising legislative
or coercive powers, and with respect to the individual congregation’s right of self-government it is but an advisory body.” Were the Synod an ecclesiastical government (Kirchenobrigkeit) with legislative or coercive powers, when it determined that a pastor should not be pastor, it could itself remove him from office, or command with force of law that such be done. Synod is not an ecclesiastical government, but advises (albeit in the strongest possible terms) a congregation whose pastor has been removed from membership in the Synod such a man is no longer suitable to be pastor—that the only appropriate course of action, now, is to “depose him from office and to deal with him in accordance with the Word of God.” Such advice is inherent in the “evangelical supervision, counsel and care” and “protection” (Const. Art. III 8, 9) that are fundamental objectives of the Synod. When Synod gives such advice it is doing what the congregations, including the one in question, have formed it to do, and the provision of such advice, however forceful, cannot be called an exercise of “legislative or coercive powers.” It is an aspect of the ecclesiastical supervision Synod exists to provide. It is an advisory Synod giving critically important advice.

The congregation may decide to depose or not to depose. However, the congregations of the Synod have explicitly declared in the Constitution establishing their synodical union (Const. Art. XIII 3) that the congregation that ignores Synod’s advice in such a matter—continuing to be served by a pastor who has been (for cause and by due process—see Const. Art. XIII 1–2, VI, II) expelled from the Synod, and refusing to “deal with him according to the Word of God”—in so doing, forfeits its membership in the Synod. It is self-evident that Const. Art. XIII 3 presumes a situation in which the congregation finds removing its pastor to be “inexpedient,” in the sense that it will not be persuaded to do so— as in such a case “all negotiations and admonitions have failed of their purpose.” If Const. Art. VII 1 were intended to excuse such a congregation from removal from the Synod, Const. Art. XIII 3 would be rendered meaningless. As we have seen above, however, Const. Art. VII 1’s “right of expediency” does not apply to the Constitution of the Synod. Manifestly Synod has the right, on behalf of all its congregations, to remove a member, including a congregation, that fails to meet the constitutional standards of membership (Const. Art. II, VI, XIII). When Synod, by its constitutional and bylaw mechanisms, removes such a wayward member congregation, it is not “imposing something on the congregation” or exercising “legislative or coercive powers” relative to a congregation’s “right of self-government.” It is simply acknowledging that this congregation no longer walks with Synod, but goes its own way.

There is thus no question, as it was put to the commission, “whose will has greater authority,” but a distinction must be drawn: The congregation may, in the end, ignore Synod’s advice and do as it wishes—the congregation’s individual will may there prevail (but let God’s will be done among us on earth). Self-evidently, however, such a stance is incompatible with continued membership in the Synod—and on that point Synod’s collective will prevails. Nothing in Const. Art. VII 1 allows the will of the individual congregation to trump the collective will of all the congregations of the Synod, as expressed in Const. Art. XIII, including Const. Art. XIII 3, regarding standards for membership in the Synod and the expulsion of members that do not meet them. To borrow from the 1944 report cited earlier, “Otherwise [the Synod] and affiliation therewith would serve no real purpose.” Adopted July 10, 2017

**Question Regarding a Congregation Disaffiliating from a District (17-2856)**

A district president of the Synod posed the following situation and questions to the commission: A congregation of the Synod requested its district board of directors to approve its transfer to another district under Bylaw 4.1.1.4. The board of directors has determined not to approve the transfer.

**Question 1:** Can the congregation unilaterally disaffiliate itself from one district, to seek membership in another?

**Opinion:** No. The bylaws are clear that a congregation may request to transfer from one district of Synod to another district of Synod but that the effect of the request is only upon approval of the respective boards of directors of the districts. Bylaw 4.1.1.4 states: “Transfer of congregations between districts is completed upon approval of the respective district boards of directors at the request of the congregation.”

**Question 2:** Should a congregation assert that it has disaffiliated itself from its district, what is the effect of that assertion?

**Opinion:** There is no effect upon the congregation or the district of its membership by any assertion of a congregation without the approval of the respective districts’ boards of directors. According to Constitution Art. XII 1, “The Synod is divided into districts, the geographical boundaries of which are determined by the Synod and are altered by it according to circumstances.” Membership in Synod shall be within the geographical boundaries of the districts the Synod has created except where the districts through their boards of directors agree to such changes. In the case of a non-geographical district, transfer to or from such a district to another is, in an identical way, contingent on the approval of both respective boards of directors.

**Question 3:** Is there any other authority in the Synod (district convention, Synod convention, etc.) that can approve a congregation’s transfer between districts, other than the district boards of directors, or any mechanism of review that could compel a district board of directors to revise its decision in such a matter?

**Opinion:** The Constitution and Bylaws of Synod make no provision for any means of transfer of a congregation from one district to another except through the request of the congregation and the approvals of the boards of directors of both the district wherein the congregation currently is a member and the district to which the congregation requests a transfer.

While normally this is a simple administrative matter subject to the approval of the respective boards of directors, a transfer from one district to another depends upon the good judgment and good will of all involved, including the respective district presidents, the congregation, and the districts’ boards of directors.

The commission notes two possibilities for a congregation that feels it has been inappropriately denied a transfer:
1. While Bylaw 4.1.1.4 gives authority over transfers to district boards of directors, the objectives of the Synod and the reasons for Synod’s formation of districts do provide a basis for such decisions to be made, for the benefit of congregation(s) involved. A congregation that disagreed substantively with its district board of directors’ decision not to release it to another district might seek to resolve the disagreement through Synod’s dispute resolution process (Bylaw section 1.10). However, Bylaw 4.1.1.4 presumes that reasonable discretion is allowed to the boards of directors involved. Pursuit of reconciliation through the Bylaw section 1.10 process is itself a proper goal. In order for such a process to decide the matter, however (e.g., to compel the board of directors to grant transfer), a substantive case would have to be presented, basing the decision on how membership in one district or another best serves the objectives of the Synod in relation to the congregation(s) involved.

2. Should a district board of directors deny the request of a congregation to transfer to another district, the congregation may petition the district convention, by way of an overture, to direct its district’s board of directors to approve the transfer. Should the request be frustrated, the congregation’s last recourse would be, similarly, to the convention of the Synod.

Adopted November 10–11, 2017

Clarification of Bylaw 3.9.2.2.3 (b) (17-2863)

Upon review of district bylaw proposals, the commission felt it necessary to provide clarifying guidance to upcoming district conventions regarding application of the new Bylaw 3.9.2.2.3 (b). Since its amendment by 2016 Res. 11-15A, Bylaw 3.9.2.2.3 has read:

The Commission on Constitutional Matters shall examine the articles of incorporation, bylaws, and policy manuals of every agency of the Synod to ascertain whether they are in harmony with the Constitution, Bylaws, and resolutions of the Synod.

(a) Agencies intending to make amendments to articles of incorporation or bylaws shall make such intentions known and receive approval from the commission in advance.

(b) A district in convention may vote to amend its articles or bylaws provided the resolution is contingent on approval of the Commission on Constitutional Matters. The amended articles or bylaws become effective immediately upon, and only upon, approval of the Commission on Constitutional Matters. Should the Commission on Constitutional Matters not approve the adopted changes, the district Board of Directors may modify the amendments to comply with the Commission on Constitutional Matters requirements upon their two-thirds vote.

(c) The commission shall maintain a file of the articles of incorporation, bylaws, and policy manuals of all agencies of the Synod.

Newly added Bylaw 3.9.2.2.3 (b) taken in isolation could be understood to allow a district that intends to amend its Articles of Incorporation or Bylaws to do so at a convention without seeking prior approval by the Commission on Constitutional Matters, first submitting these changes to the commission after the conclusion of its convention. While unanticipated bylaw changes or circumstances arising in the course of a convention may be handled under Bylaw 3.9.2.2.3 (b), agencies, including districts, intending to amend their bylaws or articles are reminded that the requirement of pre-approval in Bylaw 3.9.2.2.3 (a) still applies.

That Bylaw 3.9.2.2.3 (b) was not intended to replace Bylaw 3.9.2.2.3 (a) for districts is illustrated by 2016 Res. 11-15A. The resolution indicates that the purpose of this addition was to make it possible for districts to make floor amendments to the changes previously approved by the commission, or to vote on a proposal in the rare instance when specific circumstances made it impossible for the commission to consider the proposed change prior to its being presented to the district convention.

In any case, bylaw amendment resolutions including non-pre-approved changes adopted under 3.9.2.2.3 (b) have no force or effect until approved in their final form by the Commission on Constitutional Matters.

District conventions are advised to divide those independent portions of proposals that involve floor amendments, as much as possible, into separate resolutions. Bylaw changes effected by resolutions that contain only pre-approved changes and involve no floor amendments can thus be of immediate and certain effect. Bylaw changes effected by resolutions involving floor amendments must be held in abeyance until approved by the commission. When dividing pre-approved bylaw proposals into separate resolutions, care must be exercised that the separation into parts does not affect the meaning of the parts taken individually (i.e., that the parts separated are truly independent of each other).

Adopted November 10–11, 2017

Appeal of the Doctrinal Review Certification of a Seminary Journal Article (17-2869)

The Commission on Doctrinal Review (CDR) has received, under Bylaw 3.9.3.2.2, an appeal to the doctrinal review certification of an item published in a seminary theological journal. A member of the Synod involved in the doctrinal review process requested an opinion on the following question:

Background: Bylaw 1.9.1 notes that “Doctrinal review is the exercise of the Synod’s responsibility to determine that every doctrinal statement in its or any of its agencies’ or auxiliaries’ materials is in accord with the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions.”

Bylaw 1.9.1.1 (d) notes that “each of the Synod’s schools is accountable to the Synod through its respective president and board of regents for the content of its professional journals and all of its published materials that are not the official publications of the Synod... The editorial boards of such publications shall serve as their own doctrinal reviewers.”

Bylaw 3.9.3 notes that “The Commission on Doctrinal Review assists the President of the Synod in the exercise of his responsibility that all doctrinal content in its or any of its agencies’ materials be in accord with the Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions.”
Question: In light of the foregoing, are publications of Synod’s schools (e.g., seminary journals) subject to appeal to the CDR under the process outlined in Bylaw 3.9.3.2.2?

Opinion: Noting Bylaw 3.9.2.2 [b], the Commission on Constitutional Matters notified the seminaries, colleges, and universities of the Synod and the Commission on Doctrinal Review of the question and received a number of responses.

The history of doctrinal review is long and storied. From its inception, concern for doctrinal integrity has been one of the very reasons for Synod’s existence. While the objective of Synod to conserve and promote the unity of the true faith (Eph. 4:3–6; 1 Cor 1:10) … and provide a united defense against schism, sectarianism (Rom. 16:17), and heresy (Art. III 1) has been consistent, the means of fostering and reviewing this doctrine and practice have changed. The role of the Synod President as the one charged overall with the supervision of doctrine and practice of Synod has not changed (Const. Art. XI B).

In 1965 the Convention of Synod directed a study of the then provisions of the Handbook and the practice of the Synod regarding doctrinal review (then using the term censorship). The 1963 Handbook reflected the long-standing practice (1924 Handbook, p. 94) that the President of the Synod was aided in his duty of censorship (doctrinal review) of official publications by the faculty of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis: “Censorship of doctrinal contents of the official publications shall be the responsibility of the faculty of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis” (1963 Bylaw 11.89). The study committee reported to the following convention that the burden of doctrinal review was too great to be placed only in Concordia Seminary and recommended a new process to include all publications of Synod and its agencies: “The material subject to doctrinal review consists of the official publications of the Synod and its official media of mass communication, regardless of what synodical board, agency, commission, or auxiliary organization originates same” (1967 Workbook, p. 59). They recommended to the convention the establishment of a Board for Doctrinal Review to provide guidelines for the doctrinal reviewers, procedures for doctrinal review, and an appeals procedure in case of dispute. The Synod adopted the recommendations of the special committee in full. The 1971 Convention approved the policy and procedures for doctrinal review drawn up by the CCM (adding Bylaws 11.151–11.163 [as finally incorporated into the Handbook; numbered 11.121–11.133 in the resolution], 1971 Proceedings, pp. 124–125).

1971 Bylaw 11.153 (c) made several exceptions to the direct responsibility of the Board for Doctrinal Review, including one for the terminal schools of Synod: “Each of the Synod’s terminal schools is accountable to the Synod through its respective president and Board of Control for the content of its professional journals and publications which are not the official publications of the Synod. The members of the editorial board of such publications shall serve as its doctrinal reviewers.” However, the provision for appeal (1971 Bylaw 11.163) did not provide an exemption for any group but broadly established a process by which appeal may be made: An appeal may be initiated by an author, the sponsoring group, or an executive staff member of that group. (It is noted that specific procedures for the appeal of doctrinal review status of items already published, which would likely originate outside the sponsoring group, would be added in 1983.)

In 1981 a sweeping review of the Constitution, Bylaws, and structure of Synod made only minor changes to the Bylaw provisions dealing with doctrinal review. In particular, the Convention added clarification that the overall responsibility for doctrinal review remains that of the Synod President (1983 Bylaw 10.01 [c]): “The primary responsibility for doctrinal supervision and review lies with the President of the Synod” (Article XI, B, 1). In 1983, upon recommendation of the Commission on Doctrinal Review, the Synod in Convention added separate procedures for appeals dealing with items already published. “A challenge to the doctrinal review certification of a published item may be initiated by any member of the Synod” (1983 Bylaw 10.15).

In 2004 and 2007 further changes were made to the bylaws. As adopted by the convention in 2007, the overall section was prefaced by Bylaw 1.9.1: “Doctrinal review is the exercise of the Synod’s responsibility to determine that every doctrinal statement made in its or any of its agencies’ or auxiliaries’ materials is in accord with the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions.” Bylaw 1.9.1.1 states: “The following materials are subject to doctrinal review:

(a) All official periodicals and journals of the Synod, as well as any material with doctrinal content issued publicly by boards, commissions, or other subordinate groups of the Synod, except as stipulated in these Bylaws, shall be subject to doctrinal review. [(b) … (c) … ]

(d) Each of the Synod’s schools is accountable to the Synod through its respective president and board of regents for the content of its professional journals and all of its published materials that are not the official publications of the Synod (paragraph [a] of Bylaw 3.8.5.2.3). The editorial boards of such publications shall serve as their own doctrinal reviewers.”

When it states, except as stipulated, the meaning is clear: the direct responsibility for doctrinal review in these stipulations is carried out not through the Commission on Doctrinal Review but through those specified—not that the publications are exempt from doctrinal review. The procedures under Bylaw 1.9.2 apply to whomever the doctrinal reviewers are—which those reviewers appointed under Bylaw 1.9.2 (a) or those who function as doctrinal reviewers according to other stipulations: in the case of seminary publications, their editorial boards.

In the event of a problem that cannot be resolved between an author and the [doctrinal] reviewer, whether one appointed by the Synod President or those designated in the stipulations (Bylaw 1.9.1.1 [c–f]), the Bylaw directs the problem to the Commission on Doctrinal Review “which shall follow the appeals procedure and criteria stated in Bylaw 3.9.3.2.1” (Bylaw 1.9.2 [f]).

“The overall responsibility for doctrinal supervision and review lies with the President of Synod” (1.9.2 [a]) and he exercises this responsibility for doctrinal review of all materials and publications of Synod and its agencies or auxiliaries either through those reviewers appointed under Bylaw 1.9.2 [a] or through those stipulated separately in 1.9.1 [c–f]. If question or challenge is made to material reviewed and published, the intent
Questions regarding the Definition of Multi-congregation Parish (17-2870)

A district president of the Synod submitted a series of questions regarding whether or not the call of a pastor by both an existing dual parish and by a third congregation rendered the three congregations a parish (Const. Art. V A). His questions were prefaced with the following rather extensive background:

Background: A long-standing dual-parish had gone vacant. A series of circumstances resulted in the lack of resources for the dual-parish to support a pastor. Since there were no other congregations within reasonable distance with which to form a triple-parish, a larger congregation in the area chose to assist by offering to call the pastor of the dual-parish as an associate, at least until the congregations could manage on their own. This arrangement was established solely out of the generosity of the larger parish for the sake of supporting the proclamation of the Gospel in two small rural communities. A pastor was installed as the pastor of the dual-parish and an associate of the larger congregation. The pastor of the larger congregation has no call to, and no responsibilities toward, the dual-parish.

The Secretary of the Synod, following a previous CCM opinion, ruled that this arrangement constituted a parish under Const. Art. V and that, therefore, these three congregations were [together] entitled to one pastoral and one lay vote at the district convention. The questions herein set forth are intended to challenge that ruling on the basis of two facts:

1. The congregations in question do not fit the normal pattern of the construction of a parish by design or intent.
2. The current Constitution and Bylaws of the Synod do not contain a definition of the term parish thereby making a textual interpretation impossible. This commission might then seek to follow historical patterns. These, however, are not entirely consistent, since there is historical precedent in Walther’s Gesammtgemeinde for congregations, in association, to be considered independent congregations.

CCM Op. 09-2545, quoted below (in part, underlining added), seems to have formed the basis for the decision of the Secretary of the Synod in this matter. In this decision, the commission seems to have relied on text that had not existed in the Handbook for 46 years. If the commission is permitted to use a “ghost” text that is not available to the members of the Synod, those members are at a distinct disadvantage by not being allowed reasonable access to the law. The congregations in question, lacking a definition of the term parish, can reasonably argue that they could find no ground in the bylaws for their voting rights to have been limited by this arrangement.

Voting Rights of Congregations (09-2545)

In a January 18, 2009 emailed letter, a parish pastor requested an opinion with respect to the representation of a four-congregation partnership (a multiple-congregation parish) at a district convention.

Question: Four congregations have formed a partnership. They each have called the two pastors who serve this partnership. Can each of the four congregations send a lay delegate to our district convention which is in June? Also, what is the status of the two pastors in regard to being the pastoral delegate or delegates to the district convention?

Opinion: The four-congregation partnership is entitled to two votes, that of a pastor who serves the four-congregation partnership and a lay delegate, both chosen by the four-congregation partnership.

Article V of the Synod’s Constitution states: “At the meetings of the districts of the Synod, every congregation or parish is entitled to two votes, one of which is to be cast by the pastor and the other by the lay delegate.”

In its Opinion 03-2327 (January 20–21, 2003), the Commission on Constitutional Matters opined with respect to Article V the opinion, “Voting Rights of Congregations,” included the definition of the term “parish” and addressed a multiple-congregation arrangement:

In the May 3–4, 1985 ruling (Ag. 1748), the commission ratified an opinion that had been offered by the Secretary of the Synod regarding the voting rights of congregations at district conventions when several congregations form a dual or multiple parish, namely, “that a multiple parish has only two votes, that of the pastor who serves the parish and a lay delegate chosen by the parish.”

This opinion took into consideration earlier versions of the Handbook that had provided a definition of the term parish, e.g., “If a pastor serves two or more congregations, these shall be regarded as one parish and shall be entitled to only one lay vote” (1963 Handbook, Bylaw 3.09). The term [parish] therefore refers to a dual or multiple-congregation arrangement served by the same pastor and is not synonymous with congregation. As such, two or more congregations who are served by one pastor share the right of representation by one lay delegate and one pastoral delegate to a district convention.

The four-congregation partnership constitutes one parish as defined above.
I. OPINIONS OF COMMISSION ON CONSTITUTIONAL MATTERS

The four questions, then, are as follow:

**Question 1:** Is the Commission on Constitutional Matters bound to interpret the text of the Constitution and Bylaws of the Synod on the basis of the text of the Constitution and Bylaws as currently delivered to the members of the Synod?

**Opinion:** The Commission on Constitutional Matters is charged with the interpretation of the Constitution, Bylaws, and resolutions of the Synod (Bylaw 3.9.2). In interpreting the Constitution and Bylaws the commission is required to understand the terms used in their original intended meaning and context and not on the basis of how the meaning of a term might have changed over time. In addition, when Bylaws or amendments to the Constitution are adopted by the Synod, while every attempt is made to change the Constitution or Bylaws clear and precise, there are times when it is later discovered that the present text of bylaws as adopted does not provide all the necessary context for a particular bylaw’s interpretation and/or application. In those instances, the commission is required to take into consideration the intention of the entire resolution by which the text in question was adopted, and the historical context and standing interpretation of the terms used.

**Question 2:** Absent a definition of the term *parish* in the Constitution and Bylaws of the Synod as currently delivered to the members of the Synod, is the commission permitted to import or construct a definition of the term?

**Opinion:** While Bylaw 1.2.1 lists definitions of many of the terms that are used in the Constitution and Bylaws of the Synod, that bylaw makes no attempt to define every term used in these documents. Many of these terms have had a common use and understanding within the Synod throughout its history. In interpreting the Constitution and Bylaws the commission is required to understand and exposit these terms based on their historic use in the Constitution and Bylaws of the Synod.

Such is the case with the term *parish* in Const. Art. V A, and it is in relation to its particular use in this article that a definition is sought. This article deals with the voting rights at the conventions of the Synod: In conventions of the district it states that every congregation or parish is entitled to two votes, one by the pastor and one by the lay delegate. This arrangement preceded the creation of district conventions, originating with the pre-delegate (directly representative) conventions of the Synod, from 1847 to 1872.

The matter of voting rights at conventions of the Synod was first established by the 1847 Constitution at the founding of the Synod, and has remained consistent (as presently applied to district conventions) throughout Synod’s history:

**Article 3—External Organization of Synod**

1. The “synodical personnel” is made up of the ministers (*Der Diener*) of the Church and the delegates of the congregations (*Pfarrgemeinden*), each of which has the right to elect one delegate. If pastors or delegates are absent for a good reason they may in a particular case deliver their vote in writing.

Article 3 describes the organization and conduct of the annual conventions of the Synod, with Section 1 dealing with those who may vote. Those who may vote are the ministers and delegates of the *Pfarrgemeinden*. The 1847 Constitution includes an important explanation of what is meant by this term, translated here as *congregation*. In the original German text, the term *Pfarrgemeinden* is footnoted as follows. Note that we have translated *Pfarrgemeinde* as *congregation* in the article and *parish* in the footnote, but the word is the same—reflecting that *congregation-or-parish* (Const. Art. V A) corresponding to one pastor.

A parish [*Pfarrgemeinde*] is either one single congregation or the sum of the individual congregations which the pastor serves [*bedient*], as, in Germany, the territory in which he serves is called *Kirchspiel* or *Kirchensprengel*. The pastor may serve 3 or 4 or more congregations, locally separated; they are in relation to him essentially only one congregation and must, therefore, jointly send to the convention one delegate.

Thus, how the Synod from its inception viewed the right to vote is clear. The vote belongs to the *Pfarrgemeinde*, the *congregation-or-parish* and is exercised by the pastor of the congregation-or-parish and a lay delegate designated by the congregation-or-parish. From the beginning of the Synod, the term *Pfarrgemeinde* or *congregation-or-parish* (to use the present Const. Art. V language) was understood to mean a single congregation or two or more individual congregations being cared for by the same pastor.

When the Synod divided into districts in 1854, the same wording applied to both the district conventions and the conventions of the Synod. In 1872, when the Synod authorized the holding of delegate conventions, it was not felt necessary to change the wording of the Constitution. The first three Synod Handbücher (1873, 1879, 1888) retained the 1847 language in this section, but omitted the footnote defining *Pfarrgemeinde*. The 1873 Handbuch (p. 105) indicates a decision of the Northern District reflecting the 1847 definition: “While it is hoped for and desired that the various congregations of one pastor might send each its own [lay] delegate … only one at a time can represent [as voting lay delegate] the interests of the parish [Parochialbezirks].” The 1899 Handbuch included a footnote indicating: “A parish [Parochie] consisting of several congregations but having only one pastor [aber nur einen Pfarrer hat, emphasis original] can send only one voting [lay] delegate. Others sent are … only advisory members.”

This language and meaning of Article 3, Section 1, remained unchanged until the Constitution of the Synod was revised and translated in 1924. The wording selected in 1924, as Const. Art. V A, is still the current wording. The revised language did not alter in any way the meaning regarding who was designated as authorized to vote in conventions. The new wording did, however, attempt to make clarifications: The procedure followed after the Synod began to hold delegate conventions was now placed into the Constitution. In describing who was to vote at conventions of the districts, the phrase *congregation-or-parish* was used to describe what had been the practice of the Synod from the beginning, namely that the sum of the congregations served by a given pastor are to be considered a unit when it comes to the matter of voting representation at conventions. Thus, from the beginning of the history of the Synod a *congregation-or-parish*, although the term itself was not used until 1924—when the Constitution was, culminating a thorough reorganization in German, translated officially into English—is the total of the congregations served by one pastor.
This definition has more recently been applied to groups of congregations served by the same two or more pastors (CCM Op. 02-2321, 09-2545, 11-2617), and to congregations which may not all have called the same pastor(s), but are all served by him/them (1972 Ag. 305; 1978 Ag. 1275A, B; Op. 11-2618, 14-2718). These applications, however, do not appear to have been contemplated before the modern era.

Question 3: Does the manner in which an amendment occurred (e.g., unintended elision or adoption by the Synod in convention) permit the commission to amend the text of the Constitution or Bylaws in a manner that causes its text to differ substantially from the text that has been delivered to the members of the Synod?

Opinion: The commission was unsure of the precise intent of the question. The Commission on Handbook is charged with the maintenance and management of the Handbook, consisting of the Constitution, Bylaws, and Articles of Incorporation of the Synod (Bylaw 3.9.4). In carrying out this work it revises the Handbook following every convention. At times, it may, in consultation with the Commission on Constitutional Matters, make a non-substantive change in the bylaws for the sake of clarity of a particular bylaw or to correct errors made in the publication process.

It is not the business of the Commission on Constitutional Matters to amend the text of the Bylaws, although it may, in a case where the Constitution or other Bylaws render certain language unconstitutional or inapplicable, have to indicate that such language is inoperative until it can be corrected by a convention. In this specific instance, the question seems to be whether the commission was correct, in its 2009 and prior opinions on this matter, to apply the previous definition of parish, even though the explicit statement of this definition had been removed from the bylaws in 1981.

Where a definition has been removed from the bylaws by a convention, the circumstances of its removal are important in determining the significance, if any, of the removal to the meaning of the defined term(s). In 1981, the definition appears to have been removed as part of a sweeping revision of bylaws, only part of which was adopted. In reviewing the related material, the commission was unable to discern any sense that the convention intended to rescind the definition, the explicit statement of which it was removing from the bylaws, or to detect any sense of a new intended definition with which it might be replaced. As noted in the various opinions since, the Synod continued to operate, between 1981 and present, on the previously explicit definition of parish as the commonly understood definition.

Furthermore, here, the question is one of constitutional interpretation: What does congregation-or-parish mean in Const. Art. V? How the convention changed the bylaws in 1981—unless it acted thereby to interpret the Constitution, explicitly and with substantive rationale, which it did not—has no bearing on what the constitutional term has meant since 1924, or on what its predecessor term Pfarrgemeinde has meant since 1847. In 2009, and again in 2014, the commission applied the definition that had consistently been applied to that point (see Op. 14-2718, June 13–14, 2014; Op. 11-2618, Nov. 11–13, 2011; Op. 09-2545, Feb. 7–8, 2009; Op. 03-2327 and 02-2321, Jan. 20–21, 2003; Ag. 1748, May 3–4, 1985; Ag. 1734, Feb. 1, 1985); Ag. 1275A, B, June 9, 1978; Ag. 305, May 4–5, 1972; Ag. 181, Oct. 1–2, 1970). It cited this definition from its previously explicit statement in the bylaws. In doing so it did not amend the bylaws or “resurrect” a dead bylaw, and certainly did not go beyond its authority (Bylaw 3.9.2.2[c]). It simply applied the historically demonstrable, settled interpretation of Const. Art. V.

Question 4: Does the call of a pastor of a dual-parish as an associate pastor of a local larger congregation, where the pastor of the larger congregation has no call to and no responsibilities toward the dual-parish, constitute a parish under Article V of the Constitution?

Opinion: Presently, based on the standing treatment of parish, if any pastor of a congregation serves any other congregation, the totality of the congregations served is considered a parish.

Formerly—when Synod was capable of distinguishing the one Pfarrer, the (head) pastor of a given congregation, from its Hilfsprediger, assistant pastor(s), if any—this was not the case.

In the early period, a congregation had only one pastor (Pfarrer), though it may have had Hilfsprediger, assistant(s), in addition. Those congregation(s) under one Pfarrer were a Pfarrgemeinde or congregation-or-parish. Perhaps independent congregations could have shared Hilfsprediger, though this possibility is more theoretical than historically demonstrable. The relation of congregations and pastors is now far more complicated. Today the category of associate pastors has evolved and the once-constitutional distinction of assistant pastors (Hilfsprediger) as advisory only has, by the 2016 convention, been removed. More pastors are being shared among multiple congregations, whether by call or by uncalled but still regular service.

In this changing situation, over many decades, interpretation has fallen along the lines that congregations with any serving pastor in common constitute a parish.

The original intent of Pfarrgemeinde, which grouped congregations based on their sharing of a head pastor, relied on a distinction not possible to draw using present bylaws: namely, distinguishing the (head) pastor or Pfarrer from any assistant pastors or Hilfsprediger of a given congregation. Without such a distinction, the only viable, practical application of the constitutional principle is as previous commissions have repeatedly decided: “[T]he principle stands without exception: Two or more congregations being served by the same pastor constitute a parish with the right of representation by one lay delegate and one pastoral delegate” (Op. 11-2618, Nov. 11–13, 2011). The commission notes that if such distinctions could again be drawn, it would be fully consistent with the meaning of the original constitutional language to define a congregation-or-parish as (a) congregation(s) with a head pastor of its/their own, who is not the (head) pastor of any other congregation(s). Multiple congregation-or-parish representation units could share assisting pastors without thereby becoming together one congregation-or-parish. Without clarifying bylaw changes, however, such a solution is impossible to implement today. Given such distinctions, however, it would be entirely consistent with the foundational, constitutional Pfarrgemeinde or congregation-or-parish concept practiced from Synod’s inception.

An example from the early history of the Synod is the practice of forming a Gesamtgemeinde as Lutheranism expanded in certain cities. Perhaps the most notable of these was the Gesamtgemeinde in St. Louis. In 1847, due to the growth of Trinity Lutheran Church in St. Louis, where C. F. W. Walther was the
pastor, the congregation started a school and church on a second location, which took the name of Immanuel. Initially Immanuel was not an independent congregation, and at the 1854 convention of the Synod the pastor of Immanuel, J. F. Buenger, was listed as an advisory delegate. In 1856 a third school and then church were added, which caused a re-evaluation of the arrangement. The solution was the division of the Gesammtgemeinde into three “districts.” In this arrangement, while the Gesammtgemeinde would nominate pastors for a vacant congregation, each “district” or congregation would actually elect him, with the result that each was served by its own pastor. Later, a fourth “district” was also added. The common bond holding the congregations together was their affection for C. F. W. Walther and their desire to maintain a connection with him. (About a year after Walther’s death in 1887, the congregations involved decided to dissolve the Gesammtgemeinde.)

To deal with this unique circumstance, the Synod resolved at the 1866 convention that each congregation with a “separate pastor” was to be recognized as a congregation entitled to be represented at conventions by an ordained and a lay delegate:

A request of the President, as pastor of the Lutheran congregation in St. Louis, was read, wherein the Synod was asked either:

[1.] To clarify that in the Synod Constitution all such congregations as have their own [einen eigenen] Seelsorger are to be understood as Pfarrgemeinden, even when the same are combined in other respects with other congregations into a Gesammtgemeinde; or

[2.] To alter the Constitution to require that every such congregation to be represented by its Seelsorger and a delegate from its hearers.

The Synod by resolution gave the sought-after clarification, that every congregation with an “independent” [einem selbständigen] Seelsorger is to be understood as a Pfarrgemeinde, and thus to be entitled to be represented in the Synod by its Seelsorger and a delegate. (1866 Proceedings, p. 75)

There thus exists the possibility under the constitutional concept of Pfarrgemeinde, a.k.a. congregation or parish that “every congregation with its own independent pastor” would constitute a congregation-or-parish (Pfarrgemeinde), to be represented by one pastor and one lay delegate. The qualifiers its own and independent refer to a pastor or pastor(s) in the following situation to a congregation or parish: He is (they are) recognized as “the pastor(s)” (i.e., not merely assisting, or as equals among or subordinate to others) who is (are) not recognized as “the pastor(s)” by any other congregation(s) (i.e., if they are also serving any other congregation, it is merely as assisting under the supervision of someone else who is “the pastor”). In this sense, each such congregation or set of congregations having its/their own pastor(s) would constitute a congregation-or-parish. As noted previously, such a definition would rely on a distinction between “the pastor” and “assisting pastors” that is not presently possible under existing bylaws.

In the case prompting this question, suppose that the distinctions underlying the 1866 Gesammtgemeinde practice were to be recovered. Congregation 1 could call Pastor A as “head” pastor and Pastor B as assisting pastor. Congregations 2 and 3 could call Pastor B as “head” pastor. In this situation, Congregation 1 would have its own pastor in the sense delineated above if Pastor B serves that congregation only as an assistant, under Pastor A’s supervision. Pastor B, likewise, would be the pastor of Congregations 2 and 3. Supposing all this to be the case, Congregation 1 would be a parish, which may be represented by Pastor A only, and Congregations 2 and 3 together would form a parish, which may be represented by Pastor B only. If Pastor B could serve as Congregation 1’s delegate, or is regarded in any fashion as “the pastor” of Congregation 1 (even, to use one of the invented terms, as associate with Pastor A, not strictly under Pastor A’s supervision) then Congregations 1, 2, and 3 would, in fact, remain one parish, even under the Gesammtgemeinde practice.

Were these distinctions to be recovered today in the bylaws of the Synod, two congregations having some sort of a joint arrangement or relationship, but each of them having its own separate pastor, would each be allowed to be represented by two delegates at a district convention, one ordained and one lay. An example might be that Congregation A is quite small and the man who has been called as the pastor of Congregation A, with the agreement of his congregation, assists the pastor of Congregation B, which is quite large, by each month making half of the visitations to the homebound of Congregation B. Since each pastor has his own parish for which he is responsible, the one merely assisting at the other, each congregation would be entitled to its two votes at the district convention, and each pastor would only be eligible to cast the vote for the congregation of which he is the pastor.

Conclusion: In the opinion of the commission, it would be appropriate for the convention to again take up the definition of parish and to develop appropriate bylaws that would clarify its application to present situations, while remaining within the boundaries of original constitutional intent.

To facilitate the convention’s consideration of this question, the commission offers the following overture, by which the convention may adopt the definition that “(a) congregation(s) with a (head) pastor of its/their own, who is not the (head) pastor of any other congregation(s) constitutes a congregation-or-parish, even though it might share other (assisting) pastors with other congregations.” Unless the possibility of making such distinctions is restored to the bylaws, the present practice will persist.

Doctrinally Pure Agenda, Hymnbooks, and Catechisms in Church and School (18-2873)

An ordained member of the Synod, referencing the fourth membership condition of Synod’s Constitution (Const. Art. VI 4), “Exclusive use of doctrinally pure agenda, hymnbooks, and catechisms in church and school,” posed the following questions of the commission:

Question 1: Are other hymnbooks and agenda currently in print besides Lutheran Service Book (2006), Lutheran Worship (1982), or The Lutheran Hymnal (1941) that are doctrinally pure, and, if so, how would they be identified as such? For instance: is the ELCA’s current hymnal, Evangelical Lutheran Worship, doctrinally pure and appropriate for
Opinion: The commission is responsible for interpreting the Constitution, Bylaws, and resolutions of the Synod. The answer to this question, with regard to specific materials, would be a finding of fact that lies outside the authority of the commission. The Constitution and Bylaws of the Synod do not identify a particular “method” by which “doctrinally impure worship materials” would be identified. This is a matter for ecclesiastical supervision (Const. Art. III 8; XI B 1–3; XII 7–8), which is carried out with reference to the confessional position of the Synod (Const. Art. II), as applied in doctrinal resolutions and statements of the Synod (Bylaws I.6–9), and with the assistance of the Commission on Theology and Church Relations (Bylaw section 3.9.5). Materials inconsistent with the confessional position of the Synod (Const. Art. II) are not to be used in Synod congregations (Const. Art. VI 4). The use of such materials, despite futile admonition, is incompatible with membership in the Synod (Const. Art. XIII 1) and would appropriately be addressed by the district president’s evangelical advice, admonition, and reproof (Bylaw 4.4.4 [b, e], 4.4.5–6), and, if necessary, application of the ecclesiastical supervision process delineated in the Bylaws (Bylaw section 2.14).

Question 2: Surely, scrutinizing all the subtle nuances and theological particulars of a Divine Service and hundreds of hymns to determine doctrinal purity is too large a task for any individual or small group (no matter how bright and orthodox) which is why we have a Synod in the first place—to provide, among other things, reliably sound hymnbooks and catechisms! Given these realities, doesn’t Const. Art. VI 4 require exclusive use of an actual, published, hymnbook/agenda, whose content is fixed and can be carefully scrutinized by all LCMS churches and schools, such that the usage of ad hoc “contemporary/creative” worship materials—that change week to week and season to season—would be in violation of Const. Art. VI 4?

Opinion: While several of Synod’s objectives (Const. Art. III 1, 2, 5, 6 and 7) are furthered by Synod’s provision of carefully developed, thoroughly reviewed and approved worship materials, such as our hymnals, and while encouraging congregations to “strive for uniformity in church practice” is itself an objective of the Synod (Const. Art. III 7), the same objective acknowledges that the congregations may also develop “an appreciation for a variety of responsible practices and customs which are in harmony with our common profession of faith.” This balanced approach is reflected in 2016 Res. 4-04A (Procedings, 147–8), “To Appeal to the LCMS Congregations, Workers, and Institutions within Christian Freedom and for Love’s Sake to Retain a Common Order of Service for the Lord’s Supper” (see also 2010 Res. 2-05, “To Command Theses on Worship,” and, regarding hymnody, 2013 Res. 3-12A, “To Affirm Our Worship Treasures Old and New and Command the Document, Text, Music, Context”). “Doctrinally pure materials” are not limited to those materials produced and/or prior approved in some fashion by the Synod or its agencies. Members of the Synod are expected to use diligent care and discernment in selecting for use only those materials consonant with the confessional position of the Synod. Members (individual and congregational) are encouraged to take to heart such advice as Synod and its proper agencies provide. When members have questions, they should seek advice from their ecclesiastical supervisors.

Question 3: In practice, doesn’t Const. Art. VI 4 require exclusive use of one of the three hymnals officially approved by Synod in convention—and if not, why not?

Opinion: See the answers to questions 1 and 2, above. Const. Art. VI 4 requires “exclusive use of doctrinally pure agenda, hymnbooks, and catechisms in church and school.” The centrality of these materials in maintaining the faith—in the lives of our people and the life of our congregations and Synod—is enshrined in this constitutional requirement. While the article does not require “exclusive use of officially approved agenda, hymnbooks, and catechisms in church and school,” members of the Synod are expected to use diligent care and discernment in selecting for use only those materials consonant with the confessional position of the Synod. Members (individual and congregational) are encouraged to take to heart such advice as Synod and its proper agencies provide. When members have questions, they should seek advice from their ecclesiastical supervisors.

Adopted February 2–3, 2018

Questions regarding Const. Art. VI 2 (18-2875)

A member pastor of the Synod, by a January 19, 2018, email, posed the following questions to the commission, some regarding Const. Art. VI 2, and others, regarding Bylaw 1.8.3.

Regarding Const. Art. VI 2:

Question 1: As used here, is unionism different than syncretism?

Opinion: Article I of the original 1847 Constitution of the Synod addressed the conditions under which an individual or a congregation could become a part of the Synod and have fellowship with the Synod. (Since 1924, this has been treated under Article VI.) The 1847 Constitution, in Article II 3, used the phrase aller Kirchen- und Glaubensmengerei in describing what members of the Synod were required to renounce; the same phrase was used in Article VI 2 when the Constitution was restructured in 1924. The term Kirchenmengerei means, most naturally, the mixing or mingling of churches with a different confessional basis or outward church practices of the same. The term Glaubensmengerei means, most naturally, the mixing or mingling of beliefs or confessions. In 1924, when the first official English translation of the Constitution of the Synod was completed from the 1924 German text, the phrase unionism and syncretism of every description was used to translate aller Kirchen- und Glaubensmengerei. While in today’s usage the meaning of the terms unionism and syncretism may vary, depending on context, in interpreting the constitution, they must be understood in their originally intended meaning and context.

The constitution then proceeded to give three examples of activities that would be identified as the mingling or mixing of churches and/or beliefs, without distinguishing some as Kirchenmengerei or unionism and others as Glaubensmengerei or
unionism and syncretism. (These examples were not, of course, intended to be exhaustive, as they are prefaced with the words “such as.”)

For the purposes of understanding the Constitution—while there may be shades of meaning, with unionism tending more toward commingling practices or services and syncretism toward commingling doctrines or teaching—there is considerable overlap between the two. An historically defensible, precise dissection of these terms is unlikely to be possible. For the purposes of understanding the Constitution, though, it is not necessary sharply to divide the terms. The phrase “aller Kirchen- und Glaubensmengerei” or “unionism and syncretism of every description” is best understood as an expansive single thought—perhaps a pleonasm, the use of two almost identical terms to avoid any possible misunderstanding or minimization. While other terms are also used in the literature of the Synod to express the same concept, the Constitution clearly states that it is the expectation of members of the Synod that, because they “accept without reservation the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions” (Const. Art. II), they would renounce activities of every description that would commingle the confession, teaching, or practice of that true and salutary confession with any contrary (and therefore false and harmful) confession, teaching, or practice.

Whether or not any particular activity or “fact situation” would be determined to constitute unionism or syncretism (Kirchen- und Glaubensmengerei) and, therefore, to constitute a violation of the conditions of membership in the Synod, falls outside of the authority of the Commission on Constitutional Matters. Such a decision is properly the responsibility of the ecclesiastical supervisor of that member.

**Question 2:** What is the definition of unionism as used here?

**Opinion:** See the response to question 1.

**Question 3:** What is the definition of syncretism as used here?

**Opinion:** See the response to question 1.

**Question 4:** What are heterodox tract and missionary activities, and what is meant by participating in such activities?

**Opinion:** As used in the Constitution of the Synod, heterodox means “confessing a different doctrine or belief from that expressed in Article II of the Constitution of the Synod.” In any specific instance, the Constitution designates the primary responsibility for determining if a teaching or action is heterodox to the ecclesiastical supervisor of that member of the Synod. To participate means, simply, “to take part in.” If a member is uncertain in any given situation, the ecclesiastical supervisor of that member should be consulted.

It must be noted that this passage is stated in the Constitution as one of three examples of unionistic and syncretistic activity. To make an application from above, it is the expectation of members of the Synod that, because they “accept without reservation the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions” (Const. Art. II), they would renounce (and therefore not take any part in) activities of every description that would commingle the confession, teaching, or practice of that true and salutary confession with any contrary (and therefore false and harmful) confession, teaching, or practice.

With regard to the meaning of taking part in or participating in, these words are used to state examples of prohibited activity. The positive requirement of the Constitution is not only that members avoid the prohibited example activities, but that they renounce unionism and syncretism of every description. Contrary to that required renunciation are any activities inviting the reasonable inference that the exclusive teaching and practice of Synod’s confession (Const. Art. II) may, as a matter of indifference or insignificance, be laid aside, replaced by, or commingled with other teachings or practices. Such activities violate Const. Art. VI 2 and give the sort of offense contemplated in Const. Art. XIII 1’s “offensive conduct.”

Regarding Bylaw 1.8.3:

**Question 5:** What is meant by “Any such public teaching shall place in jeopardy membership in the Synod?” Does this include public practice?

**Opinion:** The question as asked does not quote the entire bylaw. Bylaw section 1.8 deals with the right of a member of the Synod to dissent from the doctrinal position of the Synod as this is expressed in the Synod's doctrinal resolutions and statements. The bylaw section details the process by which this dissent may be expressed and to whom it may be expressed. Bylaw 1.8.3 specifically states that the right to dissent from the doctrinal position of the Synod does not include the right to publicly teach or practice contrary to the established doctrinal position of the Synod. (Bylaw 1.8.2 distinguishes from “public teaching” or “a public forum” a private and confidential discussion among a fellowship of competent peers, and this distinction is elaborated by CCM Op. 13-2665.) When a member publicly teaches or practices contrary to the established doctrinal position of the Synod, the exercise of ecclesiastical supervision is called for. Should admonition of the member prove fruitless, the member is exposed to expulsion from the Synod as specified in Article XIII.

**Question 6:** What Articles and/or Bylaws of the Synod would address an infraction of Bylaw 1.8.3?

**Opinion:** Constitution Article XIII, Expulsion from the Synod, and Bylaw sections 2.13–2.16 and 4.4 would generally provide the ecclesiastical supervisory mechanisms to address an infraction of Bylaw 1.8.3.

Adopted April 6–7, 2018

**College/University Board of Regents Questions (18-2889)**

A college/university board of regents of Synod has asked numerous questions concerning the closing of a Concordia System college or university. The CCM has consolidated these questions in order to provide a road map of how Synod’s bylaws designate that a Concordia University may be closed. This road map includes the roles of the board of directors of the Concordia University System, the individual Concordia University’s board of regents, Synod’s Board of Directors, the Council of Presidents, and Synod itself. The last area of inquiry concerns the paper trail that each agency must provide for the closing process to be valid.

The following are relevant Constitutional Articles and Bylaws, and a definition:

**Article IV Powers**

The Synod in convention is empowered to and has formed corporate entities which shall have legal powers:
I. OPINIONS OF COMMISSION ON CONSTITUTIONAL MATTERS

1. To purchase, hold, administer, and sell property of every description in the interest of the Synod;

2. To accept, hold, administer, and, if deemed advisable, dispose of legacies, donations, commercial papers, and legal documents of every description in the interest of its work.

Article XI Rights and Duties of Officers

E. Composition and Duties of the Board of Directors

2. The Board of Directors is the legal representative and custodian of all the property of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, directly or by its delegation of such authority to an agency of the Synod. It shall exercise supervision over all property and business affairs of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod except in those areas where it has delegated such authority to an agency of the Synod or where the voting members of the Synod through the adoption of bylaws or by other convention action have assigned specific areas of responsibility to separate corporate or trust entities, and as to those the Board of Directors shall have general oversight responsibility as set forth in the Bylaws. For the purposes of this article, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod includes both the Synod formed by this Constitution and the Missouri corporation formed by the Synod.

1.2.1 The following definitions are for use in understanding the terms as used in the Bylaws of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod:

(a) Agency: An instrumentality other than a congregation or corporate Synod, whether or not separately incorporated, which the Synod in convention or its Board of Directors has caused or authorized to be formed to further the Synod’s Objectives (Constitution Art. III).

(1) Agencies include each board, commission, council, seminary, university, college, district, Concordia Plan Services, and each synodwide corporate entity.

(2) The term “agency of the Synod” does not describe or imply the existence of principal and agency arrangements as defined under civil law.

(q) Property of the Synod: All assets, real or personal, tangible or intangible, whether situated in the United States or elsewhere, titled or held in the name of corporate Synod, its nominee, or an agency of the Synod. “Property of the Synod” does not include any assets held by member congregations, the Lutheran Church Extension Fund—Missouri Synod, or by an agency of the Synod in a fiduciary capacity (including, for purposes of example, the funds managed for the Concordia Plans by Concordia Plan Services and certain funds held by The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod Foundation).

1.5.3.5 All agencies of the Synod shall develop policies and procedures for making available official minutes of their meetings. All mission boards and commissions shall develop policies and procedures to make available upon request and at a reasonable price a verbatim copy of the official minutes of their meetings except for executive sessions. Any member of the Synod may request a copy of any official minutes of mission boards or commissions by submitting a written or electronic (via email) request to the Secretary of the Synod, who shall provide such minutes according to the policy of the Board of Directors.

3.3.4 The Board of Directors of the Synod is the legal representative of the Synod and the custodian of all the property of the Synod. It shall be accountable to the Synod in convention for the discharge of its duties.

3.3.4.7 The Board of Directors shall serve as the custodian of all the property of the Synod as defined in Bylaw 1.2.1 (q). Except as otherwise provided in these Bylaws, it shall have the authority and responsibility with respect to the property of the Synod as is generally vested in and imposed upon a board of directors of a corporation.

(b) It may, however, delegate to any agency of the Synod powers and duties with respect to property of the Synod for which such agency of the Synod has direct supervisory responsibility.

(c) Such delegation shall be in writing and shall be subject to change at any time by the Synod’s Board of Directors provided that reasonable deliberations, as determined by the Board of Directors, take place with such agency prior to the change.

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3.10.6.4 The board of regents of each institution shall become familiar with and develop an understanding of pertinent policies, standards, and guidelines of the Synod and the Board of Directors of Concordia University System.

... (h) have authority, after receiving the consent of the Board of Directors of the Synod by its two-thirds vote and also the consent of either the Council of Presidents by its two-thirds vote or the appropriate board of regents by its two-thirds vote, to consolidate, relocate, separate, or divest a college or university.

Divest. Equivalent to devest (q.v.) Devest. To deprive or dispossess of a title or right (e.g. an estate). Black’s Law Dictionary, Fifth Edition (1979)

Question 1: How are the assets of a University liquidated?

Opinion: Synod’s Constitution places the authority of all of Synod’s property with the Synod’s Board of Directors (BOD) except “in those areas where it [the BOD] has delegated such authority to an agency of the Synod or where the voting members of the Synod through the adoption of bylaws or by other convention action have assigned specific areas of responsibility to separate corporate or trust entities, and as to those the Board of Directors shall have general oversight responsibility as set forth in the Bylaws” (Const. Art. XI E 2).

This BOD authority concerning Synod’s property is repeated in Bylaws 3.3.4 and 3.3.4.7. The property of Synod is defined in Bylaw: 1.2.1 (q) and includes all property of an agency of Synod. A Concordia University is an agency of Synod, making all the property of the Concordia University property of the Synod. Board of Directors Policies 5.4.1.2f have addressed, in general, the delegation of property authority to college and university boards of regents, which delegation remains subject to the Bylaw requirement (3.10.6.4[i][6]) that a board of regents has “no power by itself to close the institution or to sell all or any part of the property which constitutes the main campus.”

A board of regents may validly liquidate the property of a college or university under either of two circumstances. It may do so:

(1) as part of a divestiture directed by Concordia University System under Bylaw 3.6.6.5 (h); or it may do so

(2) having requested and obtained appropriate approvals (Bylaw 3.10.6.4[i][6]), as when forced to exercise its fiduciary duties in a condition of financial emergency.

As the by itself of Bylaw 3.10.6.4[i][6] implies, the execution of a closure or “liquidation” of a college or university (whether initiated by Concordia University System under Bylaw 3.6.6.5 [h] or by the board of regents itself, on account of operating conditions) does rest with the board of regents, as the governing body corporate of the institution (Bylaw 3.10.6.4[i][5]), but requires the consent of those with oversight authority, namely, the boards of directors of the Synod and of Concordia University System.

Bylaws do not stipulate limits as to how much of the institution’s property may be divested in such a circumstance. There being no limit placed by the Bylaws the CCM can only conclude that the quantity of property and the kind of property that is the subject of the divestiture is the same property to which the above-noted authorities assented.

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Question 2: Another avenue of questions asked what papertrail must be established by Synod’s Board of Directors. The questions focus on what can be done in private (executive session) by the BOD and what must be public, and what would constitute a proper form of “consent” allowing a board of regents to act “not on its own.”

Opinion: Synod’s Constitution and Bylaws are silent concerning this question. As such, the commission can only conclude that Missouri state law, if there is any state law on point, possibly may govern the answer to this question. The CCM states possibly because the Establishment clause of our Federal Constitution as well as the Missouri State Constitution may come into play. What the CCM can say is that the Constitution and Bylaws do not require the BOD to release every facet of its work (or these specific facets) in its public minutes.

While the fact that the BOD as an officer of the Synod (Const. Art. X A) is “in everything pertaining to [its] rights and the performance of [its] duties responsible to the Synod (Const. Art. XI A 1)” implies that the conduct of its responsibilities (Const. Art. XI E 2) must be reviewable by the convention, this does not imply that the BOD cannot take, when necessary, confidential business actions. The BOD has both a fiduciary duty and a bylaw obligation to avoid “creating potential liability” (Bylaw 1.5.1.3). The BOD is the entity with fiduciary responsibility for the property and business of corporate Synod and must be the entity to determine what is suitable for release to public minutes. Issues surrounding the potential or actual closure of a college or university could understandably be very sensitive, and have the potential, if disclosed prematurely or unnecessarily, to cause significant harm to the business operations of the school, the Concordia University System, and the Synod. The BOD has policies relating to executive session (BOD Policy Manual section 2.4.8) providing for its holding confidential such material, and neither these policies nor their application to material relating to school closure are inconsistent with the Constitution or Bylaws of the Synod.

Bylaw 1.5.3.5 states “[a]ll agencies of the Synod shall develop policies and procedures for making available official minutes of their meetings …” Agencies by their very nature manage property that belongs essentially to the Synod, on behalf of Synod’s constituent congregations, and their actions with regard to that property are to be reported for examination by the Board of Directors and by the Synod as a whole. Corporate Synod and its Board of Directors are not “an agency of the Synod,” Bylaw 1.2.1 (a), and therefore not subject to Bylaw 1.5.3.5.

As a corollary, there are no magic words to signify “consent” to the divesting of property. The CCM would expect “consent” to be worded in language easily understood by whoever must be assured that proper “consent” has been given, such as Concordia University System, Synod’s Board of Directors, or the board of regents of the school.

Response and discussion of “Background” material:

Synod Bylaws 3.6.6.6 (a) and (b) require the CUS Board, in consultation with the colleges and universities of the Synod, to develop and have in place policies that would assist and ensure that those responsible for the educational programs of the institutions do so in a manner designed to “preserve their Lutheran identity” as relating to the Article III objectives of the Synod’s Constitution. These objectives grow out of the confessional roots of the Synod in Article II in that they are developed and performed “under Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions” (Article III).

The Concordia University System has particular responsibility “to provide for the education of pre-seminary students, ministers of religion—commissioned, other professional church workers of the Synod” (Bylaw 3.6.6.1). Decisions of colleges and universities in any way impacting such programs—including arrangements with other church bodies to contribute to the training of their workers—must be coordinated with the Concordia University System. Likewise, creation of new programs, if such are conceived for training of extra-synodical church workers, is to be reviewed and approved by CUS (Bylaw 3.6.6.5 [c]).

Preservation of “Lutheran identity” is not a matter of protecting a quaint ethnicity, but rather deals with the truth of the
confessional foundations that undergird what we believe, teach, and confess. Though another denomination may accept the course work provided at an educational institution of the Synod as satisfactory for their requirements, it goes without saying that what our schools teach is in no way to be adjusted to minimize the truth of our doctrines (cf. Const. Art. III 1). CUS is responsible for assisting the President in his supervision of this area (Bylaw 3.6.6.5 [g]).

Finally, the Synod itself retains authority for ecumenical relations, an authority vested in its President as chief ecumenical officer (Bylaw 3.1.1.1.2 [c]).

The commission addresses both questions in one opinion:

**Question 1:** Would the President of the Synod, as chief ecumenical officer, need to approve such arrangements?

**Question 2:** Do the universities need to communicate the conditions under which such instruction is being offered so that no confusion arises with respect to the respective denominations’ doctrinal confessions and practices?

**Opinion:** If recognition of credits were the extent of the memorandum of understanding, and the content of the teaching were not adjusted to suit heterodox church bodies, the commission does not believe that this would constitute an “ecumenical agreement” requiring such approval. Nonetheless, the Office of the President should certainly be informed in advance of any such potential agreement and be given opportunity to fully address any concerns related thereto. Terms and conditions of any such agreement must be fully disclosed, as they are subject to the proper oversight and/or supervision of the CUS and the President of the Synod. Communication with the Office of the President is an obligation both of the school and of CUS, which has the responsibility to “assist the President of the Synod in monitoring and promoting the ongoing faithfulness of Concordia University System colleges and universities to Article II of the Constitution of the Synod” (Bylaw 3.6.6.5 [g]).

Adopted August 17–18, 2018

**Prior Approval of Adjunct Concordia University System Theological Faculty (18-2891)**

The President of the Concordia University System (CUS) posed a question of the commission:

**Question:** Does Bylaw 3.10.6.7.3 require adjunct as well as full-time theology professors to be vetted in the same manner?

**Opinion:** In 2013 the Synod in convention restored the process of prior approval for initial appointments of theology faculty at CUS institutions (2013 Proceedings, p. 140) but with a different process than the process appointed for seminary faculties (2016 Bylaw 3.10.5.7.3 [a]). In 2016 the Synod in convention further refined this process by removing the words *all initial full-time* and thereby extending this process to all appointments and calls without qualification other than the single exception expressed in the referenced Bylaw 3.10.6.7.3. The Board of Directors of the CUS has responsibility, under Bylaw 3.6.6.1, to facilitate the process:

Adopted August 17–18, 2018
I. OPINIONS OF COMMISSION ON CONSTITUTIONAL MATTERS

Notes

1. The bylaw change adding non-candidate status arose from a request from the Council of Presidents and was ultimately enacted by the Synod Board of Directors June 1, 2000, at the direction of the 1998 Convention of the Synod (1998 Res. 7-16A). This resolution, which is indicative of the reason for the distinction then made between candidate and non-candidate members, read:

Whereas, “Candidate status” is a designation for those who are eligible to perform the duties of any of the offices of ministry specified in Bylaw 2.15 but who are not currently performing those duties on a regular basis and who are not emeriti; and

Whereas, Candidate status is meant to be a short-term or temporary designation which is not to exceed two years unless an extension is granted by the Council of Presidents; and

Whereas, There are a large number of requests from those on candidate status for extensions beyond the two year time limit; and

Whereas, Candidate status, in practice, has resulted in persons being able to retain roster status in spite of an inability or unwillingness to receive or accept a call into active service; and

Whereas, The result of this practice has caused many who have candidate status to become in some way stigmatized, even though they are in all ways eligible to receive a call, to serve in professional church work, and it is their hope to again serve their Lord in ministry; therefore be it

Resolved, That the “candidate” status be reserved for those qualified individuals who are desirous of receiving a call and are ready to re-enter the active roster; and be it further

Resolved, That the Council of Presidents be directed to evaluate those who currently are designated with candidate status and establish appropriate designations for those who for some reasons are not desirous of a call, or are in some way unable to fulfill a call; and be it finally

Resolved, That the Council of Presidents be directed to establish guidelines and proposed Bylaws and amendments which, per Bylaw 15.01 2, will be drafted by the Secretary of the Synod, reviewed by the CCM, and adopted by a two-thirds majority vote of the Board of Directors. This is to be reported to the church and to the 2001 synodical convention by the Secretary of the Synod.

2. Seminary Board of Regents—Hyatt (Ag. 1739, 1744, A-B): An opinion expressed by the Commission regarding the eligibility for Dr. Hyatt to serve on more than one seminary Board of Regents had been questioned. In response to this question, the Commission stated that the issue which faced it at the inception of discussion on this issue was whether the position on the Board of Regents was one of designation or appointment. The Commission felt that language in Bylaw 6.01 did not call for appointment but designation, and that Bylaw 2.73 refers only to appointed positions. A designation can be changed at will since no term is specified. There is no implication of permanency in that term, whereas appointments are generally for specified periods of time. It is the feeling of the Commission that the President has resolved the issue in his own mind and that Dr. Hyatt is considered to be designated, not appointed, in those positions where he casts a vote and serves as a liaison to those seminary board positions where he is not granted a vote. The Commission further recognizes that the question which has been raised involves a matter of semantics. Because of the importance of the question, as well as other ambiguities, the Commission will be asking the Commission on Structure to urgently consider language clarification of the bylaws which are involved. (CCM Minutes, May 3–4, 1985)

3. CCM Ag. 1511 (Sept. 11–12, 1981) held as follows:

249. Membership in Two Districts (Ag. 1511):

The Secretary had written to Rev. Arthur Geidel of Palisades Park, New Jersey, with carbon copies to Presidents George Bornemann and Walter Zeile, that a pastor accepting a call to one District becomes a member of that District and cannot hold membership in another District in which he functions also as an institutional missionary. The Commission ratified that reply.

This ruling preceded the 1986 development of Bylaw 2.41, subparagraphs [a] and [b] of which are the equivalent of 2016 Bylaws 2.12.1.2 and 2.12.1.3. Instead of these, 1981 Bylaw 5.33 (similar to 2016 Bylaw 4.4.7) alone applied:

A pastor or a teacher accepting a call to a member or nonmember congregation in a sister District, or to an institution served by such District, shall immediately report such decision to his District President and ask for a transfer of membership. The District President shall forward such transfer to the President of the sister District. Upon receipt of the transfer and of a request for installation from the pastor or teacher, the District President of the sister District shall install or authorize installation of such pastor or teacher.

That the membership of a minister whose calls cross district lines should wind up in that district in which he was most recently called might be the conclusion from Bylaw 4.4.7 alone. Because, however, such a conclusion does not resolve the conflict inherent between, in this case, Bylaws 2.12.1.2 and 2.12.1.3 it can hardly be definitively recommended.

4. The request for reconsideration uses the term “individual member” apparently to refer to a member under district supervision. An individual member, in Bylaw terms, refers to Ministers of Religion—Ordained and Commissioned, as opposed to congregational (voting) members of the Synod. Const. Art. XIII and Bylaw section 2.14 deal with individual and congregational members without distinction. The “individual” is therefore dropped in this response.

5. See, for example, 1971 Bylaws 5.11–5.13, Handbook, pp. 114–115, in which the intent is the same as 1956 but the outline is much clearer:

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B. SUSPENSION AND EXPULSION

5.11 Notification of Accusation

When a member of the Synod is accused of an act or of conduct which could result in expulsion from the Synod under Article XIII of the Constitution, the accusation shall be addressed in writing to the President of the District in which said member holds membership. The District President shall promptly inform such member that such an accusation has been made against him. If the member consents to the expulsion, the District President shall publish such fact in the official periodical of the Synod and shall so report to the next District convention.

5.13 Commencing an Action of Expulsion

If a member of the Synod, accused of an act or of conduct which could result in expulsion from the Synod under Article XIII of the Constitution, does not consent to such expulsion, the District President, in consultation with the District Vice-Presidents, may suspend the member, provided, however, that the member shall have been given written notice of the proposed suspension 15 days in advance of the effective date thereof, during which said member may ask the District President to reconsider on the ground that adequate informal settlement efforts (Section 5.03 b) have not been made. Within 7 days after the effective date of such suspension, the District President shall submit the case to the District Commission of Adjudication for adjudication in accordance with the provisions hereinafter set forth. In the event that the District President is disqualified or unable to act, the First Vice-President or the next qualified District officer shall be authorized to suspend and to submit the case to the Commission of Adjudication as herein provided.

If the District officers fail to act, the President of the Synod, by virtue of the power given him in the Constitution (Article XI, B, 1–3, inclusive), may on his own initiative institute proceedings, take administrative action, and, if necessary, present charges to the appropriate District Commission of Adjudication, provided, however, that such must be in the same manner as hereinabove set forth for the District officers.

6. From 1956–1965, it was not understood as contrary to Const. Art. XIII 2 for the President of the Synod to present charges to a district board of appeals. Suspension (at that time) did not precede but followed the decision of the district board of appeals. This suspension could then be appealed to the district and Synod conventions. Though initiated by the President of the Synod, the process ultimately resulted in expulsion “by the district[s] of the Synod.” Suspension was to be initiated by presidents; expulsion was finally the realm of conventions and then the adjudication system.

Interestingly, however, expulsion cases regarding pastors, professors, and teachers “which [arose] in connection with activities directly under the control of the Synod” could be initiated by the President of the Synod and members suspended and ultimately expelled at the Synod level, Const. Art. XIII 2 notwithstanding. (See, e.g., 1945 Bylaw VIII II b a, *Handbook*, p. 35; 1949–1963 Bylaws 5.81–5.93.) That this procedure, similar to the present Bylaw section 2.15, but broader, coexisted with the earlier Const. Art. XIII 2 suggests the relatively greater weight of Const. Art. XI B 1–3. Where the President of the Synod had the supervision, he had the authority, ultimately, to initiate suspension and expulsion—and not only through a district president. Perhaps this reflects the reasoning that the Synod and district presidents hold (under Const. Art. XII 6) fundamentally the same office, with the same powers, within their respective spheres: the President of the Synod, over the whole Synod, and the president of a district, within, and as appropriate to, his district.

7. German included throughout is from the 1924 *Handbuch*, which is exactly parallel to the English of the 1924 *Handbook*, the first edition in English. The German is significant for reasons to become apparent later.

8. See the detailed treatment of this term under part 4.

9. When the 1956 provision was being effected the Committee on Constitutional Matters then understood this as a “clarification” in the bylaws of a power pre-existing in the Constitution (the rationale of 1956 Res. 6-11, proposed by the committee, being that “It is necessary to clarify Article XI B, 1, 2, 3, concerning the powers of the President if District officers fail to act …” (Proceedings, p. 451, emphasis added).

10. Const. Art. XI B 1 b provides that “all such as are employed by the Synod” are also under the President’s direct supervision, although these have not historically been considered subject to Bylaw section 2.15. They were apparently subject to similar provisions, however, from 1945–1965 (see footnote 3).

11. The predecessor measure, 1998 and 2001 Bylaw 2.27 g, was adopted by 1998 Res. 7-06A (1998 Proceedings, p. 149) on similar grounds—that a means should be clarified by which the President of the Synod could ultimately carry out his responsibility for supervision of district presidents under Const. XI B 1.

12. The commission notes that the request for reconsideration denies to the President of the Synod the power of suspension, while failing to note that the present bylaws grant this power of suspension, in similar circumstances (where a district president has failed to act), to a referral panel—which is nowhere in the Constitution granted a power of suspension. Importantly, though, the chief issue identified by the commission in Op. 16-2791 and 2794 is not that an illegitimate power was granted to the referral panels by the bylaws, but that this power was not granted by the bylaws to the President of the Synod, as expected by Const. Art. XI B 1–3.

13. Const. Art. XI B 8 in the 1924 Constitution, due to the removal of the previous Const. Art. XI B 7 (relating to the President’s signing of official documents in the name of the Synod) in 1998.

14. On this passage, see further footnote 16.

15. At present, “suspension” is not the “optional,” stop-gap measure it was in 1854, but the necessary first step of such formal proceedings under the bylaws developed pursuant to the modern Const. Art. XIII 1. Since 1966’s amendment of Const. Art. XIII, the conventions of the districts and Synod have had no direct role in deciding or hearing appeals in discipline cases; long before that time, already, cases could not simply be brought directly to the conventions, but had to go through other formal proceedings first.

16. While the President of the Synod’s supervision is, from 1864 on, described only as “over the individual districts as such,” without the 1854 continuation, “over the pastoral conferences, and over the individual congregations of the District Synods,” from 1864 until at least 1899 an addendum to the Constitution read, “The Synod declared that the synodical president is directed to serve as inspector of the district presidents,
1. OPINIONS OF COMMISSION ON CONSTITUTIONAL MATTERS

and that he therefore has the right and authority in cases where he is convinced that the district president has erred in his dealings [with the local congregation/member] to convince himself of the situation by a personal investigation at his discretion.” (1864 Proceedings, p. 4)

17. Districts do not have a distinct and collective “doctrine and practice” to supervise, as they are Synod in that place, nor does a district, as such, hold an office; supervision of doctrine and practice (“administration of office”) of districts must refer to the doctrine and practice (“administration of office”) of those members of the Synodical union under their jurisdiction.

18. 1969 Res. 5-23 is a resolution of particular interpretive force and significance. In it, the convention took up previous opinions by the Commission on Constitutional Matters, rendered June 12, 1967, and June 14, 1968. It ratified these opinions, elaborating a specific constitutional rationale, and incorporated the “basic constitutional requirements [already demonstrated by the opinions] in clear and unmistakable words also in the Bylaws.” By adoption of this resolution, the convention interpreted the Constitution with its “unique and final interpretive power” (CCM Op. 16-2791).

The June 14, 1968, CCM opinion (addressed to President Harms) reads:

You have addressed to the Commission on Constitutional Matters the question: Is it permissible under the Constitution and Bylaws of the Synod for a member congregation to have as its pastor a man who is not a member of the Synod? After thorough study of the Constitution and Bylaws the Commission on Constitutional Matters has come to the conclusion that this is not permissible and that such a congregation cannot remain a member of the Synod or exercise any rights and privileges of membership.

19. 1969 Res. 5-23 (Proceedings, p. 120). This passage paraphrases the June 12, 1967, CCM opinion noted above (later cited in CCM Op. 02-2307, October 21–22, 2002), which reads:

The Commission on Constitutional Matters holds that Article XIII, 1 of the Constitution and paragraph 1.05 of the Bylaws of the Synod are binding on every member of the Synod. Refusal to comply with these provisions as well as active promotion of non-compliance constitute divisive and unbrotherly conduct which destroys the very concept of the Synod as ‘a walking together.’ Such conduct, if persisted in despite repeated admonition, is a breach not only of synodical fellowship but of the unity which prevails between Christians and which expresses itself in love. If all efforts at admonition fail, a member persisting in such conduct shall be subject to suspension and to eventual expulsion.

20. This resolution, too, has particular interpretive force and significance. The 1944 convention received a report of a task force, commissioned by the 1941 convention, on the meaning of Const. Art. VII. The convention committee on constitutional matters edited the report and the convention, by this resolution, adopted it.

21. Noted also is the problem of invention of titles for pastoral roles which have no doctrinal, constitutional, or bylaw basis, and thus no official standing. Some of these have caused considerable confusion.
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INTRODUCTION

As Lord, Jesus established Baptism as the entryway into our new life under God’s reign. Through the door of Baptism, we are invited to participate in the Lord’s story and to inherit the promises of God’s kingdom. In brief, Baptism gives us the privileges and responsibilities that become ours as citizens of God’s kingdom. Part 4 of this document speaks of Jesus as “re-establishing” God’s story and promises to Israel throughout the Old Testament. It is with this fourfold biblical definition of Baptism for our life. It will also discuss how Baptism places us within the context of God’s story and promises to Israel throughout the Old Testament. This section will focus on themes such as the new life given in Baptism, our adoption as children of Abraham (and hence of God) and our reception into a new community.

In order to highlight the significance of Baptism, this study is organized around four parts:

Part 1: "The Story of Jesus" shows how Baptism fits within the story and mission of Jesus and how it is of utmost importance for our Jesus that gives us our eternal inheritance in the new heavens and the new earth. It is not an afterthought to say that Baptism accomplishes our entire life in Christ and under Christ.

Part 2: "A New Beginning" explores the various ways in which the Bible expresses the meaning and benefits of Baptism for our life. It will show Baptism to be a coherent and consistent story within which one can account for the entry of the Christian life that Baptism represents.

Part 3: "The Gifts and Benefits of Baptism," considers the privileges and responsibilities that become ours as members of God’s kingdom through Baptism. It moves from an exploration of the biblical material to a focus on the ways in which we have expressed within our communities. Accordingly, each section is organized around the theological themes with which we are familiar in Martin Luther’s Small Catechism. In brief, Baptism gives us the forgiveness of sins (where there is forgiveness, there is life and salvation), delivers us from death and the devil, and brings us safely through the final judgment.

Part 4: "The Baptismal Commission," addresses both theological and practical questions that have been raised in the course of the church’s history as it has brought the Gospel into new cultures. To that end, it will discuss elements that are essential for the church’s practice of Baptism in order for it to be a Christian Baptism, as well as certain matters that are not essential but are useful and beneficial for teaching. These themes are roughly organized around Jesus’ Great Commission as found in Matt. 28:16-20. 

Addendum: A final section addresses further questions that people may raise about the theology and practice of Baptism.
Jesus' Baptism and the Reign of God

The story of Jesus begins before the events of His baptism, when the angel appeared to the shepherds and declared that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God. Jesus' baptism is an important event in the story of salvation, as it marks the beginning of His public ministry.

Jesus was immersed in the Jordan River by John the Baptist, who declared that Jesus is the One who will fulfill the promise of God's Kingdom. This event symbolizes the beginning of Jesus' mission to bring about God's Kingdom on earth.

The Spirit of the Lord came upon Jesus, and He began to preach and teach throughout Galilee, declaring the good news of the Kingdom of God. He declared that the Kingdom of God is near, and that people should repent and believe in the good news.

Jesus' baptism is also a sign of His identity as the Son of God, as declared by the voice from heaven. This event sets the stage for Jesus' public ministry, during which He will fulfill the promise of God's Kingdom and restore creation.

The God who created the universe is present, and we are called to seek Him and live as He intended. This is the purpose of baptism, to be immersed in the message of the Father.

As Jesus carried out His mission, He often spoke in parables, in which He painted a picture of what it means to enter the kingdom of God. He likened it to a feast, a treasure hunt, or a field, and challenged His followers to seek it with all their hearts.

Jesus' baptism is not just an event in the life of one man, but it is the beginning of God's mission to bring about the Kingdom of God on earth. It is a sign of the new creation, a sign of the renewing of the earth, and a sign of the new life that God is offering to all who believe in Him.
2. BAPTISM: A NEW BEGINNING

In order to better appreciate how Baptism makes us children of God and members of the kingdom of God, we need to locate this event within the wider story of God and Israel. We learn that Baptism has been designed by God to bring people into the family of Abraham. This becomes clear in the context of the promises that one is born into the family of Abraham and into the family of God, as described in the story of Christ as the Son of God.

We Are Made Children of Abraham Through Baptism

In order to better appreciate how Baptism makes us children of God and members of the kingdom of God, we need to locate this event within the wider story of God and Israel. We learn that Baptism has been designed by God to bring people into the family of Abraham. This becomes clear in the context of the promises that one is born into the family of Abraham and into the family of God, as described in the story of Christ as the Son of God.

We Are Adopted as Children of God Through Baptism

God refers to the people of Israel, the children of Abraham, as his sons. When the descendants of Abraham found themselves in Egypt, God sent Moses with these words for Pharaoh: “Thou sayest, ‘Israel is my son, my first-born.’ But I will stretch out my hand and smite thee and thy people with the sword. And I will make my covenant with Jacob and my covenant with Abraham will I establish betwixt me and thee and thy seed after thee. That the children may remember that thou didst show them kindness, and that thou didst save them by thy great power. And thou didst give them inheritance by thy word.”

We Are Baptized into the New Birth

In this act of Baptism, we become children of God through faith in Jesus Christ, who is the Son of God. TheTriune God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, work together to bring about this new birth. The Father sends the Holy Spirit to bring about this new birth, while the Son, through the waters of Baptism, is the means by which this new birth is accomplished.

We Are Baptized into the New Birth in Christ

In the act of Baptism, we are baptized into Christ. This means that we become members of the body of Christ, sharing in his death and resurrection. Through Baptism, we are united with Christ in his death, and we are raised to new life in him. This new life is a gift from God, who through the power of the Holy Spirit, gives us the grace to believe in Jesus Christ and to receive Baptism as the means of salvation.

We Are Baptized into the New Birth in Christ the Lord

In the act of Baptism, we are baptized into Christ the Lord. This means that we become members of the body of Christ, sharing in his death and resurrection. Through Baptism, we are united with Christ in his death, and we are raised to new life in him. This new life is a gift from God, who through the power of the Holy Spirit, gives us the grace to believe in Jesus Christ and to receive Baptism as the means of salvation.

We Are Baptized into the New Birth in Christ’s name

In the act of Baptism, we are baptized into Christ’s name. This means that we become members of the body of Christ, sharing in his death and resurrection. Through Baptism, we are united with Christ in his death, and we are raised to new life in him. This new life is a gift from God, who through the power of the Holy Spirit, gives us the grace to believe in Jesus Christ and to receive Baptism as the means of salvation.

We Are Baptized into the New Birth in God’s name

In the act of Baptism, we are baptized into God’s name. This means that we become members of the body of Christ, sharing in his death and resurrection. Through Baptism, we are united with Christ in his death, and we are raised to new life in him. This new life is a gift from God, who through the power of the Holy Spirit, gives us the grace to believe in Jesus Christ and to receive Baptism as the means of salvation.
Baptism Makes Us Members of a New Community

Not only do we begin a new life as God's Father through Baptism, but we also begin a new life with all the members of God's family in which we have been joined. Through Baptism, the affection of the Mitglied (and thus children of God), we become numbered among (immortally!) those who God promised to Abraham. These descendants of Abraham include not only the Hebrews who lived by faith in God's promise but also all believers scattered throughout the world. Baptism incorporates us into a community that reaches back thousands of years and that stretches around the entire world. We know that community today, the new Israel, the Body of Christ.

Paul shares in this theme and emphasizes it when he writes to the Christians in Ephesus: “There is one body and one spirit; one Lord, one faith, one baptism” (Eph 4:4–5). He expands on it further in his letter to the Christians at Corinth:

“For just as the body is one with many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit of grace” (1 Cor 12:12–14).

In Baptism, we are united with Christ and thereby also united with every other baptized Christian. We share the same promises and the same hope as part of the Body of Christ. Hence has our indissoluble union as Christians.

Paul uses Baptism's incorporation of Christians into one Body of Christ as a basis for urging the unity of Christians (Hence an especially good case study) to get along with each other, to bear each other's burdens and to live in peace with one another. Since Baptism makes us members of God's family, we are called to look after each other—in spite of we do not always know each other personally or like each other very much! Paul reminds the Corinthians that even as members of one body, they have different gift given interests and talents. All of these gifts, taken in one way or another, serve to build up and edify the one Body of Christ (Rom 12:3–8).

Love girds us as using these gifts for each other, as Paul writes in his famous chapter on love (1 Cor 13:1–8). In the early years of the church growth, when the church life was so full of growth, the church leaders paid a lot of attention to the right way to baptize people and the importance of Baptism. This was so in the church that stood out against Christians within the ancient world and provoked pagans to believe how they love one another? This is what life under the promised reign of God looks like in practice.

Baptism's formation into a new community carries with it significant implications for our practice of Baptism. Ordinarily, it is most fitting to perform Baptism within the context of the entire assembled congregation. A public Baptism highlights the act as an act of adoption by which we are welcomed and incorporated into our new family and community. The case study (1 Cor 12:12–14) serves to illustrate this point.

The Baptism of an infant emphasizes this when the congregation welcomes the newly baptized in Jesus' name as our "Father's child" that we might hear Jesus, receive His gifts, and proclaim the praise of His name (Ps 22:22) as "an out of darkness into His marvelous light" (Isa 49:7).

Baptism Promises the Forgiveness of Sins

Today, you MAY take the "breakfast" of lots of grapes and granola or to empty its utility in your power by turning it into a pleasant "plastic bottle of water." To get a better sense of your life-shattering forgiveness we can consider this: When we forgive someone, we are promising them that we will not allow the past to determine our future relationship with them. When we forgive God, God's promise to us will not allow her past actions to determine our relationship with the saints and those we love the church and gave himself up for her, that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any kind of fault—just as Christ loves the church and gave himself up for her, for we know that Christ might marry such a bride as she. From the washing of water with the word (Baptism), so that the present might the church is given in the spirit, without spot or wrinkle or any kind of fault, that she might be holy and without blemish (Eph 5:27, emphasis added).

In the New Testament, the washing of Baptism often comes with the reminder that it is good to be—though often counteracted with the admission: Death do not get away again! For Paul, Paul writes to the Corinthians: “If anyone is cleansed from sins (1 Cor 6:11). If you are made, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and by the Spirit of our God” (2 Cor 1:22), this verse comes on the heels of reminding them about their former sins (filled outside of Christ) "(some were) you of Christ in the Lord! (2 Cor 1:22)." It is the basis for Paul's exhortation to be "temples" in the Lord's temple (Col 3:12–17).

A life in which he persecuted and killed followers of Jesus, he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any kind of fault—just as Christ loves the church and gave himself up for her, that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any kind of fault, that she might be holy and without blemish (Eph 5:27, emphasis added).

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II. THEOLOGICAL DOCUMENTS—CONCORDANCE ON THEOLOGY AND CHURCH RELATIONS

1. Theology of Baptism

2. Theology of the Eucharist

3. Theology of the Sacraments

4. Theology of the Church

5. Theology of the Holy Spirit

6. Theology of Ethics

7. Theology of Mission

8. Theology of the World

9. Theology of the End Times

10. Theology of Creation

11. Theology of Revelation

12. Theology of Salvation History

13. Theology of the Church's Practice of Baptism

14. Theology of the Church's Practice of the Eucharist

15. Theology of the Church's Practice of the Sacraments

16. Theology of the Church's Practice of the Church

17. Theology of the Church's Practice of the Holy Spirit

18. Theology of the Church's Practice of Ethics

19. Theology of the Church's Practice of Mission

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22. Theology of the Church's Practice of Creation

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24. Theology of the Church's Practice of Salvation History

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In addition to Baptism, God conveys His promises to us in several other ways. First, He speaks them through His Word spoken by others. This can take the form of preaching, teaching, apologizing, Scripture-based Christian encouragement, etc. Second, He embeds His promises in the broad and loving promises of the God of Love.

Who Performs the Baptism within the Service?

Within our Lutheran tradition, we believe that when Christ gives His disciples this baptismal commission to baptize, He goes on to extend all of His following, in other words, Christ gives the commission to all Christians. Thus, a statement adopted by the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod in 1932 states:

Christ Himself confers on all the heirs of the kingdom of heaven, Matt. 28:19–20, 28, and commissions all followers to preach the Gospel and to administer the sacraments (Act. 8:39; 20:28),Col. 4:4–5:1 (index Added).

Ordinarily, the church has selected someone from its midst to carry out this commission on behalf of all, and especially on behalf of children. This is because Christ has established a particular office to preach and administer to the faithful, so that when the pastor administers the Baptism, he does so on behalf of the congregation, the priesthood of all believers, the “officers of the Church publicly administer, their office only to exercise delegated powers, and such administrations remain under the supervision of the latter, ecc.,” [Brief Statement, 5Ne].

Note that in the Roman Church, the bishop or priest of the diocese of all believers, has been given the mandate and authority to baptize, meaning that they have the authority to baptize in an emergency or an extraordinary situation such as when there is an imminent danger of death (”Baptism in Cases of Urgency,” 5Ne). In addition, several bishops and the bishop of the diocese have the power to consecrate the ordinand who is to be ordained a priest of all believers (”Baptism in Cases of Urgency,” 5Ne).

In this position, the bishop or priest performs the ordination and ordains and consecrates the candidate who is to be ordained a priest of all believers. This is done by means of a common form of consecration of a new minister. In the result, the bishop or priest in the presence of the people of the diocese and under the consent of the candidate, together with a group of other bishops and priests, and of the people of the diocese, consecrates the candidate as a minister of the Gospel and a priest of all believers (”Baptism in Cases of Urgency,” 5Ne).
In this document, we have analyzed how Baptism brings us under the reign of Christ as followers of Jesus. This transition into God’s kingdom is frequently described in the New Testament as stark and dramatic: new birth, death and resurrection. Our focus is on the transformation from the old self and the old values to the new self and new values. This is not to say that the Christian life as a baptized follower of Jesus in an easy life, at least not on this side of heaven. (Recall that life was not easy for Jesus Himself: “... He did not need food or sleep or rest” [see Luke 4:42].) It is not a life dominated by pain and futility because of sin (infected by sin and subjected by God to pain, frustration, and financial or always be subject to Satan, whom should I be alarmed? Why should I be troubled about my sin?” (Rom 8:38). We see God providing nourishment and sustenance to those who are饿 and thirsty.)

At other times, our lives are filled with success, joy and hope as we reap the benefits of living in God’s creation, which He blesses and for which He still graciously cares. "In past generations he allowed all the nations to walk in their own ways... God does not leave it to our understanding and an obedient will is fashioned out of a darkened mind... Although God does not force human beings to do such a thing in a way that they must become godly believers... Not by our power, or by our will... (AC V 3; KW 41)."

The key thing to remember is that faith is the means by which we receive and eminate God’s promises. The Lutheran Confessions put it simply: “faith is the instrument by which our faith in God and the promises of God are recognized.” The Bible itself says: “...I don’t believe you!” (LC Baptism, KW 35).

4. What can or should adult convert be?  
With regard to when God creates faith, we might revisit Jesus’ conversation with Nicodemus regarding our new birth by the Holy Spirit. There Jesus states, “...you must be born again.” (John 3:3). And, “...in order for our faith to be validated, we need to be born again.” (EC LB8, KW 45). The ability of believing or trusting is not, in and of itself, the cause of our salvation. As Luther says in the Large Catechism, “...Everything depends upon the word and command of God... For... faith is not made by baptism; rather, it is received.” (LC Baptism 55; KW 465).

With regard to how He creates faith, we can say this much: God does not force someone to believe. We can also say that God does not leave it to our understanding and an obedient will is fashioned out of a darkened mind... Although God does not force human beings into doing such a thing in a way that they must become godly believers... Not by our power, or by our will... (AC V 3; KW 41).

5. Why does an adult need to be baptized if he or she is already a believer?  
A person who asks this question likely needs to be gently helped to see that this is the wrong question to ask. Baptism is not something that “we do to it” - rather, our Lord is in and through it. He gives us the promises spoken with word (teaching, absolution), in the visible and tangible word (Baptism, Lord’s Supper), and in the written word (the texts of Scripture). Whatever we baptize on behalf of Christ’s command and promise. Baptismal promises are rich. Not only are we our sins forgiven (Acts 2:38), but we receive the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38), and we are made members of Body of the Lord (Acts 2:32).” (See Jesus Himself has commanded: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them... (Matt 28:18-20)."

What is the biblical and theological reason for baptizing infants?  
In a word, Jesus died and rose to be our great priest and advocate before God. As Baptism, they are taken out of their previous lives of alienation and estrangement and brought under Jesus’ protection and blessing.

From an infant stands in great need of such rescue: “...The Word of God also teaches that we are all conscious and born sinful and are under the power of the devil until Christ claims us as His own. We would be lost forever unless delivered from sin, death, and everlasting condemnation” (Rich in Holy Baptism, 2:3:2, page 508). This calls for repentance and renewal of the Holy Spirit, which is poured out on us by faith through Jesus Christ our Savior” (2 Tim 2:15). Baptism — as we saw earlier — is not just a removal of dirt from the body but also as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through

**CONCLUSION: JESUS’ BAPTISMAL PROMISE TO US**

We can also say this: God does not leave it to our understanding and an obedient will is fashioned out of a darkened mind... Although God does not force human beings to do such a thing in a way that they must become godly believers... Not by our power, or by our will... (AC V 3; KW 41)."

**ADDENDUM: OTHER QUESTIONS ABOUT BAPTISM**

1. Is it acceptable to use different “Trinitarian terms” when baptizing?  
No. In recent decades, some churches have decided to use baptismal language that is considered gender inclusive. For that reason (or perhaps when), they may perform a Baptism by saying, “I baptize you in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.” While those terms and (other that must sometimes be avoided may be “Trinitarian in their own way, there are more titles or descriptions of God than they are names of God. Moreover, they could easily lead one to speak in a modalistic manner that denies the three persons (e.g., God is one eternal person that has three roles such as one actor might play different characters in a play).

Even if the intention is to reinforce the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, such formulae raise unnecessary questions, concerns and doubts for the one being baptized by deleting from the words given to us by our Lord. As Christ’s followers, we are bound to use the words that Christ gave us to use. We therefore baptize using those words in which the pastor repeats the very words of Christ: “In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”

2. Why are Baptists normally considered the “church” of Baptists?  
Baptism is normally conducted as a public act as it is a congregation as the church gathers in worship rather than as private ceremonies restricted only to the immediate family of the one baptized. The reason for this is quite clear: Baptism makes us members of the Church, which is the community of those who believe in Christ, members of God’s family, as His adopted children and members of the Body of Christ. One’s entry into this now spiritual family is confirmed by the whole people of God to celebrate and not simply for the parents and other relatives or close friends.

3. Is it acceptable to use different “Trinitarian terms” when baptizing?  
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Baptism is normally conducted as a public act as it is a congregation as the church gathers in worship rather than as private ceremonies restricted only to the immediate family of the one baptized. The reason for this is quite clear: Baptism makes us members of the Church, which is the community of those who believe in Christ, members of God’s family, as His adopted children and members of the Body of Christ. One’s entry into this now spiritual family is confirmed by the whole people of God to celebrate and not simply for the parents and other relatives or close friends.
the resurrection of Jesus Christ” (2 Pet 1:3).

The central questions of the entire debate can be expressed in straightforward terms. Baptism primarily promises to us in Baptis
CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION

INTRODUCTION

The 2015 convention of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod adopted Resolution 4-13, "To Encourage Confession and Absolution for Pastors" (see Appendix). Re-affirming the LCMS scriptural and confessional position on confession and absolution, the resolution seeks to take "seriously the pastoral vocation of the pastor" (second resolve) and encourages them "to seek a father confessor" (third resolve). The fourth resolve maintains Christian liberty, stating: "That this resolution makes provision only for those pastors who have a desire to make use of private confession, but who are unsure where they may go..." The resolution then mandates "that the Commission on Theology and Church Relations provide a document that sets forth our church's teaching on confession and absolution and offers positive guidance to pastors and congregations in their exercise of the Office of the Keys." The two words, "confession and absolution," are worthy of some clarification. "Confession" occurs in more than one setting or context. The root word from the New Testament is ὑμνία (Hymn, "homos") and the same. The basic meaning of the related Greek compound term ὑμνοσία is "an agreement" by which two parties say the same thing, and the compound verb ὑμνάω is similarly used as "to agree." Thus, "if two agree, it is accorded" (see Matt. 18:16). We are using the same thing that God is saying about us and our sin. We are admitting (acknowledging) that the Lord's judgment upon our sin is right and true. The second word, "absolution," is a synonym for forgiveness. Lutheran theology defines it as any discussion of "confession and absolution." It is this second word that requires emphasis. In Lutheran Pastoral Training to Confessors, he says: "We should therefore take care to keep the two parts clearly separate. We should not sit back on one word, but muck and Ingram, General Need."

The Small Catechism uses the first word in its question, but emphasizes the second.

What is Confession? Answer: Confession has two parts. First, that we confess our sins, and second, that we receive absolution, that is, forgiveness, from the pastor as from God Himself, not doubting but firmly believing that by our sins are forgiven before God in heaven.

Luther speaks of confession of sins in three settings: (1) private confession to a pastor (2) confession to God alone (as we find it in the Lord's Prayer, Matt. 6:13); and (3) confession made to a fellow Christian (James 5:14). We continually admit and confess our sin before God when we pray, "Forgive us our trespasses." And since the keys of the kingdom of heaven are given to the apostles by the Lord, "We, therefore, may boldly come..." (Heb. 4:16). This is the significance of the prayer: "Forgive us our trespasses..." and so on. This is not to imply...
CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION

| PART ONE: FOUNDATIONS |

Scriptural witness

W

e must never assume with Luther at the outset that the "type of confession, which is now done openly, into the ear, can be substituted and made one by one from divine law." That is not the same as admitting, however, that the Scriptural and Old Testament witness forbids or licenses pastoral confession and absolution. Our issue is, what kind of practice of confession and absolution is required by the divine Word of God, and what is the basis of our practice. In this respect, there is no difference between private and public confession and absolution that is not already present in the Sunday morning worship of the Church. One Lutheran theologian put it succinctly: "Private absolution is neither more nor less than public worship. One Lutheran theologian put it succinctly: "Private absolution is neither more nor less than public worship."


"A recent volume on private and pastoral confession and absolution is worth mentioning: "The Art of Damascus.""


The Last shall be First (How Does a Child Learn about Repentance and the Forgiving Gospel?); Martin Chemnitz, Explanation of the Confession of Faith (First of Three), trans. Fred Heide (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1990), 92–98.

Another term for private or individual confession and absolution is: "auricular confession." The term "auricular" means "into the ear."
II. THEOLOGICAL DOCUMENTS—COMMISSION ON THEOLOGY AND CHURCH RELATIONS

and work and bear under the abasement of his Lord! From the shortest circle of the church all the way to the circle of the State, in the middle, God asks us to confess: “Confess your sins to one another and pray for one another so that you may be healed” (James 5:16). God loves us. God loves you. God loves them. They are faultless, those who believe, those who have been chosen, those who were once far off, all held in the grip of the One who loved them and gave himself for them. “I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven. And what about believers since then? What about those who never were in the Church of God, who were not on your list? What about others who were not a part of the community of faith, who were present at the cross and are not? What about them? What about those who have never been born? What about the people who remained, those who were once far off, all held in the grip of the One who loved them and gave himself for them. “I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven.”

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In the language of the church, ‘satisfaction’ as a form of punishment. In the language of the church, ‘satisfaction’ is a representative authority, this speech of Jesus through the mouth of his chosen savior, is especially focused on the word of forgiveness when he gives to his Church the keys of the kingdom

As a matter of fact, the Fourth Lateran Council (1215) made it quite representative that every Christian had to go to confession

4 Agnus Dei Alliterative, First Peace (1529), 4

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54 Martin Luther, "The Babylonian Captivity of the Church," in Proving the Babylonian Captivity of the Church, " in Deut. 4:27, kia, As the Babylonian Captivity of the Church, " in Deut. 4:27, 5

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II. THEOLOGICAL DOCUMENTS — CONFESSION AND CHURCH RELATIONS

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However, already in the later part of the 16th century, some followers of Luther began to criticise the directions in which the Reformation had developed. The movement that came to be known as the Pietists had some very different perspectives about the practice of private confession and absolution. The matter was especially tied to the protestations of the key word, absolution, or whether a greater emphasis should be placed on the necessity of repentance and forgiveness. Some saw this as an assault on the power of the Word of God. In their view, the forgiveness of sins was obtained simply through the insurrection of repentance.

The new trend towards the anti-sacramentalism of the Pietists was moved with the American Protestant tradition. In dogmatics, Schmucker revised Lutheran sacramentalism, and certain “errors in view” had to be corrected. One of Schmucker’s most significant actions was to defy the Anglican Church. In his view — and one that Schmucker’s view would influence many who were to follow him — the atonement of Jesus was not a public act of the forgiveness of sins. In his view, the forgiveness of sins was not accomplished in the Carolina Church and the Evangelical Reformation.

Challenges

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own experience of confession and absolution in Isaiah 6, where his cry of “woe is me” reflects not only his own sin but also the sin of the corporate people. God responds through a messenger of grace with a declaration, and even a touch of absolution, that purifies Isaiah’s unclean lips. Indeed lips that will proclaim God’s judgment and salvation on those lips that first experienced God’s judgment and forgiveness, “That has touched your lips, your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for” (Isaiah 6:7).

But also the sin of the corporate people. God responds: “Casualties of the pastoral ministry abound these days, he is also a lamb in need of a shepherd. Tidball received His gracious gift to his congregation: ‘Skillful shepherds, among whom the comfort and medicine of the Holy Spirit are nourishing grace is for all. ’”72

The pastor vows never to reveal the contents of a private confession to his congregation, but it certainly invites us to "...faithful prayer and a failure to love as we are loved. Such words could be echoed by every child of God without faltering prayer and a failure to love as we are loved. Thus the pastor, as Stendhal observes, “Casualties of the pastoral ministry abound these days, he is also a lamb in need of a shepherd. Tidball received His gracious gift to his congregation: ‘Skillful shepherds, among whom the comfort and medicine of the Holy Spirit are nourishing grace is for all. ’”72

The pastor is not merely a pastoral counselor or a conﬁdential source, but he is also a community leader whom the comfort and medicine of the Holy Spirit are nourishing grace is for all. In this way the pastor’s vocation is both a calling and a commission, to be a visible sign and forerunner of the kingdom of God (Matthew 5:14). Is it not so? Is it not so?

The pastor speaks in the name of God to those who are in the assembly, the pastor speaks these words of confession within the assurance of the church’s forgiveness of sins (Romans 8:1). Both the pastor and the people have the assurance that their sins are forgiven in the name of Jesus Christ. This assurance is given to all the people of God, whether or not they show it in life or in practice. The pastor’s words are to be taken as the voice of God speaking to the congregation. The pastor’s words are to be taken as a voice of God speaking to the congregation. The pastor’s words are to be taken as a voice of God speaking to the congregation. The pastor’s words are to be taken as a voice of God speaking to the congregation. The pastor’s words are to be taken as a voice of God speaking to the congregation. The pastor’s words are to be taken as a voice of God speaking to the congregation. The pastor’s words are to be taken as a voice of God speaking to the congregation. The pastor’s words are to be taken as a voice of God speaking to the congregation. The pastor’s words are to be taken as a voice of God speaking to the congregation.

Like every child of God, pastor need the saving, releasing and strengthening Gospel, even as they administers it. He is a fallen sinner. Without Christ, he will die as he sins. All share in this fallen condition, but sin also shows in power in unique ways in every life. So, the only thing the pastor can do is to be humble and contrite in the assembly, the pastor speaks these words of confession within the assurance of the church’s forgiveness of sins (Romans 8:1).

Help for the Pastor as a Child of God

We poor sinners’

Unlike God, our ruler and redeemer, we poor sinners continue to sin as we are. Yet as we are free to sin, we are also free to love as we are loved. Thus the pastor, as Stendhal observes, “Casualties of the pastoral ministry abound these days, he is also a lamb in need of a shepherd. Tidball received His gracious gift to his congregation: ‘Skillful shepherds, among whom the comfort and medicine of the Holy Spirit are nourishing grace is for all. ’”72

To be, one may honestly acknowledge sin without an unrighteous confession of sin as we do in personal prayer that in public confession, the presence of the congregation. This is not the same. We find this true in the congregation, the pastor’s voice speaks the Word. Words of forgiveness over bread and wine as a study in these words from the general confession. So the pastor bears our sins as his own. This powerful brief of God’s mercy is woven through the Old Testament. Return to the Lord your God, ‘for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love; he will return your disaster as far as the east is from the west. ’68

In the confessing of the confessed, the penitent must be encouraged to hold faith and open admissions of the sin(s) that bring turmoil. Our struggles at being sinners — our exercises in denial — are nothing but self-deception. Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.

For what I kept silent, my bones were melted away through my groaning all day long. (Ps. 38:7)

The pastor is called to go to hell as a sinner, to give the assurance of his sinfulness to all. It is a hard work for sinners that be without the forgiveness of sins, and in whose spirit there is no deceit. (Ps. 51:10)

72 LSB 130, Luther’s Small Catechism, Luther’s Small Catechism, Luth. Publ. House, 1995, p 24.

73 Cf. 1 Corinthians 1:27: “What things are written.”

74 Idem, I Cor, I Thess, I Tim; 1 Thess 2:8, 15, 16, 17; I Cor 15:9.


76 In English, ratification of the 1999 edition, it is observed that the words “conversion” and “repentance” are no longer used by the Lutherans.

77 Small Catechism, LSB 324, Luther’s Small Catechism (Evangelische Gesellschaft, 1982), p. 324.


79 LSB 165, Luther’s Small Catechism.
**II. THEOLOGICAL DOCUMENTS — CONFESSIO AND CHURCH RELATIONS**

**CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION**

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**CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION**

**PART TWO: HELPING THE PASTOR**

**Reconciliation and Absolution**

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**Guidance for the Pastor**

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**2019 Convention Workbook**

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Th is is why in most cases it is wise to seek out a pastor’s confession “under the seal.” At the very least, if he does, they are also ecclesiastical supervisors who may have to discipline to the pastors” of his district. While district presidents are called to prove trustworthy may be especially important. Yet only the Lord who “career of souls.”

A sound method of avoiding this is to keep a record of the absolution in writing, but only the Lord who knows the heart of the person who accuses made others “Get this: ‘When we recite these familiar words of confession and absolution, they are given in the name of Christ. As he retains silence and exercises judgment, the shepherd hears the hurts and sins of one of his sheep, and the Lord of heavenly justice, who sits enthroned on the throne of His glory (Heb. 4:13), then proceeds to ‘comfort, into whose lap we should in confidence sit.”

As benevolent as the general confession is in the church, it has its limits and is by no means a substitute or alternative for individual confession. This enables us to avoid dealing with its specificity and particularity of personal circumstances.

As to the current practice of private confession, I suggest it is not only a matter of good order, but it is also proper because a pastor should be con and how much and how often one should be converted to Christianity. In my opinion, the current practice of private confession is simply an unnecessary and impossible burden on the pastors’ of his district. While district presidents are called to cordia Publishing House, 2006), 166. Never means never, without exception. Only Jesus can enable a pastor to carry this burden.

As noted, our Confessions reject the enumeration of sins that weigh a Christian down. As

We should not think, however, that absolution (any more than baptism or the Supper) comes a difference. It is a God who alone can receive the individual and present it, forgive the sins, and absolve one.”

Instead of asking the question, “Do I have to confess before receiving the Sacraments?” we should be asking, “will I be able to confess when I need to? If the answer is no, then we are not truly confessing.”

We are convinced of the necessity for private confession and absolution in our parishes because it enables the pastor to provide the care and comfort to the individual Christian that the General Assembly of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod encourages in its “Lutheran Confession and Catechism” (2013), Article 20.5, “A Christian who truly knows his need of salvation and has confidence in God’s promises, is enabled to make a thorough examination of his consciences and to make confession of his sins. This is an expression of the faith of the individual Christian and is a means of grace for the strengthening of his faith.”

We believe that the church is not only a place of worship, but also a place of care. The pastor is called to be a shepherd who helps the sheep to find their way back to the fold. As benevolent as the Lutheran Confession is in the church, it has its limits and is by no means a substitute or alternative for individual confession.
Moreover, individual confession and absolution may provide a natural doorway to instruct and fortify God’s people with the teaching of God’s Word. It can lead to practical insights on how to battle the flesh, the world and the devil as one lives out the fruit of the total forgiveness already received. Such personal instruction with pastoral application also invariably fosters a closer relationship between pastor and penitent. Again Like, “Private Confession offers the best opportunity to instruct people, . . . the pastor . . . can instruct such one in the Law and Gospel according to his need. Also, a pastor understands easier and retains better what is told him alone on such a hallowed occasion than what he hears publicized.”

Restoration and Practice

The pastor must lead the way toward a restoration of the practice of individual confession for he is the steward of Christ’s mysteries—His Means of Grace (Rom. 10:14). He is Christ’s under shepherd, and so he leads the flock. As the pastor establishes a personal rhythm of confession and absolution, he will increasingly experience the great benefit of the practice and naturally encourage and lead others into it as one who knows its great consolation. This voluntary counsel should not minimize the fact that the “practice of private confession is actually an extension of . . . teaching” when the counseling and teaching that include reference to the value of individual confession are a vital part of encouraging its practice—Abbot and Lent may be opportunities for such special attention. In addition, regular confessions should always address the thirteenth part in Luther’s Small Catechism on confession, both for youth and for adults. For established members, Bible studies, newsletter articles, blogs, weekly small group and other pastoral communications may be utilized. Moreover, the pastor would be wise to discuss the practice with the leadership of the congregation: both elders and officer other leaders. In all teaching, the pastor should be prepared to deal with “dilemmas” to private confessions, such as those mentioned above (especially that it is “too Catholic”).

A few concerns about the actual implementation of private confession should be considered:

One immutable question is whether to offer individual confession at specific times or simply to make public His will and place individual confession at any mutually agreed time and place. Some are concerned that the pastor should offer a set time for private confession and absolution, because penitentials will know that fellow members are using the pastor for that purpose, encouraging the practice. Another view is that part of the canonical preparation is to lead the congregation to recognize and affirm the fact that private confessions and absolution are offered, and regular times enable penitents to realize “I’m not the only one.” Thus, the realization that others are using the resources can actually serve as a motivator and encouragement to a fellow member. However one evaluates these perspectives, it is apparent that a pastor may also provide a both and approach, offering confession both at set times and by appointment.

As the actual meeting with the penitent, while private confession and absolution can occur anywhere, the setting is not unimportant. A private setting is essential. Long songs suggestions from Winter and Ethics that a private area may be designated near the communion rail or in a corner of the nave. “If a confession is heard in the sanctuary, then a confessional chair or location for hearing should be identified. Another obvious possible location in the pastor will be at risk if fixed, if a person is available.”

The pastor may be flexible in his clothing when he hears confession and give private absolution. However, the use of costumes, especially the stole, may be appropriate as a way to emphasize the gift of the Sacrament—God’s grace administered through the Office of the Public Ministry.

Either a printed order or the use of the hymnal is encouraged. A set order is in concord with the liturgical nature of this gift—that it is approved by our church and not a pastoral idiosyncrasy. On the first occasion for a confession, the pastor should emphasize that 1) penitents need only confess what is troubling them, 2) they can confess their own sin, and not the sins of others, 3) they can reflect on the nature of confession and how was it received. Another view is that part of the catechetical practice. Another view is that part of the catechetical instruction that 1) the pastor will maintain confidentiality in accord with his ordination vows; 2) absolution is the central purpose and value of individual confession; and, finally, 1) absolution is given without qualification, and any counsel is not penance but guidance and encouragement in Christian life.

Fluss provides helpful guidance for hearing confession: The diagnostic key is self-examination in view of one’s own sin or place in life according to the Ten Commandments. Here the pastor does not usually probe or probe; he is not a moral detective. Rather, he the penitent to stand before the mirror of God’s law see that the sinner is brought to light, to prepare the words of the hymn. Then the pastor will need to attend to the words of the pastor, the penitent away from complaining about his sins to actually confessing them, turning them. When there is concern or lack of clarity here, the pastor may need to probe the penitent to identify which commandment of God he or she has sinned against. Likewise the pastor will be sure that the penitent dip into the kiddush meal of confessing the sins of another. “The sinner you put here with me — she gives me some fruit from the tree, and it is” (Rom. 5:12).

Having heard the confession, the pastor stands before the penitent, places his hands on the penitent’s head and pronounces the absolution. “To the sinner and the command of my Lord Jesus Christ, if you forgive your own sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” If there is further confession, the pastor may first emphasize the absolution: just spoken as the only true source of strength for Christian living. He may also provide further guidance for a like situation and joyful faith, carefully avoiding any hint of demand- satisfaction.”

For pastor and people— for all the sheep who follow their Good Shepherd — the Shepherd of God’s people may lead the way toward a restoration of the practice of individual confession for he is the steward of Christ’s mysteries—His Means of Grace (Rom. 10:14). He is Christ’s under shepherd, and so he leads the flock. As the pastor establishes a personal rhythm of confession and absolution, he will increasingly experience the great benefit of the practice and naturally encourage and lead others into it as one who knows its great consolation. This voluntary counsel should not minimize the fact that the “practice of private confession is actually an extension of . . . teaching” when the counseling and teaching that include reference to the value of individual confession are a vital part of encouraging its practice—Abbot and Lent may be opportunities for such special attention. In addition, regular confessions should always address the thirteenth part in Luther’s Small Catechism on confession, both for youth and for adults. For established members, Bible studies, newsletter articles, blogs, weekly small group and other pastoral communications may be utilized. Moreover, the pastor would be wise to discuss the practice with the leadership of the congregation: both elders and officer other leaders. In all teaching, the pastor should be prepared to deal with “dilemmas” to private confessions, such as those mentioned above (especially that it is “too Catholic”).

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2019 Convention Workbook
THE ROYAL PRIESTHOOD
IDENTITY AND MISSION

You yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.
1 Peter 2:5

THE ROYAL PRIESTHOOD:
IDENTITY AND MISSION

Introduction

“But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, for your own possession, that you may proclaim the excellences of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.” 1 Peter 2:9

Alphabetical index

Ap  Apology of the Augsburg Confession
BMC  Board for Mission Services (now Board for International Mission)
BSA  The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church (Minneapolis, Reformed, 1959)
CC  Large Catechism
LXIX  Septuagint
SA  St Paul’s Articles
SC  Small Catechism
TWA  D. Martin Luther’s Works, Volume 1801–1929
VTC  D. Martin Luther’s Works, Tübingen

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THE LUTHERAN CHURCH—MISSOURI SYNOD SEPTEMBER 2018
I. THE OLD TESTAMENT BACKGROUND

When they hear the word of God, they have a responsibility to proclaim that word to the whole world. For example, the Lord said to Moses, “You shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.” (Exodus 19:6)

The royal priesthood therefore has its explicit beginning with the giving of God’s word in the Old Testament. Before there was any of the Levitical priesthood to come, there was only the royal priesthood. The Old Testament has been described as the book of the priests and the prophets, and the New Testament has been described as the book of the Levites and the apostles. This is because the Old Testament presents the world with the word of God, and the New Testament presents the world with the work of God. The Old Testament is the word of God, and the New Testament is the work of God. The Old Testament is the book of the priests, and the New Testament is the book of the Levites.

II. THEOLOGICAL DOCUMENTS — COMMISSION ON THEOLOGY AND CHURCH RELATIONS

For a detailed examination of the confession of the royal priesthood, see The Celebration of Ministry in the Local Church, 2001 (pp. 35–47). See also Confessing the Faith; Confessing the Faith, 2001; and Celebrating Ministry, 2001, at https://www.craftscenter.org/.

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In Exodus 19 God speaks to command Israel of their priority identity. We, even when God plainly calls them His kingdom of priests, Israel behaves. In Exodus 20, Moses still indice to Israel. He speaks to His people whom He says to Moses (verse 18): “You speak to us, and we will listen, but not to God, that He speak to us, lest we perish.” He rightly acknowledging the glory and the sacredness of his position on His throne. The contrast of His New Testament is not of that sort. We look for “priests” and “priesthood” new in the New Testament, with far different significances from the same, while others are significantly different. This is the New Testament church. This is the church of Christ’s individuality, however, but one of promise (prophetic) and fulfillment. The New Testament makes plan the preparatory characterize of the Old Testament. The New Testament is freely dependent upon Christ, the fulfillment of the Old in all its parts. In Luke 24:44–47, He then said to them, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you that every thing written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.” Then he opened his mind to understand the Scriptures, and said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.” “You are a royal priesthood, a holy nation, declare Peter, speaking in the present time as he refers to promises fulfilled! In the New Testament, God had made Himself known to the people in the foundational work of creation, then in the mighty acts of deliverance, in His choice of Israel as His covenant people, and in His messianic promises of the One who should be Prophet (verse 17), Priest (verse 17) and King (verse 17). In all this and more, God acted in grace and mercy. The people of Israel never had been in their royal priests Amidst of God’s gracious character, not on account of their virtue or merits. The Old Testament royal priesthood was here grounded in God’s gracious presence. He promised and He worked and He promised—He is to say in the New Testament, under the consciousness of Christ’s redemptive power by grace through faith alone, just as the whole of his life for the New Testament priesthood was also grounded entirely in grace.

II. “PRIEST” IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. 1 Peter 2:9

1. Promises Fulfilled

To speak of “out” and “old” implies contrast, but it leaves upon the kind of contrast. It cannot contrast age and death—old ideas and works of God. It leaves upon the kind of contrast, the evident. The contrast of Old and New Testament is not of that sort. When we look for “priests” and “priesthood” new in the New Testament, we look for something of the same name, while others are significantly different. This is the New Testament church. This church represents the kingdom of God, but while one of promise (prophetic) and fulfillment. The New Testament makes plan the preparatory characterize of the Old Testament. The New Testament is freely dependent upon Christ, the fulfillment of the Old in all its parts. In Luke 24:44–47, He then said to them, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you that every thing written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.” Then he opened his mind to understand the Scriptures, and said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.”

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II. THEOLOGICAL DOCUMENTS — COMMISSION AND CHURCH RELATIONS

1. The Royal Priesthood

The royal priesthood is a theme that runs throughout the Bible, from the Old Testament through to the New Testament. It refers to the idea that all believers have access to God and are able to present spiritual sacrifices to Him. This concept is rooted in various passages, such as Hebrews 7:11, which says, "For if the law had been capable of bringing salvation to those who obeyed it, almost everything would have been cleansed by the blood of animals." The idea of the royal priesthood highlights the fact that Christians have the responsibility and privilege to present spiritual sacrifices to God through Jesus Christ.

2. Priesthood in the New Covenant

In the New Testament, the concept of the priesthood is expanded. Jesus is described as the high priest, the mediator of the new covenant, and the sacrifice that all believers can offer to God. This is illustrated in Hebrews 7:25, where it says, "He is able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them." The new covenant is characterized by the Spirit's role in the life of the individual believers, who are now able to offer spiritual sacrifices to God.

3. Priesthood in the New Covenant

The new covenant is seen as a covenant of priests, where all believers are priestly sacrifices. This is described in Romans 13:14, which says, "But let each one of you love his neighbor as himself, and fear the Law." This verse emphasizes the idea that all believers are priests, and are to live in such a way that they are able to present spiritual sacrifices to God. The priesthood of all believers is emphasized throughout the New Testament, as it highlights the importance of the role of each individual believer in the life of the Church.

4. The New Covenant of Holy Baptism

The New Covenant of Holy Baptism is described as a covenant of priestly sacrifice. It is a covenant that is open to all who believe and are baptized. In this covenant, believers are spiritually cleansed and made holy. This is illustrated in Romans 6:3-5, where it says, "If you were once dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of the flesh, in regard to the rules of human tradition, which are based on mere human commandments and teachings, and if you have been circumcised in Christ Jesus, who has钉ed once for all the circumcision that was made without and is based on the command of Moses, whose end is now past."

The New Covenant of Holy Baptism, as described in the text, highlights the idea that all believers are priests, and have access to God through Jesus Christ. It emphasizes the importance of the role of each individual believer in the life of the Church, and the need for believers to live in such a way that they are able to present spiritual sacrifices to God. The priesthood of all believers is emphasized throughout the New Testament, as it highlights the importance of the role of each individual believer in the life of the Church.

5. The Priestly Calling of All Christians

It is clear that Christians are called to be priests. This is because of God's gift of grace to all believers. As believers, they are called to present spiritual sacrifices to God. This is illustrated in 1 Peter 2:5, which says, "You yourselves, as alive from the dead, and as members of his body, which is the Church, and as priests of the flock of God." The idea of the priesthood of all believers is emphasized throughout the New Testament, as it highlights the importance of the role of each individual believer in the life of the Church.

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III. THEOLOGICAL DOCUMENTS—CONFERENCE ON THEOLOGY AND CHURCH RELATIONS

Through the High Priest, the royal priests are sanctified.

The high priest is also marked by particular prayer responsibilities and prays for all the people who pray for us, also inviting us to join in prayer in the "High Father," their Lord, Jesus Christ (1 Peter 2:21). His role has a new and living spiritual way. They are not simply to make a ceremonial act of worship but to enter into the experience of prayer, into the heart in full assurance of faith (Heb. 10:22).

It is by virtue of their office as priests through our baptism into Christ's death and resurrection that we are enabled to cry to our "Almighty Father" (Heb. 4:16). Only through the understanding of our high priest's work in Jesus, the Son of God, can we approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need (Heb. 4:16).

The royal priesthood therefore includes the mediatorial ministry of Jesus Christ (Heb. 7:27, 25; 8:1–2, 4–5; 12:24). The priestly office is not to be confined to a select few, but to all people in and all circumstances.


The word mission deserves our attention. It is is where we have come to use the word "mission." The word mission is used in the New Testament to indicate a "sent" people: a holy, royal priesthood. All the baptized would render service to the Church in the New Testament and, for that reason, the Church's mission is a work not set aside to be carried out by a few, confided only to or set only to "the professionals." The New Testament emphasis would not be one of priestly distinction from people. All believers were the royal priesthood. All the baptized would render service to the Church in the New Testament and, for that reason, the Church's mission is not a work not set aside to be carried out by a few, confided only to or set only to "the professionals." The New Testament emphasis would not be one of priestly distinction from people. All believers were the royal priesthood. All the baptized would render service to the Church in the New Testament and, for that reason, the Church's mission is not a work not set aside to be carried out by a few, confided only to or set only to "the professionals."
of the relationship enjoyed by those who are "the royal priesthood of Christ." Still in the second century, Irenaeus saw the Church as the renewal of the Tabernacle of Moses, in which Aaron and the Levites possessed the sacerdotal rank. Justin himself was a prime example of this, but so were countless others who offered not only their prayers for the church, but even their lives for the church's holy-mindedness, for the unbelieving world would not know them otherwise.

Lest we think of the term "royal priesthood" as somehow catering to all the world's needs, we must remember that this is not the work simply of those in the public offices of the Church, but all those who believe and trust in the General Assembly. In the Old Testament, and while ideas about priesthood and service might differ, the identity of the believer has remained constant. In the New Testament, even as every believer has received the blessings of Christ, the question becomes not what the royal priesthood of God will look like, but what will be the identity of God's people in the wider world and culture (although witnessing to the Jews remained an important task). The task was to be faithful to the message, and to translate God's Word into the ways of people who lived in a very different time. Missionary efforts were made, but in the long run, the focus shifted.

Ladylady should honor those serving in the public offices that had been entrusted to them, and must continue in this line, to carry forth this transformation out in the Book of Acts. As the story stretched beyond this, the mission of the Church is not the work simply of those in the public offices, but all those who believe and trust in the General Assembly. In the Old Testament, even as every believer has received the blessings of Christ, the question becomes not what the royal priesthood of God will look like, but what will be the identity of God's people in the wider world and culture (although witnessing to the Jews remained an important task). The task was to be faithful to the message, and to translate God's Word into the ways of people who lived in a very different time. Missionary efforts were made, but in the long run, the focus shifted.

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THE ROYAL PRIESTHOOD |

THE ROYAL PRIESTHOOD IN THE EARLY AND MEDIEVAL CHURCH

THE ROYAL PRIESTHOOD IN THE EARLY AND MEDIEVAL CHURCH

2019 Convention Workbook
message, they also pointed back to the Roman church as the source that had sent them, thus linking the image of the pope and the church to the person or persons whose words they had quoted. The church, therefore, might be seen as the source of their authority.

III. PRIESTHOOD IN THE EARLY AND MEDIEVAL CHURCH

The priestly role should teach knowledge, for he is a messenger of the Lord. But how the man who says: “I am the messenger of the Lord” and any Christian who calls himself a “messenger of the Lord” in the name of God, tended to draw attention away from the church as an institution. However, the church itself was an institution that Christ had established centers of learning for clergy, it had failed to secure or guarantee the same level of education as was known to be important for the people of God, who transferred the symbols to the one being installed. As the pressure on him grew, Wyclif began to question the very structure of the church. As the working of the Word, and the Word is spread when people speak. That is the work of the priests, the bishops, the deacons.

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Luther pointed in that same timeframe, was to be an ac- hungry the reformers could not have won their battle over the ordination of the clergy. Without the support of the people, the people would have resisted. Luther’s emphasis on the importance of the people was a reflection of his theology of the Word. He argued that the Word, when preached and understood, had the power to transform lives. In his view, the Bible was not just a book, but was a living source of wisdom and authority. Luther believed that the Word had the power to bring about change and that it was the responsibility of the people to proclaim it. He emphasized the role of the laity in the church, highlighting the importance of lay participation in the church’s work. By placing the emphasis on the Word and the people, Luther was able to create a new vision of the church that was more democratic and less hierarchical. This emphasis on the Word and the people would have implications for the church’s structure and leadership. The church would no longer be an exclusive club for the elite, but would be open to all who believed in the Word. Luther’s emphasis on the Word and the people would have a lasting impact on the church, shaping its structure and guiding its future development.
While describing the priesthood and what it does, Luther also distinguishes between that priesthood of the baptized and the public office of preaching the word.

The Royal Priesthood

The royal priesthood is not a separate office but is a part of the life of the believer.

Clerics serve when they repeat the voice, and the Word and the Spirit in the Word create and sustain that.

To anyone in the baptized priesthood: “A seven-year-old echo the simplicity yet depth of the Augsburg Confession of the baptized priesthood as a whole.

They will never be enough.

No institution—be it church, state, or club—can improve the church’s missionary outreach, making God’s mighty acts known to others.

The Lutheran Confessions are to be found in the catechisms and confessional books.

Luther answered the question of the priesthood: “Is there a saying attributed to Luther? What is one? Reconciliation and peace. Where? In heaven. Reconciliation is a matter of rejoicing, a matter of rejoicing, a matter of rejoicing.

The two are connected: the believer who has the word bears witness to the world, and the believer who has the world bears witness to the world.

Luther, who died in 1546, a Scot, you may not only read the book, but also have the book read to you.

Luther had thought through, he had never made plans for reforming the institution. He had hoped what was in the new city, the new place would change and thus serve well, but not so. As the 1540s drew to a close, the Emperor was forced to make a decision.

The Roman structures and leadership may have helped the baptized understand their identity, grow in the tumultuous 1520s. What might be next? In Luther’s time, who knew what would come if and when Emperor Charles, who had gone off to a new place, would return and focus on his Empire? A different way, the Reformation had brought much change.

Luther had hoped that the Gospel when unleashed would work everything clean, but that had not happened. What was left in the church’s missionary outreach, making God’s mighty acts known to others.

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the hope that is within them in their daily lives (1 Peter 3:15).

5. Each royal priest is to exercise the functions of the royal priesthood — sacrifice, prayer, proclamation — in a way that accords with his or her vocations within the three estates of home, church and society (Num 10:5–10; 20:1–6).

6. The Holy Spirit is at work wherever the saving work of God in Christ is made known, whether that message is delivered by a layman or a pastor. The Gospel alone is the power of salvation (Rom 1:16). This means that the proclamation of the Gospel by members of the royal priesthood as they speak of Christ to others, at home, with fellow believers and in society, is an effective means of grace by which the Holy Spirit creates and nurtures saving faith (Acts 11:19–24).

7. The royal priesthood does not undermine or negate the Office of the Public Ministry, which Christ gives to the Church. Members of the royal priesthood, in various ways, choose individuals from among their number, and are equipped to teach and call in an orderly manner to hold the Office of Public Ministry and to perform its distinctive functions (See 1 Tim 3:1–7; 5:17; Titus 1:5; 1 Cor 4:1–5).

Having completed this report, the Commission is preparing a follow-up Bible study for congregational use.

“To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.” Revelation 1:5–6

Adopted September 15, 2018
Women and Military Service:
A LUTHERAN PERSPECTIVE

A REPORT OF THE COMMISSION ON THEOLOGY AND CHURCH RELATIONS
THE LUTHERAN CHURCH—MISSOURI SYNOD
MARCH 2018

PART I: Background and Introduction

Throughout American history, women have served in a variety of roles in support of military forces, particularly during times of war. However, women normally did not function in direct combat roles, and they were never subject to conscription. The increasing role and number of women in the U.S. military in recent years, and their participation in combat, has coincided with several societal shifts occurring in the latter half of the 20th century and the early 21st century. These changes include movements for equal rights (including calls for equal opportunities for women in all fields), the end of the draft and the beginning of the all-volunteer U.S. military force in 1973, and the evolution of combat tactics of asymmetric warfare.2

Women and Military Service: A LUTHERAN PERSPECTIVE

PART II: Theological Considerations

The Faithful Service of Christians in Governmental Vocations

Male-Female Distinctions within the Order of Creation

Scripture's Teaching about Conscience

A Final Word

PART III: Practical Considerations

Supporting our Christian Sisters and Brothers in Matters of Conscience

Guidance for Individuals and Pastors

A Final Word

Women and Military Service: A LUTHERAN PERSPECTIVE
and recent legislative discussions regarding the possibility of opening all combat roles to women. The social, political and legal context — especially in view of the recent decisions opening all combat roles to women — requires us to address the question of the appropriate role for women in the military. This is not simply a matter of public policy; it touches on the most fundamental question of the nature and purpose of the military.

The Chief of Staff and the Secretary of Defense are charged with the responsibility of determining the role of women in the military. This is a complex issue that involves a variety of perspectives and interests. It is important that we approach this question in a thoughtful and balanced manner, taking into account the needs of the military and the rights of women.

Public Opinion: As women have become more involved in the military, public opinion has also changed. According to a recent poll, the majority of Americans support the inclusion of women in combat roles. This is an important development, as it suggests that the public is increasingly accepting the idea of women serving in combat roles.

Professional Military Arguments: The military has also played a role in shaping public opinion. The military has argued that women are physically capable of serving in combat roles and that their presence in combat units would improve morale and unit cohesion. These arguments have been influential in shaping public opinion.

Legal and Ethical Considerations: There are also important legal and ethical considerations involved in the question of women in combat. For example, the U.S. Constitution guarantees equal protection under the law, and it would be necessary to ensure that women are treated equally in the military.

To conclude, the question of the role of women in the military is a complex and important issue. It requires careful consideration and thoughtful debate. We should be guided by the principles of the U.S. Constitution and the values of the nation as we work to ensure that the military is a reflection of the values of the society it serves.
Holy Scripture clearly affirms that in the earthly realm is instituted by God and is to be respected and obeyed. 41 Christians, therefore, may be good conscience serves to prevent acts of violence in the military, including the military. 42 The Lutheran Confessions affirm this scriptural understanding of governance service to the state in the sense that it is taught that all political authority, civil government, and the like is created and sustained by God and that the Christians may not seek to oppose political authority; by princes and judges, who may administer justice according to imperial and other existing laws, punish wrongdoers with the sword, wage wars, serve as soldiers, and, last, take required oaths, promise pacts, and so forth. 43 There are always limits to a Christian's obedience in the left-hand realm, but, however, for Christians must obey God rather than man (or at least not man) if a conflict should arise between these dual but unequal loyalties. 44

Serving the "word" of government (love to others) to help preserve and maintain order and justice, either in the military or in other civil vocations, in itself a God-pleasing service. 45 In support of this understanding, Martin Luther wrote a bountiful prayer for those who serve as soldiers. 

Barely Father, here I am, according to your will, in the external work and service of your law which I love for you and to that end for your sake. I thank your grace and mercy that you have me in a work which I am not in, not in a way that I know and have learned from your gracious word that none of our own works can help us to be saved as a soldier, but for this reason, therefore, I will not do any evil work of obedience and work any evil work of the study of your will. I will obey you with all my heart and not the bloodless word of any son, your Lord Jesus Christ, roads and sons, who he made for him in obedience to your will. This is the basis on which I stand before you, in this faith I'll live and she, fight, and do everything else. Dear Lord God your Father, preserve and strengthen that faith in my spirit. Amen. 46

The answer lies in the light of Christ. The fullness of this holy life and the bitterness of His suffering and death, given and not a matter of human choice. 28 God did not create the male and female beings specially designed in accordance with His concrete essence of the divine likeness was shattered by sin; and the fall the will to self-assertion distorts this relationship into dominion and subjugation of one party to the other. 48

The Triune God created human, male and female, in His image (Gen. 1:26-27). This means that their God-given gift in righteousness and holiness before Him, and looked to His glory as the goal of the church and its whole community of faith (the church), and to other vocations and society of work. 52

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According to the order of creation, God has ascribed individual identity to each sex. He “from the beginning created them male and female” (Matt. 19:4). The identity and functions of each sex are not interchangeable; each has a special role or function, different from the other. 53

The Bruce-Borgen-Luther perspective that is the foundation of the Biblical view of marriage and of order in the Church, especially with regard to the roles and expectations of men and women. His central concern in these passages is for the male-female distinctions within the order of creation, Luther observes that gender differences and debates have increased in significance in marriage, the family, and in the church are rooted in Scripture in the divine order of creation for reasons of conscience to being employed in military combat or being compelled to participate in military service. 54

Finally, as everyone is aware, cultural and societal views on the relationship between men and women, and even the application of the principles, have changed both in recent decades, and continue to change. 55 New laws, especially those that provide more opportunities for alternatives to military service, and outreach and advocacy for women and their God-given gifts and abilities, and societal concerns about and protections for women who face undesirable attitudes and abuse behavior. Other cultural and societal changes in this area, however, have largely been negative from a Christian perspective, contributing to a continual blurring of the lines between so-called meaningful, created gender distinctions between the sexes and the chilling of possibilities of discussing, interpreting, and affirming the God-given distinctions between man and woman in ways that are headed and rooted positively and constructively.

These factors, among others, have made it more challenging to discuss the issues addressed in this document, and hence they also make it especially necessary to do so clearly, respectfully and faithfully in light of the Bible and Word and in the context of sound reasons and context (not least the historical and practical nature of the pastoral office) that are consistent with created realities that reflect the work and nature of God. The very diversity of this issue, therefore, makes the Word does not make explicit every implication or application of the order of creation for male-female distinctions within the Order of Creation.

The God who guides the primary of the marital vocations of husband and wife and endorses deep respect and honor for those vocations, together with the overall institution of marriage. It is set forth (paraphrased for the pastoral office) that are consistent with created realities that reflect the work and nature of God. The very diversity of this issue, therefore, makes the Word does not make explicit every implication or application of the order of creation for male-female distinctions within the Order of Creation.

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that men and women at worship should conduct themselves modestly and in keeping with the customs of the time and, above all, in accordance with God's will and design. Hence, the created distinction between men and women should be honored in the church.

The ultimate significance of this handiwork consisted in its potential to express a particular differentiation between men and women. When used as a means of leadership, and the primary responsibility for such leadership is that of the husband and father.


Th for whoever does these things is an abomination to the Lord, and whoever commits adulteries, for they are the cause of divorce (to the Lord's Law). In other words, as a crucial and practical way of living out the truth of Christ ("the analog of Christ") that defines the relationship to the church as "head" makes it clear that the position of husband and wife is meant to be exclusive and exclusive alone. Under the principle of mutual submission, however, not necessarily marriage is viewed not as a political relationship between men and women. While both fathers and mothers play a crucial role in the family, they do not beget the family. Thus, the title of the author, authority, is portrayed by Paul, is in love with her with a sacrificial love that is of Christ, which was a sacrifice unto death. Commenting on Eph. 5:21–33, Ginn Edwards Vanhoy says, "The wife's submission is to submit her will. The husband's submission is to give himself up for his wife; Ephesians 5:33 says, '...husband who sacrifices himself..." This is what we mean when we say that submission is a "divine order" of things. It is simply taken for granted that the authority of Christ has been established in the church. Male submission is essential both for the husband and for the wife.

52 Ibid., 80–81. Wives are not given an explicit directive to submit, but it is understood that this should be the case. On this point, see also J. D. Douglas, "The Church and the Civil Order," in A Call to Submit, ed. J. D. Douglas (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1982), 103–106.


For this reason, Paul urges the husband to love his wife, Pers. 5:3 says "...love as you love your own life..." or at least not less than your own life. Love is the expression of concern for the welfare and happiness of others, not only oneself. Love is not a feeling, but a way of life, a way of acting and choosing that is directed towards the well-being of others. Love is an active, not a passive, attitude towards others. Love involves not only feelings, but also actions. Love is not just a feeling, but a way of life.

2013 Res. 2-11A (righteously) observes, reason and natural law recognize physical, hormonal and emotional distinctions between men and women. On average, males have greater physical strength than females, particularly upper body strength. Additionally, due to differing hormonal concentrations, males typically have higher aggression levels, and females more tendencies toward nurturant, supporting and developing or building relationships, furthermore, some may harbor protective attitudes towards women that could cause unit and mission risk if women are involved in combat units. Studies have shown that all-male combat似乎_search for similarities than did female-gender-mixed combat units. They also found that women have significantly higher attrition rates due to injuries in combat-related situations.

While the death of any soldier is deeply tragic, and both fathers and mothers play a crucial role in the family; reason and natural law recognize the feminine role, and feminine roles in society are increasingly recognized and supported. The evidences summarized above from both the Old and the New Testament regarding male-female distinctions are critical to the nature of the society and making special provisions for women and men serving in combat roles. The evidences summarized above from both the Old and the New Testament regarding male-female distinctions are critical to the nature of the society and making special provisions for women and men serving in combat roles. The evidences summarized above from both the Old and the New Testament regarding male-female distinctions are critical to the nature of the society and making special provisions for women and men serving in combat roles.
A Christian woman (married or not) may come to the conscience-bound conviction that God did not want her to serve in the military based on the ample scriptural evidence we have surveyed here regarding male-female distinctions found in the order of creation, as well as considerations supported by reason and natural law. A woman who is a wife and/or a mother also has a primary God-given vocation as well. In the connection, it should be noted and emphasized that The Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod has consistently and firmly held to the basis of Scripture that “She bringeth forth them in years of our days.”

This conviction alone could well form the conscience of a woman (especially a wife or potential mother) against being employed in combat or being conscripted into military service of any kind. Since service in combat in the military could potentially threaten not only her own life but also the life of her unborn child; before she “is a poison in the eye of God from the moment of conception.”

According to Scripture, it is never too late (on, in Martin Luther’s former observance, safe) to go against one’s conscience. “When a Christian is persuaded that he has a choice in conscience, he must resist certain in a manner that he himself will find to be right, no matter how violent or strong the temptation to do the opposite may be.”

In a similar way, the Synod rightly acknowledges that the conscience-bound convictions on both sides of this issue are not mere opinions of the persons involved but the conscience-bound convictions on the important and inalienable Scriptures.

The Free Synod tonight acknowledges in 2016–15:17–19 that Christians (including those within the LCMC) can and do come to differing conscience-bound positions on the issue of women serving in combat. This is particularly the case for those who are most impacted by the issue both actually and/or potentially.

Christian woman. (married or not) may come to the conscience-bound conviction that what Scripture (together with reason and natural law) says about the order of creation, while complete and true, is not decisive on the issue of women in combat. Reasons for arriving at this conclusion might include the fact that scriptural discussions of this issue are primarily concerned with the role of women in marriages and the family and with order in church, and that Scripture does not make explicit every implication or application of the order of creation for life in the civil state (including service in the military).
Guidance for Individuals and Pastors

The present study intends to provide guidance regarding women's service in the military with specific reference to issues arising in the relationship between the law, the scriptural order of creation, vocation, conscience, human reason and natural law; it should be remembered that these issues—however important—do not constitute the central and primary message of God's Word. The concluding words from the CTCR document The Catechist's Identity, although written in the context of addressing issues related to marriage and human sexuality, provide apt closing words here as well:

In the end, our discussions and affirmations regarding our creation as male and female and our church’s public teaching and practice must find their place within the life of faith in Jesus Christ. Therefore, the greatest challenge for us is to speak about these issues from the vantage point of the Cross. We do not forget that the heart of the Christian message is not guidance for marriage or sexuality (or possible vocations in the church) or any other current issue, but that the truth of an irreparably broken world that finds forgiveness, hope, and salvation only in Christ's incarnation, death, and resurrection.

Whatever we say about sexuality (or specific vocations in the earthly realm), it must not overshadow our calling to be the Body of Christ and the Church. After all, the culmination of any true appreciation of our creation as male and female goes far beyond the blessings that come of our central embodiment for this life, as much as we rejoice in the gifts of marriage, monogamy, chastity, and sanctioned masculinity and femininity. All these are good things—good gifts of God to be honored. Yet, there is no higher honor given to humanity as male and female—no greater good—than that which was identified at least as early as Augustine (354–430 AD). Augustine insightfully wrote that in the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ, born of the Virgin Mary, God honored and blessed the work of making man, male and female. By the means of Mary’s embodiment as a woman, and our Lord Jesus’ embodiment as a man, the world saw something new—a picture of the way God desires the whole world to be a role in nothing less than the salvation of the world.6 God wills that such dignity in man and woman, this union of both, to be imitated by every creature endowed by God with eternal purpose to the beauty He has shown.7

Class I-1-O Conscientious Objector: A member who, by reason of conscience, sincerely opposes participation only in combatant military training and service for such units, but believes a significant role in war is necessary for peace.7

The LCMS in convention acknowledges the Department of Defense Instruction 1300.86. Conscientious Objectors (DoDI 1300.86, May 31, 2007), where two classifications for a conscientious objector are recognized (Class 1-O and Class 1-A) and stand routinely with any person who holds “a firm, fixed, and sincere objection to participation in war in any form, or the bearing of arms by reason of religious training and/or belief.” (DoDI 1300.86 paragraph 3.1) and it further resolved:

That the Word of God and the LCMS in convention supports individuals in the LCMS who conscientiously object (1) to a woman’s service in the military in general or (2) to a woman in the military being required to serve in a combat capacity.

Below in figures 1 and 2 are sample statements of understanding and counseling regarding both class 1-O and class 1-A conscientious objections based on guidance given in DoDI 1300.86 (dated July 12, 2017).

Figure 1: Receipt of Counseling Concerning Designation as a Class I-1-O Conscientious Objector

I have been counseled concerning designation as a conscientious objector. Based on my training and belief, I consider myself to be a conscientious objector within the meaning of the statute and regulations governing conscientious objectors and am conscientiously opposed to participation in war or non-combatant and conscientious objector training and services. I request discharge from military service (or exemption from conscription into military service). I fully understand that if this request is favorably received, I will not be eligible for voluntary enlistment, re-enlistment, extension or amendment of current enlistment, or active service in the Military Services by reason of my Class I-1-O conscientious objection status.

Figure 2: Receipt of Counseling Concerning Designation as a Class I- 1-A Conscientious Objector

I have been counseled concerning designation as a conscientious objector. Based on my training and belief, I consider myself to be a conscientious objector within the meaning of the statute and regulations governing conscientious objectors and am conscientiously opposed to participation in combat training and service. I request assignment to noncombatant duties for the remainder of my term of service. I fully understand that on expiration of my current term of service, I am not eligible for voluntary enlistment, re-enlistment, extension or amendment of current enlistment, or active service in the Military Services by reason of my Class I-1-A conscientious objection classification.

These women whose consciences are not settled in this regard should prayerfully search the Scriptures and consult that family member, pastor and others so as to come to a firm conviction on this issue. Again, it is hoped that this document will serve as an aid.

These women who are not conscience-based against women serving in combat and who desire to serve in a combat specialty within the armed forces should evaluate their motives and physical qualifications for drafting to serve in this rotation. Some questions may include:

• Can I faithfully and conscientiously bear witness to my faith in Christ and my neighbor’s need, even when it may be costly or painful?
• Am I prepared for the greater potential for sexual assault and/or harassment that exists for women in military service?
• Can I, in good conscience, willfully participate in training that prepares me to take human life?
• How might such service affect others whose consciences are troubled by this issue?

Do I have other vocations that would be affected by such service, particularly as a woman and pastor?

Pastors should be prepared to provide counsel to their parishioners as well as to others who come to them regarding God’s Word and matters of conscience.

Class I-2 Conscientious Objector: A member who, by reason of conscience, sincerely opposes participation only in combatant military training and service for such units, in so far as such combat is a vocation in the armed services. Class I-2 Conscientious Objectors are honorably discharged and the Class I-2-O Conscientious Objector is a non-combatant.

In the event that women are required to register for the draft, pastors will need to be ready to assist those women who are conscientious against being called to register or being required to conceive or engage in military service to apply as a conscientious objector. Hopefully, that day will prove helpful.6 Also, pastors and their congregations can provide care and assistance to individuals who are compelled to engage in civil disobedience in the event that their application is denied. Furthermore, pastors can offer other valuable guidance for those whose consciences are not clear on this matter, assisting them to come to a firm, God-pleasing conviction. Finally, pastors can encourage their parishes to act according to Christian citizenship in the life of their community and to voice their views to their elected officials regarding the conceptions of women as well as the impact of women serving in the military (whether as combatants or noncombatants).

The convention supports individuals in the LCMS who conscientiously object (1) to a woman’s service in the military in general or (2) to a woman in the military being required to serve in a combat capacity.

If the application is received favorably, the Class 1-O conscientious objector is honorably discharged and the Class 1-O-O conscientious objector is non-combatant.

Conscientious Objector is honorably discharged and the Class 1-O-O conscientious objector is non-combatant.

Class 15 males and females are created different. As a guide in pre-preparation for addressing issues related to marriage and human sexuality, the LCMS in convention supports individuals in the LCMS who conscientiously object (1) to a woman’s service in the military in general or (2) to a woman in the military being required to serve in a combat capacity.

These women whose consciences are not settled in this regard should prayerfully search the Scriptures and consult that family member, pastor and others so as to come to a firm conviction on this issue. Again, it is hoped that this document will serve as an aid.

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IMMIGRANTS AMONG US

A LUTHERAN FRAMEWORK FOR ADDRESSING IMMIGRATION ISSUES

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Introduction

“Tore I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me” (Matt. 25:35). The number of immigrants among us has increased, and the church is aware of the need to witness among people of all nations through its ministries of mission and mercy. The church must also consider its response to the needs, struggles, treatment, well-being and hopes of immigrants. The presence of immigrants who live in the United States illegally or without proper legal documentation has raised questions for LCMS workers and congregations concerning the church’s response to immigration issues in our day. The CTU report Immigrants Among Us and this guide, prepared as a shortened version of this report to facilitate study and discussion, are offered to help congregations and individuals address these important issues.

1: Immigrant Neighbors Past and Present

“For the whole world is at one word: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself’” (Matt. 22:39). Holy Scripture does not address the specific question of the church’s attitude toward illegal or undocumented immigrants, but it does speak to the basic attitude of God’s people toward immigrants (alle, sojourners, strangers) who live among them. Recognizing this helps us to avoid giving absolute biblical answers to an issue Scripture does not directly address. Biblical values can and should inform our attitudes toward and actions among immigrants, even as we wrestle with challenging social and political questions.

Immigrants are included under God’s command to love our neighbor as ourselves. “Neighbor” (the Hebrew word ger) in God’s command applies to all the people of Israel, but also includes those outside of the community, including the enemy or stranger. “When a stranger sojourns with you in the land, you shall not do him wrong. You shall treat the stranger who sojourns with you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself; for you were strangers in the land of Egypt. I am the Lord your God” (Lev. 19:33-34). Immigrants Among Us governs authorities” (Deut. 24:14). But God’s Word also commands us to “be subject to the governing authorities” (Rom. 13:1). Therefore, we cannot ignore the demand that civil laws place on citizens and immigrants in today’s national and international context. We affirm the right of the state to establish laws and policies concerning immigration, including laws that limit immigration for the protection and welfare of its citizens. Migrants such as national security and human trafficking are legitimate and necessary areas of concern for government leaders, who must seek to restrain evil and promote good (Rom. 13:1). In Old Testament times the law of God governed both the spiritual and temporal affairs of Israel. Aliens or sojourners did not automatically receive all the benefits of God’s people. Leviticus 19:33–34 and similar verses show God’s command to Israel to love and care for the strangers in their midst, but other texts indicate that not all foreigners had the same status as foreigners. This may have been due in part to the link between kinship and the citizenship and ownership of land that characterized Israel and other Near Eastern societies, a network no longer available to those who were immigrants.

In the New Testament era, “Israel” refers to the Church, not to an ancient or modern nation called Israel (see Rom. 9:6). We must be careful not to use the political laws of ancient Israel as a biblical blueprint for defining or creating modern nation-state policies or laws. Christian immigrants belong to the spiritual Israel, that is to the Church, the Body of Christ. They are our brothers and sisters in Christ and heirs of all the spiritual rights and benefits of children of God. At the same time, in terms of today’s earthly nation-states, these same immigrants may reside in a nation illegally or illegally. As citizens of the spiritual Israel (the church), Christian immigrants participate in all the spiritual blessings of God’s people through faith in Christ. At the same time, under the earthly state and its laws, these same brothers and sisters do not receive temporal and spiritual benefits because of the hardship of the foreigner’s heart toward vulnerable neighbors among their own people—a broken attitude condemned in Scripture.

Road Dir. 14:20–29 and Dir. 26:12–13. Which groups were without land and inheritance? How were other foreigners treated then?

Sometimes, however, sojourners and others did not receive temporal and spiritual benefits because of the harshness of the foreigner’s heart toward vulnerable neighbors among their own people — a broken attitude condemned in Scripture.

Road Dir. 24:14–18, 27:19; Ezek. 22:7 and Zech. 7:8–11. When does God command concerning justice for foreigners, widows and all who dwell among the people of Israel?

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II. THEOLOGICAL DOCUMENTS—COMMISSION ON THEOLOGY AND CHURCH RELATIONS

relationship between citizens and foreign nationals in contemporary societies.

How should Scripture inform our attitude toward immigrants today? The Bible invites us to see immigrants as our neighbors. Scripture tells us to remember Israel’s love for its immigrant neighbors and what such love meant and still means for the church.

Read Ex. 22:11-20, Lev. 19:33-34 and Deut. 10:19. Why were the Levites to love their neighbors and keep God’s commandments? What does their love for neighbors mean today? Read Deut. 10:11-21. Why should we help foreigners as we would have our neighbors help us? How does God use the church to care for aliens and those in need?

The Old Testament wrestles with God’s compassion for the stranger. Jesus identified Himself as the stranger in need (see Matt. 25:35-40) and reached out in compassion to those who were outside of Israel. In his explanation of the Fifth Commandment in the Large Catechism, Martin Luther writes “Therefore God thereby calls all persons moderators who do not offer comfort or assistance to those in need and are unable to do so.”

In your discussion, how do these biblical references inform our response to immigrants today?

3: Living in God’s Two Realms

Our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ (Phil. 3:20).

Mark Antosh, author of the book Jesus, the "Immigrant and the Strangers: A Call to Love Your Neighbor and Your Immigrant Neighbor," shared his thoughts with The Lutheran:

"Living in God’s two realms means living in both the temporal and spiritual realms at the same time. It is a balance between the two... We must always keep in mind that God is sovereign in all areas of life, including immigration. The church is called to be faithful to God’s Word and to care for those who are in need, regardless of their legal status.

In contemporary society, immigrants and refugees are often depicted as a threat to our way of life. However, as Christians, we are called to be examples of God’s love and compassion to those who are in need. We must also recognize that God’s love is not limited to those who are members of the church and that we are called to care for all people, regardless of their legal status.

In the spiritual realm, the church works to proclaim the Gospel and to be a light in the world. We must always be ready to proclaim the Gospel to those who are in need, regardless of their legal status.

In the temporal realm, the church works to offer assistance and support to those who are in need. We must also be mindful of the laws that govern immigration, and we must always act in accordance with those laws.

In conclusion, living in God’s two realms means living in both the temporal and spiritual realms at the same time. It is a balance between the two, and we must always keep in mind that God is sovereign in all areas of life, including immigration. The church is called to be faithful to God’s Word and to care for those who are in need, regardless of their legal status."
IMMIGRANTS AMONG US

through which He blesses, provides for, protects and sustains those whom God has put in his life. Our callings, or our vocations, allow God's command to love our neighbor as ourselves. We have opportunities to fulﬁll God's command by serving our neighbors for whom we care. But who is my neighbor?...

Commenting on Christ's words "do not resist the evil doer," Luther asked, "Who is my neighbor?" (see Gen. 2:5–9; 15–17; 21–22 and Gen. 3:17–19). Read Luke 14:12–24. Jesus' people about the great banquet is not speaking of immigration, but of serving the people into the Kingdom of God through the proclamation of the Gospel. Are there certain aspects of this parable, however, that might address our response to immigrants? Why or why not?

To be welcomed means to have vocations and neighbors for whom we care. But who is my neighbor? My neighbor is anyone who needs my help, if sety to prevent our neighbors from suffering a more degraded fate. A neighbor has come to this country to engage in criminal activity, and many leave because of issues in some general sense, but about the individuals who are our neighbors. Our callings, or our vocations, allow us to put a human face on concepts immigration-questions, see Framework for Addressing Immigration Issues. For instance, "I have known you all your life. You don't feel strange; you have known me since I was born."

Conclusion

In this discussion guide, the importance of keeping two truths from God's Word has been emphasized. The truths are: (1) "to be free in holiness with respect and admiration, the way human beings should be treated."

Lutheran immigration theology believes that there is a fundamental principle of which we have been called: "Since we are faced with many neighbors asking for our help, we have not the time to consider anyone as a stranger or a person with whom we don't feel protected."

Conclusion

In conclusion, this and other issues concerning immigration law, as well as the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod's position on immigration, is always treated with respect and admiration. The way human beings should be treated.

Theologian David Mohler, an immigrant to the United States from Germany, offers this opinion about the ways in which God is at work and through us as we serve others in our communities. God has provided the world with the church, but ministers and individuals members to proclaim the Gospel of redemption in Christ and to contribute to the spiritual well-being of many nations.

Regarding the challenges surrounding the issue of immigration, the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, works with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security to provide emergency assistance for children entering the United States without a parent or legal guardians. Since we are faced with many neighbors asking for our help, we have not the time to consider anyone as a stranger or a person with whom we don't feel protected.

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II. THEOLOGICAL DOCUMENTS—COMMISSION ON THEOLOGY AND CHURCH RELATIONS

In Christ All Things Hold Together: The Intersection of Science and Christian Theology
A Bible Study and Discussion Guide

This study guide may be used alone or as a companion to In Christ All Things Hold Together: The Intersection of Science and Christian Theology, a 2015 report of the LCMS Commission on Theology and Church Relations. The headings for the introduction and six sessions of this discussion guide provide the corresponding page numbers from the CTCR report.

Introduction: The Challenge of Scientific Incredulity

Session 1: Theological Foundations I

Session 2: Theological Foundations II

Session 3: Historical Context

Session 4: Philosophical Issues

Session 5: Biblical Knowledge and Scientific Knowledge

Session 6: Practical Applications

The above comments, while perhaps extreme in their views, praise science for its unfailing ability to "get things right." Such comments illustrate the fact that our Western culture is increasingly influenced by scientism, "the view that science is the only source of knowledge" (21). Scientism "leads people to regard literature, philosophy and religion as unverifiable relics of our pre-scientific past, sources which can no longer contribute to a serious conversation about what is really true" (6). Another popular worldview is secularism, the idea that "religious believers can retain the therapeutic benefits of belief in the supernatural within the privacy of their own minds, provided secular ideologies define public fact" (6). According to secularism, faith is an inward, personal and private matter, while life in public, life in "the real world," is governed by scientific fact and secular worldviews.

Influenced by such worldviews, Christians may begin to think that God and faith have no place in their daily lives and that God is not at work in ordinary events and in their daily callings. Christians with careers in the sciences may find it impossible to believe that a biblical worldview could contribute to the framework of assumptions on which scientific knowledge is built.

Different methods of addressing the relationship of science and religion have been proposed as attempts to relieve the tension between the two fields of study. For example the NOMA, or "non-overlapping magisteria," view suggests that "religion concerns issues of ultimate value (telling us how to go to heaven), while science tells us how the temporal world operates (how the heavens go)" (7). The NOMA approach sounds inviting because there is some truth to the principle that religion and science have differing areas of concern. "Non-overlapping," however, is a falsehood that becomes destructive to both. According to NOMA, a Christian scientist would have to live on two tracks, a faith track and a work track, doing science just as an atheist would. A related proposal suggests that scientists interpret Scripture in different ways for different purposes. For example a scientist might interpret Scripture as giving God's Word with an eternal and ultimate validity, while even the best scientific theories are the products of finite, fallen minds and may, at some future date, be overturned in favor of new theories.

The report of the Commission on Theology and Church Relations, In Christ All Things Hold Together: The Intersection of Science and Christian Theology, provides guidance in addressing the relationship of science and religion. The report helps Christians address real and perceived tensions between science and theology and encourages them in rethinking scientism. We need to recover the understanding of science as God's gift and as part of the grander global conversation that God has with his humanity. Christian scientists and philosophers can encourage an ongoing dialogue between Scripture and scientific theories and provide evidence that this is a created world and that human beings are a special part of God's creation. The CTCR study and this study guide provide opportunities for informed discussion so the Church can more effectively respond to challenges and encourage Christians to pursue careers in science.

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3 Page numbers in parentheses are taken from In Christ All Things Hold Together: The Intersection of Science and Christian Theology, a report of the Commission on Theology and Church Relations of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (February 2015). The underlying text in bold print in this discussion guide are taken from In Christ All Things Hold Together.


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In Christ All things Hold Together

II. THEOLOGICAL DOCUMENTS — COMMISSION ON THEOLOGY AND CHURCH RELATIONS

Our human reason is not the final authority. Human reason is a gift and a servant and, though limited, it can help us find the best ways to serve our neighbor, things about which Scripture is silent. Scripting our teaching as to plumbing or automobile repair. It tells us to serve our neighbor as ourselves, but leaves the techniques to our human ingenuity. Science is a servant of God’s Word, not a judge over it. Science can serve as an instrument to help us love and serve our neighbor.

Consider your own career and daily activities. Even if you do not work in a scientific field, how have scientific discoveries helped you to love and serve others? How have those in scientific and medical fields helped you, your family or friends?

The proper relationship between God’s two books (in Christ, page 20)

How do we read God’s two books? If we wrongly assume that Scripture is speaking about a scientific theory it may not be (for example, using Joshua 10:12-14 to explain the movement of the planets) or if we assume that nature can only be understood through scientific theory (dismissing creation’s praise of its Creator as in Psalm 98:4 or Psalm 148), we may easily create a false conflict between the two books. Throughout Scripture God communicates with us in the terms of common-sense appearances. He speaks in terms that human beings can understand.

Read Luke 1:1-4 and John 20:38-31. How do the comments of these inspired evangelists illustrate God’s common language? Read Isaiah 40:28. How was God’s ultimate revelation of Himself presented in a way that we could understand?

The natural world was created, and is still governed, by the Word of God. His Word, His logos, is inscribed or imprinted in nature and speaks to us of God’s glorious design and care: “His invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in things that have been made” (Rom. 1:20). We must not impose scientific interpretations on Scripture, and we must also understand that science is not the only way of understanding nature. Scripture opens our mind to the natural world as a source of spiritual and theological knowledge. It speaks of God, His attributes and His works, and it testifies to His ongoing involvement in this world.”

Read Psalm 104. What attributes of God are discussed in this psalm? How do the prophet’s words of praise testify to God’s ongoing involvement in His creation?

Christians today, reflecting the influence of scientific materialism, are tempted to use science as a way of proving Scripture. To guard against that approach, we must remember these five principles about the relationship between Scripture and science (23-24):

1. Scripture, not science, is God’s Word. Scripture speaks through inspired human writers, and reflects the way the world ordinarily appears in their experience. We should not assume that Scripture advocates a particular scientific theory, or that its claims are presented in a scientific manner.

2. Scripture speaks through inspired human writers, and reflects the way the world ordinarily appears in their experience. We should not assume that Scripture advocates a particular scientific theory, or that its claims are presented in a scientific manner.

3. Science is not the only source of knowledge about nature. Scripture speaks of natural revelation, in which our Creator speaks to us through the medium of the natural world, revealing His orderly design, His power, and His providential care (Ps. 19:1-2, Rom. 1:20).

4. Science can provide knowledge about the “what” and “how” of nature, but only Christian theology—revealed partially in nature and with full clarity and authority in Scripture—can explain the “why” of nature and help us to behold God with majesty and awe.

5. Scientific evidence may be used to support scriptural claims (about nature or all theology), but that does not make science the ultimate source of knowledge. Scripture, not science, is God’s Word. Scripture is self-authenticating. Our central focus in reading Scripture is its teachings about the Person and work of Christ and our relationship with Him. Any scientific implications found in scriptural statements should ordinarily appear in their experience. We should not assume that Scripture advocates a particular scientific theory, or that its claims are presented in a scientific manner.


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Christians today, reflecting the influence of scientific materialism, are tempted to use science as a way of proving Scripture. To guard against that approach, we must remember these five principles about the relationship between Scripture and science (23-24):

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“But we are all priests before God if we are Christians. For since we have both been laid on the Stone who is the Chief Priest before God, we also have everything He has. It would please me very much if this word ‘priest’ were used as commonly as the term ‘Christian’ is applied to us. For priests, the baptized, and Christians are all one and the same.”

“A cobbler, a smith, a peasant—each has the work and office of his trade, and yet they are all able to perform priestly and bishoply functions. Further, everyone must benefit and serve every other by means of his own work or office so that in this way many kinds of work may be done for the bodily and spiritual welfare of the community, just as all the members of the body serve another [1 Cor. 12:14–26].”

Professional standards of scientific conduct say nothing about God’s call to be a steward of His creation, or about our obligation to love and serve our neighbor in all that we do. Without understanding their vocation as a calling from God, Christian scientists may benefit from their faith in private but see no meaningful way to relate their faith to their scientific career. Both auto mechanic and quantum mechanic are ways of glorifying God by unraveling the ordering principles God built into nature. Both vocations serve our neighbor through discovering and developing beneficial technology.

**Read 1 Peter 2:9–12.** What is the purpose of our priesthood, our royal calling? Read Colossians 3:17–24 and 2 Thessalonians 3:6–12. What do these passages tell us about our daily work?

A Christocentric approach to creation

(In Christ, page 38)

Mary well-meaning attempts to understand science in Christian terms are descript. According to Deism, God created the universe and governs it through laws, but otherwise He has no ongoing involvement in His creation. The apostle Paul, however, “tells us not merely that ‘all things were created’ by Christ, but also that they were created ‘for him,’ and that ‘in him all things hold together’ (Col. 1:16–17) … Christ is still personally present as the unifying thread throughout the fabric of creation” (35).

We cannot fully understand what something is except in its relation to God. For example, a modern understanding of the human being as systems and cells does not reveal that a person is made in the image of God. Modern science speaks of nature as governed by laws—laws that suggest a personal lawgiver—but science cannot detect the purposes of God, who shapes all things to work together for good for those who love Him (Rom. 8:28).

The theological underpinnings of modern science

(In Christ, page 48)

“The rise of science required a worldview that postulated a world that is orderly and well rewarded rational investigation. That worldview arose from faith in an all-powerful, all-wise God who made all things. In ‘Chemical Evolution,’ the Nobel Prize-winning biochemist Melvin Calvin said, ‘This monistic view seems to be the historical foundation for modern science.’”

Nature can be investigated, an idea that assumes nature makes coherent sense and that there are rules or laws that explain its operation. Christian belief in an orderly Creator made the development of science, which seeks for order in the natural world, possible. The Christian idea that nature is a book inscribed with a logos by a single Author encouraged earlier scientists to believe that there were universal laws of nature. Galileo wrote that science “is written in this grand book, the universe … in the language of mathematics” (49). Our Creator gave us a sense of curiosity and wonder that leads us to seek answers to the mysteries surrounding us: “Science is inherently worthwhile because God created the world good: the world is full of things worth knowing about. Science is also a way of glorifying God, by showing His marvelous handiwork … But above all, science is a vehicle of thought through which human beings are enabled to love and serve their neighbors” (50).

Through science, we develop products to improve our quality of life. Imagine a world without vacuum cleaners, refrigerators, furnaces, air conditioners, washing machines, telephones, televisions, and computers! Science cannot heal the infection of sin, but scientific discoveries are able to lessen human suffering. As God’s creatures, we are dependent on one another. Without the scientist, the farmer might have a poorer yield. But without the farmer, the scientist would most likely starve. The Christian scientist should see his or her work as an important, God-pleasing opportunity to contribute to an interdependent community of many other workers.

How does the following comment by Francis Collins reflect the idea that science is a way to glorify God?

Well, as a scientist who’s also a believer, the chance to uncover the incredible intricacies of God’s creation is an occasion of worship. To be able to look, for the first time in human history, at all these billion letters of the human DNA—which I think of as God’s language—gives us just a tiny glimpse into the amazing creative power of his mind. Every discovery that we now make in science [34], for me, is a chance to worship him in a broader sense, to appreciate just in a small bit the amazing grandeur of his creation. It also helps me appreciate though that as a scientist, there are limits to the kinds of questions that science can answer. And that’s where I have to turn to God and seek his answers.

“The difference it makes it to think that human beings are specially made in the image of God and still retain important remnants of that image? For one thing, it is clear that God provides us with special gifts so that we can serve as stewards of the rest of the world. This includes the intellectual and moral gifts required to practice science within God-pleasing boundaries, as we cannot steward nature effectively if we do not know how it works and what purpose it serves” (44).

**Read Proverbs 10:24–31.** What created wonders are considered by the author of this chapter of Proverbs? What advice does he offer concerning human pride? Read Psalm 148. How does the prophet use created things to shape his praise? Read Job 38:1–11. How does God challenge Job’s pride?

“The godlike scope of human thought can tempt some people, including scientists, to believe that they can completely understand and control reality by themselves: the lure of Babel remains strong (Gen. 11:1–9). But Scripture reminds us that although in some ways our capacity for thought is godlike, we are not God, and our thoughts can never ascend to His heights” (45). Human beings are called to a “middle road,” between confidence and humility. In confident trust, we remember that we were created in the image of God, an image restored in Christ. In grateful humility, we remember that our Creator appointed us as stewards, care-takers, of His creation (Gen. 1:28; Ps. 115:16).

**Read Isaiah 53:8–11.** How does the prophet use created things in his declaration of God’s power? What do these verses say about God’s thoughts and ours? Read Psalm 148. How does the author use created things in his declaration of God’s power? How does he use nature to express God’s greatness and love?

Responsive Reading of Psalm 148

In Session 3, Historical Context, we will examine the historical developments that led to the loss of certain ideas about God and creation. How did we lose the idea that nature is God’s world or the understanding that God gave us the intelligence necessary to understand the whole He created? What new philosophies arose that viewed God as unnecessary?

**II. THEOLOGICAL DOCUMENTS—COMMISSION ON THEOLOGY AND CHURCH RELATIONS**
Session 3: Historical Context (Chapter 2, pages 52–72)

As you read the following three comments from the scientists Isaac Newton (1642–1727) and philosophers David Hume (1711–1776) and Immanuel Kant (1724–1804), notice the sequence of ideas concerning creation, religious beliefs and knowledge.

To make this system therefore with all its motions, required a Cause which understood and compared together the quantity of matter in the several bodies of the Sun and Planets and the gravitating powers resulting from thence. — Isaac Newton

It forms a strong presumption against all supernatural and miraculous relations, that they are observed chiefly to abound among ignorant and barbarous peoples. — David Hume

In a word, scientific knowledge, critically explored and systematically introduced, is the narrow gateway which leads to wisdom, if by such wisdom is understood not merely what one ought to do, but what ought to serve as a guide for teachers, in order to find well and clearly the paths to wisdom on which every man ought to tread, and to preserve others from deadly alleys. — Immanuel Kant

Isaac Newton believed that an “intelligent” Cause was required to establish the solar system. A few decades earlier, David Hume stated that beliefs concerning miracles and the supernatural (such as an intelligent Cause) are found primarily among “ignorant and barbarous” people. Immanuel Kant believed that scientific knowledge alone was “the narrow gateway” to wisdom. How did we lose the sense that nature is God’s world? How did we lose the idea that human reason is God’s gift to enable us to understand nature?

The attack on final causes and the decline of natural theology (In Christ, page 53)

The Greek philosopher Aristotle (384–322 B.C.) proposed the idea of final causes in things, that is, the purpose for which something existed. What was the goal or purpose of the thing in question? For example, the goal—or final cause—of a seed is to mature into a living plant. Although this idea was dominant for a long period of history, some medieval theologians came to view the final causes proposed by Aristotle as a threat to God’s sovereignty because such causes or goals operated independently of God. In the thirteenth century, the Bishop of Paris condemned some of Aristotle’s ideas. The following statements were among those condemned: “The first cause (God) cannot make many worlds,” and “God cannot move heaven in a linear movement. The reason is that this would leave a vacuum.” If something within nature could dictate its own final purpose, or if there was something God could not do, then He was no longer free to govern His creation as He wished. For that reason such proposals were condemned.

Other theologians, however, believed that God worked through final causes for the benefit of humanity. Studies of blood, respiration and muscles assumed that these systems existed for a specific purpose. The search for divine purpose in the natural world provided a religious reason for the pursuit of knowledge. However, some theologians claimed too much imagining God’s final causes in all sorts of things (for example, seeing God’s hand in the behavior of a wood-eating worm that brought nations together in commerce, reading in the size or roar that particular ships’ wooden hulls). Such beliefs caused some people to become skeptical and weakened the idea of God’s care and involvement in His creation. Others argued that if nature was God’s design, God was responsible for evil such as plagues, parasites and disease. Still others saw all of this as speculation and unnecessary for science.

Does the eighteenth century argument about the purpose of the wood-eating worm (page 55 in All Things) carry the idea of God’s involvement too far from biblical truth, or is it a reasonable assumption about a creator’s purpose? Read Exodus 10:12–20, 2 Chronicles 7:1–14 and Psalm 107:1–32. What do these verses say about God’s involvement in His creation? What purposes of God are revealed in these accounts?

The rise of autonomous reason (In Christ, page 59)

Nature was still thought of as “God’s book,” but in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, human reason was increasingly enlarged. Many scholars came to believe that human reason could discern objective truth without the help of divine revelation. Two important books from the seventeenth century, Francis Bacon’s The New Organon (1620) and Rene Descartes’ Meditations (1641), rejected tradition and external authorities (such as divine revelation) as a basis for knowledge in favor of using unaided human reason and experience. Francis Bacon said a scientist must purge his mind of bias so he does not anticipate what nature must do. The scientist must be open to discovering the truth of natural events. He should collect samples and interpret what he sees. Rene Descartes affirmed God as Creator and sustainer of the world, but believed that people can discover the structure of reality without the help of the supernatural.

There was a growing tendency to think that reason could “do it alone.” Still, for Descartes, God was in charge of the mechanical natural world. He was the primary cause of motion. Isaac Newton (1643–1727) believed that the system of planets and sun arose from the work of an intelligent designer. However, as the Age of Enlightenment continued, the idea of God’s control was increasingly rejected. Matter did not need God to govern it—it was self-sufficient, and a self-sufficient world did not need God’s guidance or presence. Some people embraced Deism, the belief that God created the universe but then withdrew from it and remained unmoved in His creation. Others dismissed miracles entirely and thought that

religious tests were legends. God was considered unnecessary—only nature was needed to understand nature.

A contemporary scientific comment, “As science explains more and more, there is less and less need for religious explanations.... As time has passed, we have explained more and more in a purely naturalistic way. This doesn’t contradict religion, but it does take away one of the original motivations for religion.”

Read 1 Corinthians 2:6–16. Is it accurate to say that only nature is needed to understand nature? What purpose does faith in Christ give us? Does faith—with its acceptance of divine revelation—give us an advantage in areas of scientific study or does it apply only in “spiritual” matters?

Naturalistic thinking expanded in influence, as illustrated in the writings of David Hume (1711–1776), who thought that belief in the supernatural was found primarily among “ignorant and barbarous” people. Naturalistic science, combined with scientism, resulted in the belief that the supernatural did not exist, since science cannot detect the supernatural. God himself, therefore, is unknown. “[T]he cultural residue of science is still with us in the widespread assumption that there is no such thing as metaphysical, religious or moral knowledge. At the practical level of everyday life, this is the legacy of naturalism, which makes people unable to see how what is believed by faith could be known to be true. Science is by definition naturalistic and if something cannot be known scientifically, it cannot be known at all. As a result, the resurrection and other miraculous claims of Christianity are relegated to a subjective realm accessible only by faith.”

According to this point of view, we can know things because of science, but in religious or spiritual matters we can only believe.

As science as a profession (In Christ, page 68)

In view of the above comment by Steven Weinberg, read Romans 1:19–20, Romans 8:28–29, Ephesians 1:7–10 and Philippians 2:9–11. If the universe is not pointless, what is its “point,” its purpose?

Questions concerning divine revelation and God’s involvement in His creation extend far beyond those involved in scientific careers. A contemporary survey reveals that the majority of American youth accept a belief system known as moralistic therapeutic deism. This worldview is moralistic, although the moral decisions are not based on God’s will as revealed in Scripture, but on personal experiences and feelings. People are encouraged to do “whatever makes you feel good about you.” (70) This worldview is therapeutic because people want to have their needs met and still want the “comfort” of religion. For that reason, strict deism, the belief that God is not involved in the ongoing course of His world, is revived to include a God who is there (when we want Him) to make us feel better.

Faith is reinvented as the choice of a happy, positive attitude. Contemporary people have a hard time seeing any deep connection between faith and science, since Christianity is no longer regarded as a source of objective truth. Faith is understood as an attitude of mind that does not embrace definite knowledge. Religion offers comfort only in questions of meaning and value that science does not address.
The elevation of human reason encouraged the development of ideologies or worldviews that are hostile to the Christian faith or in tension with it—materialism, scientific, methodological naturalism, the non-overlapping magisteria model and parascience. Thoughtful Christian scientists can resist these worldviews.

Materialism (In Christ, 74):

“The question of whether there exists a supernatural creator, a God, is one of the most important that we have to answer. I think that it is a scientific question. My answer is no.”20

A worldview is an account of the world that involves metaphysical (supernatural, intangible or abstract) questions such as: What is real? How do we know? How should we live?

Materialism is a worldview that makes two metaphysical claims—that what is physical defines the boundaries of what exists and that there cannot be anything independent of what is physical. Materialism, therefore, denies the existence of God and the human soul and often denies objective moral values.

Science cannot prove or disprove the existence of God. Is science looking for God? Is it actually capable of detecting His presence? The investigation of a windowless room will not provide evidence against the existence of the sun because such an investigation is not capable of discovering the sun. “To the extent that much of science restricts itself to secondary causes within nature, it is incapable of making pronouncements on transcendent matters like God, the soul, and objective moral values.”

Scientism (In Christ, 78):

Scientism asserts that materialistic science is the only means of knowing what is real. If science can only discover the material, then immortal entities (such as God and the soul) are unknowable. But scientism is not science. Scientism is a philosophical claim about science. Actual science requires abstract, immaterial things such as numbers and mathematical relations; even scientific propositions are abstract, and not physical, entities. No one could live as if scientism is true. We deal with people each day, and we assume that these people are normal persons with free will and moral responsibility, that is, they are not purely material objects. Scientists themselves make use of concepts such as numbers, truth and logical implications. Such concepts are not material things. The philosophical claim of scientism is opposed to a Christian worldview. Scientism is incompatible with the biblical teaching that man has a natural knowledge of God.

Methodological Naturalism (In Christ, 81):

There are attempts to suggest that Christians can accept both scientism (in the field of science) and their Christian worldview (in other aspects of life). One of them is “methodological naturalism” and the other is “NOMA.”

Naturalism is a worldview that denies the existence of God, the soul and objective moral values. Methodological naturalism, however, permits scientists to believe in God, angels and other supernatural things, but within the field of science they must act as if naturalism is true and that there are no supernatural things. Methodological naturalism argues that since God and souls have free will, and a scientist cannot predict what a free being might do, science should study only material things that behave in regular ways. According to methodological naturalism, any appeal to God is a “science stopper” that might allow a “God of the gaps” explanation in a particular area of study—that is, if we say that God did something, then there is nothing more to be said.

Methodological naturalism is not a universal scientific method because it does not apply in all fields of science. For example, in forensic science, archaeology or studies of the origin of the universe, scientists must consider a range of possible explanations. In some circumstances, an intelligent cause might actually be the better explanation. The study of the “fine-tuning” of the laws of nature for intelligent life or the investigation of miracle claims may also refer to an intelligent cause.

When considering intelligent design, “some caution is in order. Inferring the existence of a super-human, intelligent cause is not the same as inferring that this cause is God” (86). However, inferring an intelligent cause is not unscientific. The inference might be mistaken, or shown later to be mistaken, but that is true of scientific inferences in general. In addition, some things, such as the origin of the universe or the fine-tuning of the laws of nature, are poorly explained by causes within nature and may best be explained by a supernatural cause.

Methodological naturalism is a useful role in many areas of science, but it is not a valid principle in every area of science. “Thoughtful Christians who hope to present scientific evidence to support their faith of claims that we live in a designed world in which God also intervenes should not be deterred by methodological naturalism from making that case” (91).

The NOMA Model (In Christ, 91):

The NOMA model claims that Christians can accept both scientism and a Christian worldview. NOMA stands for non-overlapping magisteria, or non-overlapping spheres of teaching authority. According to this view, the authority of science and religion do not overlap, so religion cannot make claims about the knowledge of the natural world and science cannot make claims about religion. However, NOMA’s advocate, scientist Stephen Jay Gould, did in fact make claims against religion, calling human beings “a wildly improbable evolutionary event” (92). He actually believed in one way overlapping magisteria, that is, that he believed that there is an overlap from science into religion, but not from religion into science.


An absolute divide between science and religion is unfruitful to the goals of theology and science. The realms of science and religion do overlap. Holy Scripture has a great deal to say about the natural world and the natural knowledge of God. The Gospel makes historical claims about what Christ did and does within ordinary history.

**Philosophical contributions of Christianity to science** (in Christ, 94)

“Christians accept the idea that the universe did not just happen, but that there must be a purpose behind it.’”

“... when you realize that the laws of nature must be incredibly finely tuned to produce the universe we see,” says John Polkinghorne, who had a distinguished career as a physicist at Cambridge University before becoming an Anglican priest in 1982, “that conceives to plant the idea that the universe did not just happen, but that there must be a purpose behind it.”

Science, as Francis Collins comments above, does not have the power to address questions of purpose and meaning, but the Christian faith does in fact address these very things. Christianity is actually philosophically friendly to science because it provides key principles that support science. For example, if science is an attempt to understand the natural world, then it must consider the natural world to be fundamentally rational—a world governed by laws and principles that can be understood. A “good explanation of such a coherent, law-governed world is the existence of a single, rational, divine creator.” Indeed, the whole idea of a universal law of nature is derived from the prior idea of a single, rational legislator, and if these laws apply throughout nature, then that legislator must be a supernatural being” (94).

Christians also provide epistemological support, that is, support for questions about our sources of knowledge. The natural world is governed by laws that can be discovered, and “human reason is attuned to the rationality of nature and sufficient to discover its principles” (97).

**How do the following comments support the idea that we live in a “coherent, law-governed world” ordered by “a single, rational, divine creator?”**

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**How do the following comments support the idea that we live in a “coherent, law-governed world” ordered by “a single, rational, divine creator?”**

“... when you realize that the laws of nature must be incredibly finely tuned to produce the universe we see,” says John Polkinghorne, who had a distinguished career as a physicist at Cambridge University before becoming an Anglican priest in 1982, “that conceives to plant the idea that the universe did not just happen, but that there must be a purpose behind it.”

Science, as Francis Collins comments above, does not have the power to address questions of purpose and meaning, but the Christian faith does in fact address these very things. Christianity is actually philosophically friendly to science because it provides key principles that support science. For example, if science is an attempt to understand the natural world, then it must consider the natural world to be fundamentally rational—a world governed by laws and principles that can be understood. A “good explanation of such a coherent, law-governed world is the existence of a single, rational, divine creator.” Indeed, the whole idea of a universal law of nature is derived from the prior idea of a single, rational legislator, and if these laws apply throughout nature, then that legislator must be a supernatural being” (94).

Christians also provide epistemological support, that is, support for questions about our sources of knowledge. The natural world is governed by laws that can be discovered, and “human reason is attuned to the rationality of nature and sufficient to discover its principles” (97).
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II. THEOLOGICAL DOCUMENTS­­—COMMISSION ON THEOLOGY AND CHURCH RELATIONS

The way questions are framed has an impact on the answers discovered. Christians may
sometimes ask the wrong questions. For example, they may search the book of Revelation for the
exact timing of Christ’s return. God’s two books have the same Author and His truth is to be
sought in both books, but for many people this common ground no longer exists because science
and theology are viewed as “non-overlapping magisteria” (NOMA), and the two books are
thought to be in conflict. Does science have the last word as to what we can really know?
Theologian and author Francis Schaeffer comments:
When we face apparent problems between present scientific theories and the teaching of
the Bible, the first rule is not to panic, as though scientific theory is always right. The
history of science, including science in our own day, has often seen great dogmatism
about theories which later have been discarded. Thus there is no inherent reason why a
current scientific theory should immediately be accepted. And there is no inherent reason
why a Christian should be put in a panic because the current scientific theory is opposite
to what is taught in the Bible.
When we come to a problem, we should take time as educated people to reconsider both
the special and general revelations; that is, we should take time to think through the
question. There is a tendency among many today to consider that the scientific truth will
always be more true. This we must reject. We must take ample time, and sometimes this
will mean a long time, to consider whether the apparent clash between science and
revelation means that the theory set for by science is wrong or whether we must
reconsider what we thought the Bible says. 38
Read Philippians 3:4–11. According to these verses, what does the apostle Paul know? What
impact does this knowledge have on his life?
Paul speaks of another kind of knowing, of knowing someone, a person—Jesus Christ—as his
Lord. Knowing Christ changes everything for the apostle. This kind of knowing is of greatest
importance for Christianity. Science is not the final judge of all knowledge. “At the same time,
however, it is important to confess that reason or rational arguments are not the ultimate basis
for the knowing that Christianity claims for itself. Rather, Christians know that the wisdom of
God confounds all human wisdom (1 Cor. 3:19). How do we know this? These truths flow out of
knowing Christ Jesus, who is God’s very truth made flesh (John 1:14), God in the nature of a
man (Phil. 2:6; Heb. 1:3), and the very wisdom of God (1 Cor. 1:24).” (101)
No knowledge is more certain than knowing Christ by faith. Human imagination cannot rightly
know Christ; He can only be known through the revelation of the Word. The clarity and
authority of God’s Word, centered in Christ and the Gospel, is greater than God’s book of nature.
Read John 5:39–47. What did the Jews hope to find in their study of the Old Testament
Scriptures? What particular knowledge was missing in their search? Read Luke 24:44–49. What
Francis Schaeffer, No Final Conflict in The Complete Works of Francis A. Schaeffer, vol. 2, (Wheaton, IL:
Crossway, 1985), 130, at https://reformedreader.wordpress.com/2013/05/15/francis-schaeffer-on-science-andscripture/.

does Jesus say here concerning the relationship between Himself and the Scriptures? Read John
20:30–31. What does the evangelist John want us to know and believe about Jesus through
reading his gospel?
Just as we hold to Christ, we hold to the Scriptures, knowing them to be the Word of God.
“Therefore it is important to state clearly that even as the church confesses its faith in Christ, so
also its conviction of the complete trustworthiness of the Holy Scripture is a confession of faith”
(102). The authority of Scripture is bound up with the authority of God Himself (2 Pet. 1:16–21;
2 Tim. 3:16–17).
In our culture, many people assume that science has the authority to trump the claims of any
other source, including Scripture. To them, Scripture is a human document full of fallible,
revisable claims. Yet God knows all truths (Ps. 147:5; John 21:17; Heb. 4:13). He can do what
he intends (Ps. 115:3; Jer. 32:17; Matt. 19:26; Rom. 11:36). “Thus He can communicate
truthfully through human language and the words of mortal men. God is holy and he cannot
deceive us, and indeed, by His very nature, He cannot do so (Num. 23:19; Ps. 25:8; Is. 6:3; Heb.
6:18). Thus God’s Word is infallible (trustworthy and reliable; incapable of mistake) and
inerrant (without error) because He is completely trustworthy and without error” (104–105).
Some contemporary theologians claim that Scripture is reliable only in spiritual matters, but not
in secular matters such as history and science. That claim “drives a wedge between God’s work
as Creator and His works of redemption and spiritual renewal. Orthodox Christianity holds the
spiritual and the physical together as two spheres in which God is equally at work” (105). The
Bible bears witness to the acts of God in human history to accomplish our salvation. Paul asserts
that the truth of the Christian faith depends on the historical fact of Jesus’ resurrection (1 Cor.
15:17–20).
Read Acts 2:22–23, Acts 26:19–29 and 2 Peter 1:16–18.What is said in these texts concerning
eyewitness accounts of historical events? Read Acts 1:21–22. What particular requirement was
necessary for the person who would take the place of Judas among the apostles?
Reading God’s Word—basic principles of interpretation
(In Christ, 106)
Christians must keep Christ and Scripture together. “The crucial point to emphasize here is that
this orientation toward the centrality of the Gospel of Christ and His justifying work for the
world is presented by Scripture itself as the way it should be read. Our whole approach to the
interpretation of biblical texts is guided by this important orientation. This is the central
interpretive principle for the Christian reader of the Bible” (106).
The following principles that guide us in our reading of Holy Scripture are helpful and generally
accepted. These principles are not arranged in order of importance, but as they are actually used
in the task of interpretation. 39

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In Christ All Thing Hold Together, 107. The seven principles are adapted from Lane A. Burgland, How to Read
the Bible with Understanding, 2d ed. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2016).

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Father, and in the name of Jesus Christ the Son of God, Who was incarnate and died and rose
again, and in the Holy Spirit of God.” 40

Pay attention to the context, both literary and historical.
Begin with the plain meaning of a text.
Scripture interprets Scripture.
Interpret Scripture in light of the rule of faith.
Interpret Scripture in view of Christ.
Distinguish Law and Gospel, sin and grace.
Attend to the “then and there” meaning as well as the “here and now” meaning.

Read 1 Corinthians 15:3–8 and 1 Timothy 3:16. How is the rule of faith expressed in these
verses?

Concerning the first principle, we must pay attention to the context of any document, including
Scripture. For example, in reading one of Paul’s epistles, the interpreter should consider when
and to whom the letter was written. What issues were troubling the church to whom Paul is
writing? Had Paul already visited that church, or was he planning to do so in the future?
In the second principle, we take the text at face value, accepting its plain meaning. What does the
text actually say? We cannot pass judgment on God’s Word; it is God who judges us. Someone
who reads about a miraculous claim in a newspaper may doubt such unusual information. When
reading a miraculous claim in Scripture, for example, when someone is healed by Jesus, we can
accept the plain meaning—the truth of the account—because we know that Jesus is Lord of
heaven and earth. In establishing doctrines, the Church focuses on the primary and intended
meaning of Scripture, and not on symbolic readings. Figures of speech do happen in Scripture—
mountains sing for joy and rivers clap their hands—yet other accounts, such as Jesus’ healing
miracles, are assumed to mean what they say. Some readers may wrongly attempt to dismiss
scriptural texts that create scientific, cultural or personal difficulties by assigning an allegorical
or symbolic meaning to them (suggesting, for example, that Adam and Eve were not people from
history but merely symbolic figures representing humanity).

The fifth principle, interpreting the Scriptures in view of Christ, and the sixth, reading Scripture
as Law and Gospel, keep Christ and His saving work at the center of Holy Scripture. “All sound
exegesis must begin and ever return to Christ Jesus, the revelation of God (Matt. 11:27)” (110).
The twin message of the Law—to reveal and condemn sin—and the Gospel—the promise of
God’s grace in Christ—is constantly repeated throughout Scripture.
The seventh principle, paying attention to the “then and there” and the “here and now” meanings
of the text helps to prevent superficial readings of Scripture. The Bible was written thousands of
years ago in a world different from our own, but its truths, revealed in particular times and
places, are for all people of all times. This principle reminds us, for example, that when Scripture
tells us not to covet our neighbor’s ox or donkey (Ex. 20:17), this can be understood today to
forbid coveting our neighbor’s status, car or other possessions.
Biblical Exegesis and Modern Science
(In Christ, 111)
How does proper biblical interpretation relate to the discoveries, models and theories of science?
Is the Bible discredited because it sometimes appears to be in conflict with scientific knowledge?

The third principle states that Scripture interprets Scripture. For example, we read the story of
creation in Genesis 1. Throughout the Bible we find help in interpreting the creation account as
we see that God is consistently portrayed as the Creator of heaven and earth (Neh. 9:6; Is. 45:12),
who created all things from nothing (Rom. 4:17; Heb. 11:3), by speaking (Ps. 33:6; 2 Pet. 3:5)
and in six days (Ex. 31:17; Heb. 4:4).

God did not reveal Himself in Scripture in a mysterious “heavenly” language, but in ordinary
human language shaped by the world as it appears to human beings. For example, the sun
appears to move across the sky, leaving its “tent” to run its course (Psalm 19:4–5). God “inspired
fallible human beings to communicate infallibly His truth as it was spoken by prophets and
apostles and preserved infallibly in the inerrant Scriptures” (112).

“Scripture interpret Scripture” in these verses? What is the origin of humanity?

Scripture texts that appear to have scientific meaning should be taken as accurate reports of the
way things appear to the five senses of human beings. In Joshua 10:12–13, our interpretation
should be limited to the fact that, from our earthbound point of view, the sun appeared to stand
still. That text is not a scientific explanation of the movement of the solar system. Biblical
inerrancy does not mean that we should expect biblical writers to express themselves according
to modern scientific theories. “The text is indeed inspired, but what was inspired were human
words whose meanings are to be found in their normal usage at the time the original autographs
[the original manuscripts] were written—and that usage was not shaped by any of these scientific
theories” (113).

According to the fourth principle, we are to interpret Scripture according to the rule of faith, the
great “melody line” (110) of Holy Scripture. The rule is a summary of the story of our salvation
by God’s grace through faith in Christ Jesus. The Apostles’, Nicene and Athanasian Creeds
express the rule of faith, summarizing God’s work of creation, redemption and renewal. As in the
creeds, the truths of the rule may be communicated in a variety of ways. The early church father
Irenaeus (c. 130-c. 200 A.D.) briefly expressed the rule of faith this way: “First of all, [faith] bids
us bear in mind that we have received baptism for the remission of sins in the name of God the

It is important to remember the original language of “then and there,” realizing that the biblical
use of words was not shaped by modern scientific theories. For example, the “kinds” in Genesis
(Gen. 1:11, 21, 24) are not modern scientific categories for classifying living things. We do not
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know the exact marine creature that swallowed Jonah because the words used (dag gadol, or great fish, in Hebrew, and koiros, or sea-monster, in Greek) are not precise terms. Sometimes we may not know specific details, such as an explanation for the star of Bethlehem. The Greek term aster could mean a star, a planet, or a comet. In Scripture we must also pay attention to cultural details—sounding horns, drawing a blood passport—there are not familiar to us today but help to teach eternal truths.

It is helpful to identify the type of literature that appears in the text, such as historical narrative, poems, regulations and laws, prophecies or psalms, although this alone is not conclusive as to the meaning of the biblical text. It would be wrong to dismiss the creation story as merely a poetic metaphor because the Genesis account conflicts with modern scientific theories. Clues within the text itself will indicate the style and purpose of an account.

Read Exodus 3:1-10. What is the style of literature in this text? How does it express historical events? Read Psalm 90:4-8. What is the style of literature in this text? Does it present historical events or does it have another purpose or meaning? Read 2 Kings 6:1-7. What type of literature is used to present this miraculous event?

Does final authority lie with the Word of God or the claims of science? Especially today, all forms of authority are challenged, including the moral authority of Scripture. For example, in recent years some theologians have claimed that Romans 1:26-27 does not speak against sexual activity between people of the same sex but only of first century abuses such as temple prostitution. In this approach, modern beliefs are read back into the text, in this case the modern claim that homosexuality is one of many natural orientations. However, such a conclusion cannot be drawn from the words of the text itself.

Scripture is infallible, but its interpreters are not. Further study may lead faithful scholars to question assumptions or conclusions about a biblical text, yet they must guard against simply re-reading the text in light of the newest scientific theories. The Bible cannot be isolated from science, but it does not speak directly in many of the topics that science addresses. Scripture is not an encyclopaedia of all human knowledge, but it is the inspired record of God’s particular work in history—especially the incarnation and saving work of His Son” (120). Scripture is certainly clear about its central, primary truth—Jesus Christ and His saving work.

Read Isaiah 55:10-11, John 20:30-31 and 2 Timothy 3:16-17. What do these texts have to say about Scripture and its purpose?

“The Bible is clear about these doctrines essential to salvation and Christian living. This means that if there is a text that expresses a doctrinal truth in a way that is clear to us, we can be sure that it is also expressed more clearly in some other passage of Scripture” (121). Scripture interprets Scripture, and clear passages will illuminate those that are less clear.

Scripture does not teach only spiritual or moral truths. It reveals truths about the world and about history that are historical and scientific even when telling us about God’s miraculous ways. God is fully involved in His creation. His work of redemption involved His Incarnation, His flesh and blood birth among us.

"At a recent scientific conference at City College of New York, a student in the audience rose to ask the panelists an unexpected question: ‘Can you be a good scientist and believe in God?’ I can’t imagine how the panelists, all Nobel laureates, would answer this question. But I respect the question and the attempt to ask it.”

I build molecules for a living, I can’t begin to tell you how difficult that job is. I stand in awe of what God has done in the world. ‘I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me.’ This verse comes from the book of Exodus chapter 20. This verse expresses profound, anti-disensational truths. The power of Scripture is not limited to what we find easy to understand. The power of Baptism is not limited to what we can grasp. The power of Scripture is not limited to what we can grasp in our minds. The power of Baptism is not limited to what we can grasp in our minds. The power of Scripture is not limited to what we can grasp in our minds. The power of Baptism is not limited to what we can grasp in our minds.

When there is no clear way to integrate a claim of Scripture with scientific claims, we must do our best to offer an interpretation of the passage or explain the tension involved—acknowledging that the explanation may be uncertain, yet showing the extent to which that interpretation is grounded in the biblical text, which is reliable.

Read 1 Corinthians 13:13-14 and John 21:25. What do these verses tell us about areas of uncertainty or things we do not know or understand in Scripture?

It is honest and faithful to the goals of both Scripture and science to realize that we must sometimes live with unresolved tensions, knowing that our hope lies not in our perfect knowledge but in Christ Jesus. Scripture alone is the ultimate source and standard for all teaching. The proper role of science, and of human reason, is to be a servant to the faith. We must humbly follow the original, intended meaning of the text, for that is where we meet Christ.

How might you respond to the following statements concerning the truth of biblical teaching?

“Religion doesn’t have a methodology to weed out what’s false. In fact, it’s a way of fooling yourself. They have authority, revelation, dogma, and indoctrination as their methods and no way of proving their tenets false.”

If Christians are to accept science, they have to admit that the Bible is not a reliable source of information about the natural world. And why should we believe that it is a reliable source of information about anything? The creation story in Genesis is a myth. And, it is not the only story to the Bible that science can now prove is largely fiction.”

In Session 6, Practical Applications, we will discuss the opportunities and challenges that science provides for thoughtful Christians. We will examine the ways in which students, teachers, scientific investigators and non-scientifically-literate might respond to the claims of science.

Responsive Reading of Psalm 119:89-96

High school and college students may learn about scientific theories—for example, evolutionary claims about the origin and diversity of life—that are in conflict with their Christian faith. Many students react to such claims in unhelpful ways. Author Gene Veith presents a constructive approach to dealing with this challenge. Before responding to any scientific claims, the student of science should ask some questions:

1. To what extent has a purely scientific theory or observation been combined with non-scientific ideologies or philosophical assumptions?
2. Can we distinguish and disintegrate the science from the ideology and the philosophy, and if so, how much of our disagreement is primarily with the latter and not the former?
3. Even if we still think that the purely scientific claim is overstated and/or false, is there an element of truth in it?
4. Can we distinguish domains and applications where the claim is useful (and perhaps true) from others where it is more questionable (perhaps because it is unsettled, or even untestable, in those areas)?

When we learn about certain scientific theories, even those with which we disagree, we are better able to understand our neighbors’ opinions. We can respond with gentleness and respect (1 Pet. 3:15). Asking questions such as the four above, Christian students can separate truth from falsehood, the scientific from the philosophical and what is useful from what is merely speculative. Christian students—and all believers—are to be in the world, not of it (John 17:14–15) and should therefore maintain a critical distance from the world’s ideas and theories.

For example, if scientists suggest that evidence points to the non-existence of God, “there is no reason Christian scientists cannot dispute this, either by critiquing the limitations of that evidence, or by offering other evidence that points in the opposite direction. It is obviously unfair and ideologically biased to claim that scientific evidence can be used to support atheistic conclusions but cannot be used to support theistic ones” (127).

Biochemist Michael Behe comments: “It is often said that science must avoid any conclusions which smack of the supernatural. But this seems to me to be both bad logic and bad science. Science is not a game in which arbitrary rules are used to decide what explanations are to be permitted. Rather, it is an effort to make true statements about physical reality.”

"The true facts are from Gene Edwin Veith, ‘The University of Babylon’ in Living God With All Your Mind: Thinking as a Christian in a Postmodern World (Zurich, B. Cremer Verlag, 2003).
Christian teachers of science can help their Christian students understand that they can pursue scientific careers without compromising their faith. Teachers can encourage students to study the lives and contributions of scientists who were, and are, faithful Christians. Christian teachers should also avoid imparting an anti-scientific perspective to students, and should emphasize the practical benefits for humanity discovered through science. For example, scientific advances in medicine are a good starting point for the Christian teacher who wants to encourage students to pursue scientific vocations. Teachers can remind their students that central aspects of the scientific method—for example, the importance of privileging evidence over assumptions and a value of critical, careful, objective research and thinking—are vital in every intellectual pursuit. “Precisely because Christians have a place to stand outside of this world, they can be all the more objective in assessing the world’s ideas” (129).


Teachers
(All Things, 128)

Christian teachers can help their students understand that they can pursue scientific careers without compromising their faith. Teachers can encourage students to study the lives and contributions of scientists who were, and are, faithful Christians. Christian teachers should also avoid imparting an anti-scientific perspective to students, and should emphasize the practical benefits for humanity discovered through science. For example, scientific advances in medicine are a good starting point for the Christian teacher who wants to encourage students to pursue scientific vocations. Teachers can remind their students that central aspects of the scientific method—for example, the importance of privileging evidence over assumptions and a value of critical, careful, objective research and thinking—are vital in every intellectual pursuit. “Precisely because Christians have a place to stand outside of this world, they can be all the more objective in assessing the world’s ideas” (129).


50 Students can research and report on the lives and work of Christians in the sciences. Suggested names from the past include Nicholas of Cusa (1401–1464), Blaise Pascal (1623–1662), Michael Faraday (1791–1867), Asa Gray (1810–1888), and George Washington Carver (1864–1943). Suggested contemporary Christian scientists include John Polkinghorne, Andrew Peterson, Katherine Hybel, Dorothyhores, Jon Hutchins and Randy Leisz.

God’s moral law provides the boundaries for our vocations, and this includes the moral boundaries for scientific vocations. Scientific investigation has a special role within God’s divine purpose. Scientists occupy positions of trust. God has placed scientists in various fields of study that allow them to love and serve their neighbors in ways that are beyond the abilities of most people. Scientists should not reject or ignore the rich resources of Holy Scripture or centuries of reflection on Christian ethics.

If scientific work is reduced to the quest for funding and fame, the scientific vocation will be corrupted. Science is never an excuse to deny the humanity and dignity of a person. The terms “subject” or “patient” should never create the illusion that a person made in the image of God is merely a part of an experiment to serve the interests of humanity. “A Christian understanding of scientific vocation should include; thirdly, a high view of human dignity and value; and should guard against the cynical and unibidual view that some people are more valuable than others. Human persons are more biological, psychological, sociological resources to be valued only for their capacities and contributions to society. Rather, each person is a priceless gift of God” (132).

Christians who work in the sciences must understand that their abilities and skill are to be used for the well-being of human beings created by God and endowed by Him with dignity. God has called us to be concerned for others and to serve them—to “walk in love as Christ loved us” (Eph. 5:2). Scientists, and all of us, suffer alienation from one another through increasing bureaucratization, the obsession with statistics and the distances of technology. God became a real man and lived among us. He spoke words of love and offered both physical and spiritual healing. We, too, must minister to people for their good. We need to ask ourselves, “Am I helping someone today?”

Read Galatians 5:13–14. Consider some of the controversies in science and medicine. How does God’s moral law help us in addressing such circumstances?

Non-scientists
(All Things, 185)

“One of the saddest things about many Christian institutions is that they have no room for the scientific method. They are not interested in learning from the experiment of the past. They are satisfied with the knowledge that science gives and do not want to know more about what science has not discovered.”

In modern society, science affects all of us, and not merely because it develops the technologies and treatments we all use. Science has also emerged as a voice of cultural authority in many of our most important decisions. However, this exposes non-scientists to politically and ideologically charged claims made on behalf of science. Non-scientists must learn to discern when they hear reports in the media about the latest scientific discoveries that have important implications for the role of science in public life and how the results of scientific research should affect our lives. Non-scientists can learn to question the sources of scientific claims, the implications of scientific research, and the role of science in public policy.

How might the following comments by C. S. Lewis apply to today’s scientific debates and controversies?

“The only palliative is to keep the clean sea breeze of the centuries blowing through our minds, and the only palliative is to keep the clean sea breeze of the centuries blowing through our minds, and the clean sea breeze of the centuries blowing through our minds, and the clean sea breeze of the centuries blowing through our minds…”

To be sure, the books of the future would be just as good a corrective as the books of the past, but unfortunately we cannot get at these. 54

As we learn more about past philosophies and current controversies, we will be better equipped to respond to the issues arising from scientific study. We can encourage more Christians to pursue careers and vocations in science, confident of their calling and with a high moral motivation. We can also help students and teachers find the best strategies for handling controversies, especially as those controversies impact the Christian faith. We can see scientists themselves as a great resource in the body of Christ, as those best qualified to help us understand what science is really saying and best equipped to inspire young people to follow them into scientific vocations.

Read Colossians 1:11–20. If you were speaking to students of science, how might you explain the statement that in Christ “all things hold together”? 5

Responsive Reading of Psalm 8

II. THEOLOGICAL DOCUMENTS—COMMISSION ON THEOLOGY AND CHURCH RELATIONS

Unjustifiable Faiths:
Four Common—and Wrong—Beliefs about Justification

Leader's Guide

Introduction

For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law (Rom. 3:28). Luther's understanding of this Biblical teaching created a ripple effect through both the church and society of his day. What do people understand "justification" to mean in our time?

Within the Christian Church, the concept of justification refers to God's juridical declaration of righteousness through faith in Christ Jesus. But even more people understand justification to mean "the act of showing that a person's conduct is right or reasonable." When you under pressure to explain their actions or their character, most people will try to show why their behavior should be approved by those calling their actions into question. So a Board of Directors may ask the corporate CEO to justify certain federal taxes. Directors may ask the corporate CEO to justify certain decisions. When St. Paul writes that we are justified by faith apart from works of the law, he is contrasting two distinct approaches to God: through "faith" or through "acts of the law." The wider context of Romans reveals what is unstated in that sentence, namely, the object of faith (i.e. what or whom we are trusting), which is Jesus Christ. American culture believes people are justified by faith, too, but the object of that faith is quite different. The object of that faith is one self, and belief in oneself is the key to achieving a kind of secular "salvation," namely, realizing the American dream.

1. The lyric, "Just Believe," from the movie The Polar Express, often believed as salvation from the grown-up's world of cynicism. According to the lyric, in what two things is the hearer to believe? What is the promised outcome of such faith? 3. According to the song, to believe in what you feel inside is to give your dreams the wings to fly. What examples from history illustrate that faith in a dream brought it to reality? What examples illustrate that faith in a dream was not enough to bring it to reality?

2. In response to a specific request of the 2016 Convention of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (Res. 1-10), the LCMS Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR) has prepared a series of Bible studies on the doctrine of justification. The other studies in this series look at the Scriptural doctrine of justification from historical and Biblical viewpoints. This Bible study explores four commonly held beliefs that do not justify a person before God. Since each is an attempt to show that the person's conduct is right or reasonable (and therefore should be acceptable to God), each is really an example of self-justification, and each tells a short of what Scripture teaches. It is God who justifies (Rom. 8:30b), as He declares people righteous through faith in Christ. The titles of each session (in quotation marks) are commonly heard and commonly believed as such, falls short of what Scripture teaches: "It is God who justifies," included remains unspoken.

The human heart is corrupted by sin. Note the added feature in these verses: "Every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually" (Gen. 6:5). The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick, who can understand it? (Jer. 17:9). For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, fornication, theft, false witness, slander (Matt. 15:19, 21). A Christian is still saint and sinner (see Rom. 7:25). Therefore, the Christian's heart struggles against misleading desires, too. It is why we still need Confession and Absolution.

3. According to the song, to believe in what you feel inside is to give your dreams the wings to fly. What examples from history illustrate that faith in a dream brought it to reality? What examples illustrate that faith in a dream was not enough to bring it to reality?

For a list of those whose persistent belief in themselves brought their dreams to reality, see life with confidence, com/inspirational-stories.html. Included are such people as George Lucas, Harry Ford, Michael Jordan, Colonel Sanders and Walt Disney. While we do not have the names of those whose dreams have failed, we do have their failed products. Clairol Yogurt Shampoo, Coca-Cola Mountain Sparkling Water, Colgate Toothpaste's Kitchen Entries meals, flavored bottled water for cats and dogs, the disposable underwear, and of course, the Ford Edsel. The point is one cannot point to the persistence and success of others as a guarantee that one's own dreams will fly if the person only believes in himself.

4. After years of rejection, Tom's idea finally comes to successful fruition. His faith in himself is justified by overwhelming sales. He explains to his pastor, "The secret to my success is this: I just believed in myself and never gave up." If you were Tom's pastor, how would you answer? See James 1:17.

5. One might direct Tom to reflect upon God's First Article gift to him and the just such gifts (including his self-confidence) played in his success. Luther's phrase in his explanation to the First Article reminds us that God has given us "all that we need" (Warner, 2004). In what ways does the author of that poster affirm this statement in the song to believe in yourself?

6. A poster reads, "Have faith … believe in yourself … and your dreams will come true." In what two things is the hearer to believe? What is the promised outcome of such faith? 3. According to the song, to believe in what you feel inside is to give your dreams the wings to fly. What examples from history illustrate that faith in a dream brought it to reality? What examples illustrate that faith in a dream was not enough to bring it to reality?
II. THEOLOGICAL DOCUMENTS — COMMISSION ON THEOLOGY AND CHURCH RELATIONS

Session Two: "Prosperity shows that you have God's approval."

Throughout history, many people have associated wealth and prosperity with divine approval. They have assumed that material prosperity brings them with all kinds of temptation to be false to God. Christians usually warn against covetousness and the idea that quality of life is determined by the number of one's possessions. Storing up material treasures for oneself does not equal approval. But if we quickly blunt the possibility of being tempted by wealth, we should consider Paul's words to his beloved Thessalonians: "Therefore we decide that he stands at the foot of the last act (v. 16)."

Read Luke 2:80. On the basis of these words, can it be said that poverty is a sign of God's approval? One needs to be careful to consider the context. Two groups are present: the disciple and a large crowd of people from far away as Tens and Tobin. Verses 11-26 contrast two groups, simply identified in verses 11 and 24 as the poor and the rich. The first group is blessed, the second is not. That Jesus is not thinking strictly in economic terms can be seen in verse 22, which further describes "poor" as persecuted followers of Jesus. It is also important to note that Jesus did not say that, as a catechism, to put it in a manner that is meaningful and meaningful, one can use the example of the rich man did not help even when he saw Lazarus' misery every day. The rich did not bother him, but he warmed his brothers to that extent that they repeat it indicates that he realized it in the context of his calling attitude toward his neighbor, not simply because of his wealth (v. 14).

Session Three: "God only expects you to do the best you can.

A Bible class participant shared this with other members of his class: "Before I came to this church, I thought that I was a Christian because I provided for my family, supported my church and was loyal to my country. After coming here, I learned how wrong I was. A Christian is one who has faith in Jesus Christ as his Savior." A system where people receive approval or rewards based on work or effort rather than faith or other factors, is called a meritocracy. If one is promised to be a hard worker, loyal to company or country, there is an expectation that such efforts will be recognized and rewarded in some fashion. It's hard to say that system works. If, in that system the work of our world, isn't it reasonable to believe that it is how it works in God's economy too?

1. Read Matt. 20:1-16. Why did the workers who were hired first grumble when they received their pay? How did they try to justify their expectation of receiving higher wage than the latter workers received? How does the owner's words to them show that the Kingdom of God is not a meritocracy? By what system does the owner operate is not a meritocracy? Read Rev. 2:9-16.

The first workers grumbled because they received the same wage as those who were hired later in the day. They tried to justify their expectation of receiving more wages because they worked longer and under more strenuous conditions. The owner of the field shows that the Kingdom is not a meritocracy when he says, "Am I not free to do what I choose with what belongs to me?"

The first workers operate on the principle that the vineyard is his to do with as he pleases and therefore he can pay wages as he pleases. The earth is the Lord's. So (v. 21). As the vineyard from Romans indicate, God chooses to do what he chooses to do and no one has the right to interfere with his actions, and no one has the right to interfere with his actions. The owner of the field shows that the Kingdom is not a meritocracy when he says, "Am I not free to do what I choose with what belongs to me?"

2. Read Luke 7:14. On what grounds did the sick men make their case for Jesus to help the centurion? Did you think that Jesus had any soft heart toward their request? If not, how was the centurion was worthy of the help? Why might the men have gone with them? See Ps. 50:15 and John 4.

The doctors based their plea on what the centurion had done for them — he built their synagogues and was favorably disposed toward Jews. According to Ps. 39:9, God invites those in distress to call upon Him and gives a promise of deliverance. Jesus went to the centurion in the same manner. Jesus did not have good things on earth because the rich man did not help even when he saw Lazarus' misery every day. The rich did not bother him, but he warmed his brothers to that extent that they repeat it indicates that he realized it in the context of his calling attitude toward his neighbor, not simply because of his wealth (v. 14).

The centurion's own assessment is that he is unforgiving to Jesus. He says, "I am a man of position, a man of power, a leader who has been given authority over the soldiers. I was sent to the centurion, to the sick men, to the rich man. I have been sent to those who believe in God."

It is important to note that the centurion's words testify boldly about his belief about Jesus. First, he believes that Jesus, as he realizes that he is in torment because of his callous attitude toward his neighbor, shows that he has his case for Jesus to help the centurion. Did you think that Jesus had any soft heart toward their request? If not, how was the centurion worthy of the help? Why might the men have gone with them? See Ps. 50:15 and John 4.
church by way of their contributions and involvement. If true, but does this conclusion the knowledge that God operates on a merit system, too?

If pastors or priests represent God, in the minds of some of their congregation, the understanding of God’s attitude, and so these who “do” for the church deserve special consideration.

Luther spoke of two realms in which God operates — the spiritual realm and the temporal realm. In the spiritual realm, God brings people to faith in Christ through the preaching of the Gospel. In the temporal realm, God uses political authorities, coerced, etc., to maintain just, ordered societies. So the two realms are not independent, but rather intertwine in the way God causes good behavior. In the spiritual realm, the Gospel explains what it means for the neighbor to need to be loved. John, a Christian, helps his elderly neighbor with lawn care and snow removal. Bill, an atheist, does the same for his neighbor. In the temporal realm (law), on what grounds would the community agree each? How would each be judged by the ones who received their help? In the spiritual realm, on what basis would both be viewed? How would each be judged and by whom?

In the temporal realm, the community would look at what each man has done for the neighbor and judge favorably. Both recipients of their help would also feel favorably on their neighbor and probably thank each for his help and consider such to be a “good neighbor.” In the spiritual realm, however, each would be judged immediately by God who alone sees the heart. All behavior that flows from faith in Christ is the pleasure of God. These behaviors that do not flow from faith in Christ, even though they benefit the neighbor and are examples of what theologians call “civic righteousness,” cannot justify, for “without faith it is impossible to please him” (Heb. 11:6).

A Scriptural sermon rightly focuses on what Christ has done for the deceased, especially in bringing him to faith. A Scriptural sermon rightly focuses on what Christ has done for his community and church. According to what the Lutheran Confessions say in the next point (under #8), did the Lutheran Church see done for Mr. Jones’ Christian life? What are your chances that he could be misunderstood, should the pastor say the Lutheran Confessions say in the next point (under #8), had done for his community and church. According to what

7. OTHER DOCTRINES

The other doctrines that do or do not support the statements in the Creed are correct, speaking the Creed means to use the Creed’s words to confess one’s own faith in God. The Creed concludes with these words: “Thus confessing, we teach and believe the whole counsel of God contained in the Holy Scriptures.” The Creed illustrates why Jesus warned, “Not everyone who calls me ‘Lord, Lord’ will be saved. Many will say to me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in the name of your Son Jesus?’ And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you impostors.’ ”

8. CONCLUSION

As a concluding statement, consider again the following argument regarding the false idea that our justifications by God is based on having done the best we could. Although good works ought to follow faith in this way (as the result of our justification and not birth), people who cannot establish or establish in their hearts that they are freely forgiven on the account of Christ use works for a very different purpose. When they see the works of the sinner, they judge in a human fashion that the saints have merited forgiveness of sins by those works and that they are regarded as righteous before God on account of those works. Accordingly, they misinterpret those works and think that through similar works they also merit the forgiveness of sins. They try to appeal the truth of God and trust that they are regarded as righteous on account of such works (Ps 110:3). One must believe that Jesus is Lord and that God raised Him from the dead. In the Lake paragraph, Jesus says that there is a connection between what the heart believes and what the mouth speaks. Paul also speaks of that connection, “We also believe, and so we also speak” (Rom. 10:9). What the heart believes irratably is spoken (Eph. 6:17)

Assenting to the facts involves only the intellect, whereas belief in the heart encompasses the entire person — affirmation, intellect and will. “Saving faith is essentially the realization and trust in the promises of God set forth in the Gospel.”

1. Rome: 10–19. What “believes” a person need be in order to be justified? Why does Paul speak of responses from both heart and mouth? See Luke 6:43. In Biblical thought, the heart is the center of affection, intellect and the will, and the mouth is not to assist merely to the formal expression of what the Bible teaches in order to be right with God.

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2. Rome: 41–5. Paul quotes Gen. 15:6, which says that Abraham believed God and was justified. What about God’s promise of faith that led to his justification — a person’s faith and God’s promise? How does it make sense or does it? How is the synonym “trust” used? Is the idea of trust being used?

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Assenting to the facts involves only the intellect, whereas belief in the heart encompasses the entire person — affirmation, intellect and will. “Saving faith is essentially the realization and trust in the promises of God set forth in the Gospel.”

3. Acts 15:19. What distinguishes the Christian’s belief that God is one from that of the demons’ belief that God is one? Do both believe the same thing? If so, then why are they not both justified?

Both demons and Christians accept the same creedal truth. God is one (monotheism). But Christian faith is more than an assent to truth, as James goes on to explain.

Each genuine faith is that of more than mere assent to God and He graciously promises in Christian faith. Such faith also shows itself in love toward God and one’s neighbor. None of that is present in the demon’s assent to the truth. Each genuine faith is that of more than mere assent to truth, as James goes on to explain.

4. Luke 14:22–27. On what basis will some try to justify their entrance through the narrow door? Some will try to justify their entrance through the heart by pointing to their previous table fellowship with Him and their presence when He taught. But even their presence at assemblies, which are so common in Word and sacrament assemblies, are not equal to saying faith, for He calls those people “vile.”

5. John 9:38. A Jehovah’s Witness comes to the front door, eager to hand out the recent copy of Awake! magazine. The person at the door says, “No thanks, I am a Lutheran. I believe what my church teaches.” Read John 17:26, John 20:30–31 and Rom. 14:18. What is the relationship between the content of the message that is taught and the one to whom the message relates? The message that the Church proclaims is not simply information or data, but Christ and His promises. The Gospel promise invites the hearer to trust in Jesus, and, as Paul says, to call upon the One who is the content of the

The context shows that Abraham believed the promises that God had not made to him. “Your offspring shall be as numerous as the stars.”

If the synonym “trust” is used, the context that can exist with the word “believer” is avoided. In our culture, the word “believer” is often confused with the word “think” or “have an opinion about,” and so the idea of trust is lost. Belief in Jesus is not just belief in His existence, or even that He was executed on a cross, but it is trust in the promises He makes, especially the promise of the forgiveness of sins in His name.

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Session 1: Is. 64:1–9

Introduction to the Bible study series

"Justifying Christmas" is the title that has been chosen for this Bible study series. What thoughts and expectations come to mind when you hear it? Most of us probably begin running through a mental list of the various apologetic questions and challenges we Christians face every year as we gather, our customs and traditions — is or should be "mas justification"?

"Justifying Christmas" is the title that has been chosen for the Bible study series. The Study follows the Hebrew transliteration convention (Modern Hebrew, or "righteousness") word group, appears 81 times in the book and "bind together all sixty-six chapters."

In response to such unsupported theories of multiple authorship during distinct periods of history, Oswalt argues, "It is an easier supposition to imagine one author who contains a theological vision so large that it must be extended out beyond his own time and place to encompass other times and places whose details he can only dimly perceive and that are significant only insofar as they provide backdrops for the theological issues being addressed."

3. Righteousness is one of the main themes that unites the book of Isaiah into a literary unity. One of the two main rationales that Lessing uses to show the unity of the whole book of Isaiah is that of righteousness, the very theme we need to focus on. Pages 12–15 of Lessing's introduction provide invaluable introductory material for this study as well as for anyone interested in reading Isaiah as a united work. Lessing notes that instances of the phrase "righteousness" word group, appear 81 times in the book and "bind together all sixty-six chapters."

2. Although Isaiah's vision is far reaching in both time and space, it is intended to be read as a unified work.

whole Students may be familiar with critical approaches that divide the book of Isaiah (even the very text) into first, second, third and so on; however, Oswalt reports that "the idea of several independent books of Isaiah is in the eclipse." The instructor is referred to the very helpful section of Lessing's introduction, which provides a detailed argument as to why such segmental approaches should be "scraped" by a more careful and congruent reading of the whole book. His section "The Relationship between Isaiah 40–55 and Isaiah 56–66" concludes, "Chapter 56–66 are not an optional addendum to Isaiah, but the culmination of the books overall message. They must be interpreted as an integral part of the original book of Isaiah and not as an independent literary work that is only marginally connected with chapters 1–35. The inspired book is divinely intended to be read as a whole."

1. It is very difficult to determine the historical setting of Isaiah 64. It has been described as a "literary colossus," or "righteousness" word, group. The theme we need to focus on. Pages 12–15 of Lessing's introduction provide invaluable introductory material for this study as well as for anyone interested in reading Isaiah as a unified work. Lessing notes that instances of the phrase "righteousness" word group, appear 81 times in the book and "bind together all sixty-six chapters."

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The entire section is well written, but it does require some paraphrasing for ease of passage.

As chapters 40–55 end, an apparent contradiction arises between Isaiah’s urgings to repent and the history of the People of God. The prophets’ challenge can only be understood in the context of the various historical periods. For only Yahweh is righteous. Yet Yahweh promulgates salvation to the unrighteous. Should Israel, then, continue in sin and thus gravely offend (cf. Is 62:7)? The answer comes in Isaiah 66:14–24.

The Text: Is 61:1–2

The passage should first be read aloud in everyone’s hearing. The comments and observations that follow will focus very specifically on only a few of the passages, as it is important that the whole passage be heard and seen at the start. The prophet is speaking directly to us with these greater issues by his opening words in chapter 64: “Oh that we would hear!"

Isaiah 64:1

We cannot break from the first line of our text before uncounting points that require some clarification, discussion, and reflection. More specifically, there are two issues that need to be addressed in our study of this passage. The second one is not quite so difficult, so we will consider it first.

The word translated by the ESV as "yonder" in v. 25 (cf. 25:1), the Qohelet’s "Where is he?" (v. 24), and the verb in the LXX’s "Where is he?" (cf. 63:1) are very commonly used for the hunting of the yonder, but also is used in a variety of figurative ways (cf. ROM 8:19; 2 CO 1:24). The question here is not how much the verb the yonder as what sort of rhetoric evokes in our minds. "Yonder" may not be a familiar word to everyone in the class, but even the idea of hunting "hurricanes" will strike most as strange. Oswalt’s explanation for the word is helpful. "The language here is a kind of colloquialism, borrowing ambiguous, rolling, and earth-shaking. In the voice of his deeply characteristic people, Isaiah cries out for God to do in God. Nothing else but God’s direct interventions can break the power of the people’s evil and make them recognize that the nation is not above the judgment of God. [The] wishfulness of [Isaiah’s] wish is enhanced by the very theme that is present in the past. If you could just see the hurricanes now is not all that God of the future that it is wishful in the future, it is wishful to be had already interregnum longed. Israel knows God, he knows God; and he is in place God why God would let the situation go to be done without having done something more now for grace received, and longed for God to break in on that situation. Oswalt adds a footnote to this section that is very much for the point to have for us today: This point is especially crucial if the material was written, as the book claims, during the lifetime of Isaiah. The prophet speaks the tragic condition of his own day and recognizes that while the distant future is bright, nothing but deepening darkness is immediately ahead. It is a darkness that by no means culminates in the end but extends beyond it, even into the time of the return. Although Isaiah manifests constant anxiety that period in an idea (with the single exception of Cyrus), he does know that even after the return the problem of humanity as well as the future is not to be solved. It is no wonder that he is heartbroken, and feared that even our long life and God go on." The word translated by the ESV as "yonder" in v. 25 (cf. 25:1), the Qohelet’s "Where is he?" (v. 24), and the verb in the LXX’s "Where is he?" (cf. 63:1) are very commonly used for the hunting of the yonder, but also is used in a variety of figurative ways (cf. ROM 8:19; 2 CO 1:24). The question here is not how much the verb the yonder as what sort of rhetoric evokes in our minds. "Yonder" may not be a familiar word to everyone in the class, but even the idea of hunting "hurricanes" will strike most as strange. Oswalt’s explanation for the word is helpful. "The language here is a kind of colloquialism, borrowing ambiguous, rolling, and earth-shaking. In the voice of his deeply characteristic people, Isaiah cries out for God to do in God. Nothing else but God’s direct interventions can break the power of the people’s evil and make them recognize that the nation is not above the judgment of God. [The] wishfulness of [Isaiah’s] wish is enhanced by the very theme that is present in the past. If you could just see the hurricanes now is not all that God of the future that it is wishful in the future, it is wishful to be had already interregnum longed. Israel knows God, he knows God; and he is in place God why God would let the situation go to be done without having done something more now for grace received, and longed for God to break in on that situation. Oswalt adds a footnote to this section that is very much for the point to have for us today: This point is especially crucial if the material was written, as the book claims, during the lifetime of Isaiah. The prophet speaks the tragic condition of his own day and recognizes that while the distant future is bright, nothing but deepening darkness is immediately ahead. It is a darkness that by no means culminates in the end but extends beyond it, even into the time of the return. Although Isaiah manifests constant anxiety that period in an idea (with the single exception of Cyrus), he does know that even after the return the problem of humanity as well as the future is not to be solved. It is no wonder that he is heartbroken, and feared that even our long life and God go on."
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9. What, then, should we think Matthew means by “righteous” when he uses it to describe Joseph in the opening chapter of his Gospel?

The matter very well could be a question that Matthew wants us to ask at this point in his story. In Matthew, the surnames of all are referred to as “righteous” (e.g., Matt. 1:19a), but how can their behavior help us here? What did the Old Testament do when its commands told them that they were righteous through the work of the priest? Joseph could be in a situation that would be righteous man could not have known the promises of God. The New Testament writers would have brought their faith to be righteous before God, to be justified. Joseph's response to the angel's instructions would have been to accept the gift of the Holy Spirit.

5. Why should Joseph's internal deliberations even be recorded for us? Because it is an interesting encounter that sets the stage for what is to come. For a righteous man's positive decision to take on the child to be the Son of God, and the promise of the Holy Spirit.

The study follows the Greek transliteration convention presented in the SBL Greek New Testament,


6. How often does he find himself in situations where he simply doesn't know the right thing to do in such situations? How does God still reveal his Righteous ways to us in such situations?

Focus Question: Matt. 1:21–25

What is it important that Joseph is involved in naming the Child?

Seeking the origin of Jesus' lineage, Matthew's story of the Promised One, the Son of David, who would be the Messiah, the ancestors and the promise, the key factor in Joseph's decision to accept the gift of the Holy Spirit is the fulfillment of God's promise through the prophet Isaiah. Matthew, however, specifically states that Joseph does not just believe the promise; he also works to fulfill it by taking on the responsibility of being the father of Jesus. This is a critical point for understanding Matthew's message of Jesus' identity as the Son of David and the fulfillment of God's promises to David and his ancestor, King Saul. The study also explores the significance of the angel's choice to reveal his identity, as Joseph responds positively to the heavenly message, embracing his role as the father of Jesus.
the kingdom of Israel and Judah makes abundantly clear the need for another fulfillment of the promises to David. Thus, through prophet and psalmist the psalmist prays for a greater “David” to reign over Israel, and God continues to look forward to the fulfillment of what God had promised David.

Brewer notes how God prevailed this great “David” as a way that united the physical and cultural requirements for a child to be a “son of David.”

But for Judaism, as the genealogy indicates, the royal line of David is not continued through a series of David to Father. Matthew gives the answer to the modern question “[How can Jesus be Joseph’s son if Joseph did not begot him?]” when he tells us that “Joseph, the husband of Mary . . .” (Joseph is married to the young woman.)

Jesus triumphed over sin and came to tell the world, for those who hear the name and believe in the Son of God, “Jesus the Son of God . . .”

As Luther works his way toward the exposition of the text, he particularly struggled with some of these same issues. “When shall the Christ be born? How shall anyone know that the Christ is born? How will one know that the Christ has come? Luther appears to wrestle with the fact that it is easy to misunderstand the meaning of these words unless we are looking for them.”

The First Matter: What One Is to Believe

Discussing this passage, Luther declares that “the church must not be a mere observer or listener—no, she must be an active participant and even a co-witness of the entire historical process.”

The First Christmas: The True and Unfamiliar Story in Words and Songs

How did Jesus become God’s Son? How did the church come to believe that Jesus was God? With whom was Jesus identified? How did the church come to recognize the fact that Jesus was the Son of David? These are questions that require an explanation. The church could not have come to believe that Jesus was God’s Son without understanding the genealogy given in Matthew 1 – Jesus is the Son of David.

In mercy mild, in love divine,
Joins thee to Him; how greatly God must love thee!
In mercy mild, in love divine,
Joins thee to Him; how greatly God must love thee!

All who are to be the spirit of God are of God. For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption, in whom you cry, “Abba! Father!” This spirit has borne witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—sons of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him (Rom. 8:16).

The church needs these encouragements as much as did the Christian church. The only hope of the church is not in a new order, but in what has already come: “[Luther’s] one great harmony in this text, which is, ‘The First Christmas: The True and Unfamiliar Story in Words and Songs’.”

Scripture is not to be treated as a mysterious thing that remains; instead, it is to be treated as a bond between Christ and the believer, a bond that is firm and that remains throughout the ages.

In the name of the Lord, amen. Amen.
do not look at your own wounds, but fix your gaze on his wounds."

Although we know that you are speaking of wounds that tran- scend our ability to comprehend them, we have somehow grasped that you mean by "wounds" the "shape of his hands" and "dying for us." What in the world did he do for us? It is probably impossible simply to let Luther touch us with these wounds.

The Virgin Mary's lap and her dear child. This father who is so quick to practice and to pray: "Where you love, you can never strengthen it enough. That is our foundation and our inheritance, on the good work we do, saving one another."

We will add one more point from Luther, then pause for discus- sion. Luther ends the paragraph immediately above on the importance of good works. Such a fruitful, fruitful Christmas! Such a "Christmas inscription" in which God gives us as our roll that we are to be preachers of this "Christmas gospel," and that we are to be its hearers. Everything Christ did — being born for us — was for good, for our sake. We are, as we make something so definite for the good of our neighbors. And in it, Luther invests his sermon's inner voice with a sweet and satisfying "Christmas cake."

"Christ said: "This is my commandment that you love each other as I have loved you."" (John 13:34)

You see here that he has said and that he has done all the works for us, the purpose of that is in turn, does not explain how we are to be his neighbor — but to our neighbor. That is his commandment, that our obedience, and so forth brings that it is Christian, even as he brings us the love that we are the loves, and so on, and so forth. Luther's, of the ingredients of the cake. Again, our neighbors, our neighbors and so forth. We, then, love, should love something, too, and not just look and wait for us in vain. The one to the same as the other Christian, yet, as we help our neighbor, and all are satisfied.

This Luther strayed from his text in one sense, certainly. Luther's access to the context of the collection of the angels, as he wrote in his own word, is, so to speak, born every Sunday.

It is not only the ordained messenger of God's word but that, who is God's messenger, who is God's angel, what he is, that makes up his birth your own life, and that you make your exchange, such, such that you really are your own birth and receive, indeed, his. This happens, I fear, too late. By this time you are already

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Thus, when a noun is the object of a proposition, it does not require the article to be definite. If it is definite, the article must be definite, if the article is definite, it is definable.

In those cases where there is no article, the context must decide the question of whether or not the noun is meant to be definite. Paul, in fact, often means “the Law” even where there is no article present. Robertson even argues that this is the normal interpretation of the noun “Law” in such cases – especially since the entire universe operates according to certain unchangeable, inviolable laws. This may sound “abstract” or “theoretical,” but it is a consistent way of thinking. For example, if Paul is using the figure of speech that was common in Galatians 2:16, “by works of the law” (Gal. 2:16). Cf. Romans 2:13; 3:28; and in the genitive, Romans 4:3, “in the law.”

Paul might have put on the lips of Christ the language of the Old Testament, for additional questions and discussion.

When the noun in Galatians is the nominative singular of πλήρωμα (fullness), the Law is not simply a matter of the infant-heirs finally reaching the age of majority. His enjoyment of the inheritance must stretch back, in some sense, to the birth of Christ. It has been developing. In 3:23-26, Paul presents a picture of Christ that we so often fail to see as such, a “holy one.”

When he speaks of the Law, Luke, a creature, came into conflict with the Council, according to the Scripture, and the Law, which once condemned and killed all men, has nothing with which to defend its own innocence. Here the Law, which once condemned and killed all men, has nothing with which to defend its innocence. Therefore it is condemned and killed all men, and all who labor under the yoke of the Law.
There are probably few of us who would answer the ques-
tion, “What does Christmas mean to you?” Writing con-
tentions before Luther, but expressing some of the same
sentiments, Ignatius of Antioch writes to the Christians at
Ephesus that when God had accomplished the mystery of
the birth of His Son, all magi and every kind of spell were
dissolved, the ignorance so characteristic of wickedness
replaced, and the ancient kingdom was abolished when God
appeared in human form to bring the newness of eternal
life; and what had been prepared by God be-
gan to take effect. As a result, all things were throned
into ferment, because the abolution of death was
being carried out.118

11. Why should Christmas make us feel like everything
is “thrown into ferment?” That this world’s old rules
about the way things work no longer apply and that
nothing will ever be the same again because this Child
has been born?

So that we might receive adoption as sons
We already noted the chaotic structure of verses 4
and 5, but, even in noting it, we pointed out that there is
still progression as Paul moves from thought to thought.
The purpose and goal of Christ’s work of redemption
was not that we would all end up masterless men. We do not
end up as free men only but as sons. We are in some sense free
in order that we might be the sons God had intended us to be.

Adoption can be a word heavily laden with emotion in
English. Your opinion of whether or not it is a good trans-
lution for the Greek work that Paul uses here will depend
very much on the emotions and values you attach to the
word along with the words “father” or “Abba.” Writing
Andrew Das provides extensive background material for our under-
standing of the word’s usage in the New Testament.

In the Metaphorical and Social Context of Gal 4:1-7.119
A first point to be noted is that the term "spirit be
ferme" (khuiothesia) is absent from the Septuagint, Josephus, Philo,
and other ancient Jewish literature.120 Although we might think
of the overarching image of God “adopter” Israel as His son,
Paul does not use the language associated with the Enovian
here in Galatians 4.121 Although helpful information can be
gained from an understanding of both Roman and Helle-
nistic practices of adoption, Paul’s reasoning remains at a
general level and does not depend on the concrete details of
any particular legal system.122

We must be careful, too, not to automatically impose
our 21st century American ideas of adoption on Paul’s thought.
Ernest Burton has described the term in Paul’s usage in a
way that helps clarify and contrasts it with our vari-
ous contemporary understandings.

6 A. Andrew Das, Galatian Commentary (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2013), 427-436.

Das, 433.

Andrew Das, 433.


Das, 423.

120 Das, 423.

121 Das, 423.

122 Das, 423.

123 See Brown, "The Birth of the Messiah," 18; Das, 428.


125 See Brown, "The Birth of the Messiah," 18; Das, 428.


127 See Brown, "The Birth of the Messiah," 18; Das, 428.


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Setting those two conclusions from the academic study
of the New Testament side by side makes it all the more
remarkable that Paul should here, in one of his earliest if not
his earliest epistles, speak of the birth of Christ and couple
that with the work of redeeming us so as to bring the
power of the law. Paul’s proclamation that Christ was born
of woman so that we might become the sons of God is a
powerful statement of the “for us” nature of Christ’s birth
that we studied in Session 3.

Luther spoke above of the connection between our passage
and justification by faith alone. What about by grace alone?
Of course, the point made above that no work of ours even
entered into the equation and that this sonship is received
solely by faith — neither earned nor bartered for through
the commerce of our own works — necessarily implies
that this comes to us solely by the grace of God. Commenting
on Gal 4:5, Luther calls Christ Himself, who redeemed us as
from the curse of the law, “the throne of grace.”121 The “sounding
out” of the Son by the Father, moreover, calls to mind those
verses from Luther’s hymn “Dear Christians, One and All,”
Rejoice!

Then God was sorry on his throne
To see such torment rend me;
His tender mercy be thought on,
And good help would send me.
He turned to me his father heart;
Ah, then was the no empty part;
His very heart it cost him.

To his dear son he said: Go down,
Things go in piteous fashion;
Go then, my heart’s ensolved crown,
Be in the pout man salvation.
Lift him from our试scorn and scathe,
Wear him on your heart’s breast,
And take him to live with thee.

The son he heard obediently;
And, by his side brother,
Pure, tender — down he came to me,
For he said by my brother!

Concluded he brought his strength on us,
And went about in my poor form,
Meaning to catch the devil.

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My mind shall all up for thee,
And will fight for thine.
For I am thine, and thou art mine.
And his good help would send me.
The enemy shall not part us.

Like water he will shed my blood,
Of life my heart bereaving;
For he must be my brother!
And, by a maiden mother,
Thou heardest my son and friend.
And his very best it cost him!
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Session 1: Is. 64:1–9

Introduction to the Bible Study Series

“Justifying Christmas,” that’s the title that has been chosen for this Bible study series. What thoughts and expectations come to mind when you hear it? Most of us probably begin running through a mental list of the various apologetic questions and challenges we Christians face every year as the celebration of our Savior’s birth approaches — “How can you justify spending so much money on gifts when so many people have nothing?” “How can you justify celebrating Jesus’ birth during an originally pagan festival?” “And the list goes on and on.”

This study will attempt to answer these questions and challenge us as part of God’s gracious work in Christ Jesus to fit into our family traditions — is or should be part of our worship gatherings and family gatherings, our customs and traditions. In other words, we’ll be studying how Christmas, just as any other Christian holiday, can be “justified” through faith. In other words, we’ll be studying how Christmas, just as any other Christian holiday, can be “justified” through faith. In other words, we’ll be studying how Christmas, just as any other Christian holiday, can be “justified” through faith. In other words, we’ll be studying how Christmas, just as any other Christian holiday, can be “justified” through faith.

That, however, is not what this Bible study will be about. “Justifying Christmas” will not help us learn new and clever ways to justify what we do every day, rather, it will help us see how the Scriptures connect with the birth of Jesus proclaim the good news of justification by grace through faith. In other words, we’ll be studying how Christmas, just as any other Christian holiday, can be “justified” through faith.

If that’s what the Advent and Christmas Scriptures are proclaiming, then we will better see how everything we do at the time of year — our readings and songs, our worship gatherings and family gatherings, our customs and traditions — is as much a part of God’s gracious work in Christ Jesus to justify our manner of living. And if that’s what the Advent and Christmas Scriptures are proclaiming, then we will better see how everything we do at the time of year — our readings and songs, our worship gatherings and family gatherings, our customs and traditions — is as much a part of God’s gracious work in Christ Jesus to justify our manner of living.

Introduction to Session 1. Is. 64:1–9

Isaiah in the prophet quoted most frequently in the New Testament, so many of us are familiar with certain passages from his writings. What do you remember of the sonnet of this eighth century B.C. prophet? Terence Hammer provides the following one-sentence summary of Isaiah’s career:

Isaiah lived through, witnessed, and commented on one of the major turning points in Israel’s history — from the dark day in years of empire and independence under Nebuchadnezzar to the fall of Jerusalem and the end of the OT kingdom. Isaiah is often called a prophet of righteousness standing regarding personal righteousness or worthiness, called to be righteous, but fails, for only Yahweh is righteous. Yes, Yahweh promises salvation to the righteous. Should Israel then, continue to sin so that grace may abound? (Is. 55:6)?

3. Righteousness is one of the main themes that unites the book of Isaiah into a literary unity. Read looking into the importance of this theme for our passage. As chapters 45–55 end, then, an apparent contradiction arises between Isaiah’s unswerving belief (chapter 1–38) and Yahweh’s promise of a righteous standing regarding personal righteousness or worthiness, called to be righteous, but fails, for only Yahweh is righteous. Yes, Yahweh promises salvation to the righteous. Should Israel then, continue to sin so that grace may abound? (Is. 55:6)?

The Text: Is. 64:1–9

Read these verses together.

Isaiah 64:1

We cannot find even the first line of our text before encountering points that require some clarification and discussion and reflection. There are two issues that arise when we try to get Isaiah to speak English.

1. “Send the heavens”

2. “Thick that you would”

Discussion Questions

1. Advent is not about remembering Christmas past (and trying to feel good about Christmas again) or looking forward to the end of the world (and trying not to feel bad about that). It is a birth-discipline and celebration for the here and now of all that God has done and all that He will do.

2. Is the discussion of justification not simply a matter of knowing how one gets to heaven or how one “get saved”? If it involves our understanding of who God is and how He works, and whether or not we can trust Him. Have there been moments in your life when you pleaded with God, “If only You would/could have...” What was going on in your life at those times? What did you want God to do?

3. When you look around at the situation in our community and church, nation and world today, do you wonder, like Isaiah, how long God will let this go on?

Isaiah 64:5a

Isaiah turns to the past and reminds God Himself of the way He has acted: awesomely, unexpectedly, fearfully, faithfully, without the written permission of the copyright holder, is prohibited.

2. 63:19b as part of 64:1. It is important to note this difference if the Hebrew text and/or commentaries based on it are being consulted and used for the class.

3. Righteousness is one of the main themes that unites the book of Isaiah into a literary unity. Read looking into the importance of this theme for our passage. As chapters 45–55 end, then, an apparent contradiction arises between Isaiah’s unswerving belief (chapter 1–38) and Yahweh’s promise of a righteous standing regarding personal righteousness or worthiness, called to be righteous, but fails, for only Yahweh is righteous. Yes, Yahweh promises salvation to the righteous. Should Israel then, continue to sin so that grace may abound? (Is. 55:6)?

The text of section coheres nicely if the following progression is seen:

1. 64:1–2. Isaiah pleads with God, who-alone can save-in such a desperate situation, to intervene with force, making Himself known once again.

2. 64:3–5a. Isaiah supports his plea by recalling that God has acted in the past in such dramatic, unexpected ways, that He alone has acted in a way to show that He is God, that this, in fact, is the way God acts toward those who are right with Him and walk in His ways.

3. 64:5b–7. Isaiah must admit that the people have no right to expect God to act as He always does toward the righteous, for they have all mired and do not now put their trust in Him.

You may think that God’s gracious work in Christ Jesus to justify our manner of living is fittingly described in Isaiah 64:4a–5b:

2. When you look around at the situation in our community and church, nation and world today, do you wonder, like Isaiah, how long God will let this go on?

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Focus Question: Matt. 1:19
What is Matthew telling us about Joseph when he refers to him as “father”?
In the context of verse 18, what is expected the question to mean? What does Joseph’s designation of his engagement with Mary mean to him in the context of the story?

Focus Question: Matt. 1:21-25
Why is it important that Joseph be involved in naming the Child?

SESSION 3: Luke 2:14
Introduction
This session will follow a different format than Sessions 1 and 2. Rather than lead Luther provide our outline for Session 3. An outline found in his sermon on “The Gospel for Christmas Eve” which, comes from his 1212 Christmas Postil when Luther was a “guest” at Wartburg Castle. It is doubly appropriate that we look at this sermon today for two reasons. First, it is fitting that we should hear more directly from Luther during this anniversary Advent/Christmas Season. Second, and perhaps even more important, it is appropriate of course to look at this sermon because the material we discuss contact actual sentiments, penned by Luther, and sermon guides, written by him for use of the other ministers. What we find in this “sermon” is the way Luther instructed his fellow pastors to preach on Luke 2. For this reason, then, we too, will begin Luther’s students.

Luther offers a cursory overview of the material narrated in the first two verses and then goes on to two basic Outline for this sermon:

Now let us see what sort of mystery, hidden things, are presented to us in this story. Generally speaking, there are two sorts of matters which are expressed in all mysteries — the gospel and the faith, i.e., what is to be preached, and what is to be believed, and who are to be the preachers and who are to be the hearers. Let us look at these two matters.

The First Matter: What One Is to Believe
Like any good preacher who wants to keep his hearers guessing Luther immediately reverses the order he just prescribed for his listeners. Faith comes as something of a surprise to some students that Luther begins by saying that faith is an ability not to believe.

This faith does not merely consist in believing that this story is true at all. For that does not avail anything, because everyone, even the damndest believes that.

The spring from which the expectation flowed is God’s promise. But this promise which son from royal line would “build a house” for God’s name, and God would establish his house so that he would be called “son” of God forever. This king would be God’s “son,” and God would be his “Father,” and never what he had left from his life (1 Sam. 16:13–14). Although David did immediately renounced Solomon, who enjoyed a long and peaceful reign and built the temple, clearly we are sup- port of the fulfillment of that promise, the subsequent history of the kings of Israel and Judah makes abundantly clear the need for a greater fulfillment of the promise to David. Thus, through prophet and psalmist the hope is for a greater “David” remained alive, and Israel continued to look forward to the fulfillment of what God had promised David.

Brown explains how God provided this greater “David” in a way that united the biblical and cultural requirements for a child to be a “son of David.”

For Luther, as he explained the parables and read the prophetic visions, he came to the conclusion that the “Child” was also of royal blood and hence of a Davidic line.

Luther provided the following answer to our question rather than quote what is the answer that the cross, rise, and grace of God’s word do that, we firmly believe Christ is born for you and that he is born in you, and come to pass for your benefit.

It is a little unfortunate, though understandable, that En- glish translations try so hard to put the very scopy sen- tence that forms the heart of the original into English.

Luther’s answer to this question rather than quote what is the answer that the cross, rise, and grace of God’s word do that, we firmly believe Christ is born for you and that he is born in you, and come to pass for your benefit.

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We may be familiar with Luther's language of the "wonderful exchange" (airwonderful Exchange) that takes place between Christ and us. This language, as he and his contemporaries used it, probably took most of the connections to Good Friday and Easter of those to Christmas, namely the birth of Christ. For, just as for one example, Luther's comments on Luke 2:15:

The name of Christ, then, is most agreeable: 'The worm of Christ' or 'the destroyer of life.' This introduces the note of God's condescension to place his purpose as our punishment, but not as a punishment to be endured in a simple sense. This language of 'the destroyer of life' is probably easiest simply to let Luther teach us.

What can it mean that He was born for us? It refers to the Incarnation, the message always remains more significant at Christmas. Here Christ keeps the promise made in Matthew 1:21: 'Behold, in sin am I fashioned in the womb, impure, sinful, damned birth, as David says in Psalm 51[:5]: "Behold, in sin am I fashioned in the womb, impure, sinful, damned birth, as David says in Psalm 51[:5]."

Luther concludes his sermon with a reiteration of his first point:

‘And with His stripes we are healed. See how delightfully the languages of the "wonderful exchange" (wonderful Exchange) and the "wonderful grace" (wonderful Grace) overlap in the heart. A messenger of God, a "messenger of God," a "shepherd," a "soldier of Christ." The Text: Gal. 4:4-5

Introduction
Did you know that St. Paul also gives us a "Christmas story" in one of his epistles? Today, we want to Luther's "first little speech," his Biblical fiction, his "key verse," his "key verse" — Paul's Epistle to the Galatians.

Paul said and great deal about the topic of justification during the Epistle to the Galatians, and we read many of those texts to receive treatment in "Justification and Christian Liberty," a helpful introduction to this topic. The Text: Gal. 4:4-5

Because of these similarities, we might be tempted to think that, in Galatians, Paul is in the midst of the overarching plan of salvation that Luke describes. That would not be similarly wrong, but it would miss the connection with the immediate context in Galatians, and it would miss the specific point that Paul is making about this point in time.

3. What point in time is it, according to this metaphor Paul has been developing?

The Second Matter: What One Is To Preach
The answer to this would seem to be quite obvious after Part 1 of the session, but it is not. Luther begins his discussion of the second matter with a very direct and simple statement:

1. What does Paul mean by "elementary principles of the world?" (v. 24)

5. How does Luther's explanation of what is to be preached support (from Scripture) our emphasis on grace alone and faith alone? We could also ask the question in a different way: What does this "wonderful exchange" (wonderful Exchange) in the world, what does He do for the world about which? What can we do to help? What can we do to help? What can we do to help? What can we do to help? What can we do to help?

6. In what way is the Incarnation the origin of the Galatians? The Text: Gal. 4:4-5

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II. THEOLOGICAL DOCUMENTS — COMMISSION ON THEOLOGY AND CHURCH RELATIONS

1. Why should Christmas make us feel like everything is "thrown into ferment," that this world's old rules about "born of woman"? "born under the law"?

2. How can we help children and each other this year our sense of wonder at the Christmas story?

3. "Born under the law"? Born under the law, Christ was the perfect slave and found this subjection no slavery to Him, but this is not the first time in this epistle where Paul has talked about what it means to "be under the law." A. T. F. Bruce explains, Paul might have put on the lips of Christ the language of Ps. 40:4, "I delight to do thy will, O my God," because Christ is the Son of God to be born under law which he supposed to fulfill involved his voluntarily taking on himself the curse which others, by their failure to fulfill it, had incurred. Only so could it be a promise which was成就able the purpose of redeeming those who were "under the law." (p. 53)

4. Does the phrase "under the law" mean nothing more than "Jewish?"

5. How do these two characteristics — "born of woman" and "born under the law" — find expression in the Christmas narratives of Matthew and Luke? As you skim over Matthew 1 and Luke 2, note the vulnerability described for Jesus at the time of his birth. "And when she brought forth her son (as it is written in the prophecy of the kingdom of God, which he spoke to all his saints), she named him Jesus."

6. To "so redeem those who were under the law"

We have already spent some time on the idea of being "born under the law." At present, we need only add that those who argue that the Jews are the only people properly under "the law" would be forced to also regard the redemption Paul speaks of as strictly for the Jews as well as for the Gentiles. Family that cannot be Paul's means that Paul's presence is what is much easier to defend based on Paul's own language in this section:

7. Even if Paul begins the section (v. 3) by thinking of the particular Jew Christ's redeeming work involved his voluntarily taking on himself the curse which others, by their failure to fulfill it, had incurred. Only so could it be a promise which was成就able the purpose of redeeming those who were "under the law." (p. 53)

8. How much material to show both Paul's knowledge of our passage has much to teach us concerning the doctrine of justification by faith alone. (p. 54)

9. Sometimes we need the perspective of a nonbeliever to help us understand and "of the Son of the Devil, as well as what we believe."

10. How does God's word by faith alone. What about by faith in particular of Jewish Christians (e.g., "and we").

1. Theology of Paul the Apostle — Participant's Guide

There are probably few of us who would answer the question aloud with the words "faith" or "belief." Writing centuries before Luther, by expressing some of the same thoughts, Ignatius of Antioch wrote to the Christians at Ephesus that, when God had accomplished the mystery of the birth of His Son, all magic and every kind of spell were dissolved, the ignorance so characteristic of witchcrafts vanished, and the ancient kingdom was abolished when God appeared in human form to bring the newness of life, the birth of Christ. (p. 59)

2. The sense of wonder at the Christmas story?

3. How can we help each other this year our sense of wonder at the Christmas story?

4. How can we help children and each other this year our sense of wonder at the Christmas story?

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Reform

WHAT DOES "THE REFORMATION" BRING TO MIND?

- Overthrow of “Catholic oppression” (Marxist)
- Source of modernity (general historians)
- Rise of Nazism (Shirer, et al.)
- Luther stories? the thunderstorm
- The solas?

Our Approach

- Connected to the solas: scriptura, gratia, fide, Christus
- Jesus: if it’s truly Christian, it must be Christocentric
- Justification: if it’s truly Christocentric, then salvation flows entirely from Him (grace, faith)
- The Bible: if it’s the authentic Jesus, it’s biblical

Hardly Forgotten

IN THE MIDDLE AGES

- Some Reformation caricatures are false:
  - Everyone went to church.
  - The laity were all terrified of damnation.
  - The clergy were all hypocrites.
  - Everything was about Mary, not Christ.
  - No attention was given to grace or faith.
- Christ and His gracious work were not ignored.
- But ... they were more peripheral than central.
II. THEOLOGICAL DOCUMENTS — COMMISSION ON THEOLOGY AND CHURCH RELATIONS

Christ LESS THAN CENTRAL

- Churchly control of grace — the ecclesial dispensary of grace
- Sacramentalist centrality with only indirect connection to Christ or to faith
- "You must prepare yourself for God’s grace."
- Thus the temptation to indulgence

An Indulgence FROM TETZEL

Examining THE INDULGENCE

- Who is named in the indulgence?
- Who isn’t named?!
- How did you get this?
- The theology of indulgence is more complex than this simple statement, but what would the common person think?

Luther’s RESPONSE

95 Theses (Disputation of Doctor Martin Luther on the Power and Efficacy of Indulgences)

- In the Name our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.
- #1. Our Lord and Master Jesus Christ, when He said Poenitentiam agite, willed that the whole life of believers should be repentance.
- #62. The true treasure of the Church is the Most Holy Gospel of the glory and the grace of God.
- #75. To think the papal pardons so great that they could absolve a man even if he had committed an impossible sin and violated the Mother of God — this is madness.
- #76. We say, on the contrary, that the papal pardons are not able to remove the very least of venial sins, so far as its guilt is concerned.
- #78. We say, on the contrary, that even the present pope, and any pope at all, has greater graces at his disposal; to wit, the Gospel, powers, gifts of healing, etc., as it is written in I. Corinthians xi.

Reform NOT REVOLUTION

- A key truth about the Lutheran reform
- So, affirmation of the received doctrine of the Trinity and the two natures of Christ (together with many other teachings)
- Reformation’s criticism: “We have always believed this, why do you ignore it or deny it?”
- “Let’s take Jesus (the second article) to heart.”

For Luther CHRIST IS ALL

“If you want to interpret well and confidently, set Christ before you, for He is the man to whom it all applies, every bit of it.” — Martin Luther (AE 35:247)

- Incarnation
- Life and teaching of Christ
- Suffering of Christ
- Death
- Resurrection
- Ascension
- Return in glory
- What’s the one word message of Jesus?
- What two words follow?
- Is the grumblers’ description of Jesus accurate?
- What do you make of Jesus’ response?
- What do “Repent” and “Follow me” say about the Christian faith?

Jesus?

Read John 1:1–4.
- Who is this?
- What has He done and how is He described?
- What does He possess?

Read John 1:16–18.
- What have we received from Him?
- What comes only through Jesus and none other?
- How can mere mortals know God?

Jesus?

Read 2 Cor. 5:18–21.
- How does this parallel the message of John 1?
- What does “reconciliation” imply?
- Who is Christ and what has He done?
- What is the purpose of His work?
- What is the result of our reconciliation?

Jesus?

Read Col. 1:11–20.
- Who is “doing the verbs” here?
- What has God done?
- By whom has God acted?
- How is Christ described?
- What is the culmination of His work?

Jesus?

Creeds

CHRIST IS CENTRAL

- What is emphasized in the creeds?
- The creeds are Scripture in summary.
- The 2nd article is the most complete.
- See
  - John 1:1–4, 16–18
  - 2 Cor. 5:18–21
  - Col. 1:11–20
WEEK TWO

Jesus &

Justification

Introduction

Justified?
- How do we use the language today?
- Business, finance, courts
- Self-justification — an inherent trait — includes claims based on status, purpose, and morality
- What happens when something is “unjustified”?
- Being justified demands answers: By whom? In what matter? On what basis?

Budget

JUSTIFICATION

- Each item identified in the budget should have an explanation
- What will the item be needed for?
- Make sure you articulate specific equipment you want to acquire
- Specify the identified uses of contracted services

Justification

- Justification is everyday language because people seek legitimacy.
- But, it is also vital for biblical understanding, striking the heart of the relationship between God and humanity. (Jargon alert!)
- How can I justify my life to God? How is any human being justified in God’s judgment?

Centrality

Justification “is the central and most important teaching of the Christian faith.”
- What do these passages have in common?
- Note that when we speak about justification, as a teaching, we are talking about our relationship with God — and how salvation takes place.

Justified

By Faith
II. THEOLOGICAL DOCUMENTS—COMMISSION ON THEOLOGY AND CHURCH RELATIONS

Centrality

Justification is the article of faith “on which the church stands or falls.”
- Read 1 Cor. 1:22–24. What is preached?
- Read 1 Cor. 2:2. Why is this Paul’s determination?
- See also Luke 2:11; Eph. 2:4-7; 2 Tim. 1:8–9.
- Justification is no more and no less than the message that salvation for the world comes through Christ — so it is a gift received by faith.

Justification WITHOUT THE TERM

- Outline the story.
- What disturbs Simon?
- What brings the woman to Jesus?
- What do you think she had heard about him?
- What does Jesus say to Simon and to her?
- How/why/on what basis is this sinful woman justified before Jesus?

Justification AND THE REFORMATION

The Augsburg Confession (1530)
- Result of reactions to Luther’s writing
- Written to restore unity
- Declares the catholicity (universality) of the Lutheran confessors – in the mainstream
- Denies the heresies charged against the Lutheran confessors
- Lists the abuses the confessors are correcting

Outline OF KEY REFORMATION EVENTS

Timeline
- 1517 – 95 Theses protesting indulgences
- 1519 – Luther debates authority in the church
- 1520 – Luther is told to recant (3 works)
- 1521 – Diet of Worms, excommunication
- 1522 – Anabaptists; New Testament published
- 1525 – The Bondage of the Will; Tyndale
- 1529 – Luther’s Catechisms & Marburg Colloquy
- 1530 – Torgau Articles and Augsburg Confession

Also they teach that men cannot be justified before God by their strength, merits, or works, but are freely justified for Christ’s sake, through faith, when they believe that they are received into favor, and that their sins are forgiven for Christ’s sake, who, by His death, has made satisfaction for our sins. This faith God imputes for righteousness in His sight. Rom. 3 and 4.

Augsburg Confession, IV of Justification
II. THEOLOGICAL DOCUMENTS — COMMISSION ON THEOLOGY AND CHURCH RELATIONS

### Definition (THEOLOGICAL)

- Justification denotes a verdict: “not guilty”
  - Read Rom. 3:21–25a. What two key truths appear?
- Justification and forgiveness (pardon) overlap
- Justification is typically used of individuals
  - Read Rom. 4:2–8.
  
> “We first want to show that faith alone makes a righteous person out of an unrighteous one, that is, it alone receives the forgiveness of sins.” Ap IV, 72

### The Nature of Justification

What happens when the sinner is justified?

- God doesn’t count his sins against him, but gives the sinner credit for Christ’s righteousness.
  - Read Phil. 3:8–9. What makes everything else look like rubbish?
  - “Our righteousness before God consists in this, that God forgives us our sins by sheer grace... and reckons to us the righteousness of Christ’s obedience and that, because of this righteousness, we are accepted by God into grace and regarded as righteous.” FC Ep III, 4

### The Nature of Justification (continued)

What happens when the sinner is justified?

- Justification means *all* our sins are forgiven.
  - Luke 7:47–48 — the woman’s many sins are all forgiven!
- Only the Trinity — the true God — justifies.
  - Note who is doing everything for sinners in 1 Cor. 6:9–11.

### Setting THE STAGE


- In a world of good guys and bad guys, why does Paul (quoting Psalm 14) say that “no one is righteous”?
- What is the only true source of righteousness?
- How does it become ours?
## The Need for Justification

Adam’s sin is “imputed” (jargon!) to all and Christ’s righteousness is also imputed to all.

- What does Ps. 51:5 tell us?
- How about Rom. 5:12–15?
- Why is it helpful to think of Christ as the “second Adam”?

- As poor sinners we are all condemned.
  - Read Gal. 3:10. What’s the standard for human sinlessness?
  - Rom. 6:23 simply states the dilemma for sinners, and our only hope.
- Only Christ propitiates (jargon!).
  - Read 1 John 4:10; Heb. 9:22.

  Luther: “He who does not know he has a propitious Father does not know God.”

## The Basis of Justification

- God’s grace in Christ is justification’s only source.
  - John 1:16-17 and Eph. 1:7
- God’s “justifying grace” is His undeserved love, which gave His Son to be our Savior.
  - Rom. 3:24 and Titus 2:11
- God’s grace is universal — for all the world.
  - 1 Tim. 2:4

- Justification is based on Christ’s obedience.
  - 1 Peter 2:21–24
- Christ’s death provided sacrificial atonement.
  - Is. 53:5–7
- Christ’s perfect obedience propitiated God’s wrath.
  - John 1:29 and 1 John 2:2

## The Universal Finished Results of Christ’s Work of Obedience

- All the world is redeemed, forgiven and reconciled because of Christ’s death and resurrection.
  - 2 Cor. 5:18–19 and Rom. 5:19
- God’s wrath is stilled; Satan (all evil) is defeated.
  - 1 Thess. 1:10 and Col. 2:14–15
- In Christ, righteousness and forgiveness are won and sinners are reckoned as righteousness.
  - Heb. 10:12

- So objective [general] justification is forgiveness Christ won for all (2 Cor. 5:19–21).
  - His work is an objective reality — salvation and forgiveness for the world is accomplished, independent of any other human action or merit.
- And subjective [individual] justification is this same forgiveness as it is received through faith by individuals (Gal. 2:16; Titus 3:3–7).
  - The individual “subject” is justified, born again.
Justification FROM TWO STANDPOINTS

1. From God toward humanity (objective): God is just, yet He is also gracious. He has declared the forgiveness of sins for all the world, for the sake of Christ. This is the Gospel truth! (Objective factuality, believed or not.)

2. From humanity toward God (subjective): Gifts may be given and not received. Promises may be made and not believed. But God’s promise is received by those who believe.

WEEK FOUR
Jesus & Justification

Setting THE STAGE

Read Rom. 4:16–5:2.
- What does Abraham illustrate?
- How do promise and faith relate?
- Who alone makes promises that are always true?

Another LOOK AT ABRAHAM & FAITH

- What does Abraham illustrate for James?
- How do faith and works relate?
- Who alone makes promises that are always true?
- How does faith respond when God speaks?

Faith: THE APPROPRIATION OF CHRIST’S RIGHTEOUSNESS

Justification’s essentials are
- God’s grace
- Christ’s merit
- Faith

The only essential and necessary elements of justification are the grace of God, the merit of Christ, and the faith that receives this grace and merit in the gospel’s promise, through which Christ’s righteousness is reckoned to us. From this we obtain the forgiveness of sins, reconciliation with God, our adoption as children, and the inheritance of eternal life. FC SD III, 25

2019 Convention Workbook
Faith: THE APPROPRIATION OF CHRIST’S RIGHTEOUSNESS (cont.)

- Justifying faith is faith in Christ.
  - Phil. 3:8–10
- Righteousness is imputed to individuals.
  - Acts 10:43 and Rom. 5:1–2
- Individuals can be justified only through faith.
  - John 1:12 and Gal. 3:22
- Faith comes by hearing ... The Word of Christ.
  - Rom. 10:17

Faith: THE APPROPRIATION OF CHRIST’S RIGHTEOUSNESS (cont.)

- Faith is the ear that hears God’s promise, the hand that receives God’s gift.
  - Luke 8:8; Rom. 4:16 and 10:17
  Forgiveness “cannot be received in any other way than by faith alone, since a promise cannot be received in any other way than by faith alone.” Ap IV, 84
- Justification is through faith, without works.
  - Eph. 2:8–9
- But faith inevitably bears fruit, that is, good works.
  - Eph. 2:8–10

Faith: THE APPROPRIATION OF CHRIST’S RIGHTEOUSNESS (cont.)

- Faith isn’t self-chosen, but the Holy Spirit’s gift.
  - 1 Cor. 6:11 and 12:3
- Justifying faith is not my good work, but God’s.
  - John 3:16; Rom. 4:5
- Faith bears fruit — but that’s not why it justifies.
  - Rom. 3:28
- I’m not justified because I’m contrite. (jargon)
  - Acts 13:38–39; Eph. 2:8–9

Faith: THE APPROPRIATION OF CHRIST’S RIGHTEOUSNESS (cont.)

So...

- Justification by anything other than faith dishonors Christ and obscures the Gospel.
  - Gal. 2:21 and 5:4
- Faith, through which we are justified, is a gift.
  - John 6:44; Rom. 11:6; and Phil. 1:29

Unbelief: THE REJECTION OF CHRIST’S RIGHTEOUSNESS

- The world is justified in Christ, the impenitent stand condemned.
  - Luke 18:10–14
- Faith doesn’t cause justification, but without faith we are lost since unbelief rejects the gift.
  - John 3:36
  - 2 Tim. 2:11–13
How Does JUSTIFICATION GET TO ME?

- The world and Church need God’s Word of Law and Gospel to be proclaimed and rightly distinguished. The Law brings contrition; the Gospel salvation.
  - Rom. 2:1–4; 3:9–19; Gal. 3:10–14; 2 Tim. 2:15
- Christ’s justification is for all, delivered through the Gospel and sacraments, in which Christ comes to us.
  - 1 John 2:2; 1 Tim. 2:4; Matt. 28:18–20; Rom. 10:6–8
- The Holy Spirit uses the Gospel message of Christ’s atoning work for sinners to work saving faith.
  - Col. 1:5–6; Ps. 32:5; 1 Tim. 1:15; Rom. 1:16; 1 Cor. 2:2; 2 Cor. 11:4

Gospel, ABSOLUTION AND CERTAINTY

- The pastor’s absolution is simply the Gospel as it is announced to one or to many, and it is not dependent on the pastor’s character.
- Salvation (forgiveness) is certain entirely because of God’s promise, not me (my experiences or works or great faith). We cling to Christ and His Gospel alone.

Justification — A GIFT DECLARED IN THE SACRED SCRIPTURES, GOD’S WORD

By grace alone
for Christ’s sake alone
through faith alone.

This saving Gospel is made known for all generations in the Scriptures — which alone are God’s inspired, inerrant Word.
He Is Our Righteousness
Leader’s Guide
Session 1:
Introduction/The Parable of the Good Samaritan in Context

Setting the Context: In Luke

Lake is the only evangelist to include the parable of the Good Samaritan in his Gospel, as we focus on Luke as we set the parable in its historical and literary context. The narrator will be the best judge of how much review is needed of the early chapters of Luke, but many students will be familiar with Luke’s birth narratives, his account of John the Baptist’s early ministry and his telling of our Lord’s temptation. Chapters 4–8 provide numerous episodes from Jesus’ ministry in and around Galilee both in terms of his teaching and in terms of healings and other miracles. Jesus has already told several parables, and he has explained his reasons for using parables by quoting the prophet Isaiah (Isa. 6:8, 9). He has gathered around Himself a large, popular following, often speaking to crowds numbering in the thousands (see Matt. 15:29, Luke 7:28). He has also called closer circles of disciples to learn from Him, and He has sent out both the 12 and the 72 to proclaim the Kingdom ahead of Him. Among the disciples are those who have seen Him transfigured (e.g., Matt. 17:1–9) and those who have confessed Him to be “the Christ of God” (e.g., Matt. 16:16). By the time the narrator reaches Luke 10, he has already heard Jesus twice announce His coming death. Indeed, Jesus has now “set His face to go to Jerusalem” (Luke 9:51; 18:31). And Luke’s parables fall within Luke’s extensive account of the things Jesus says and does on the way.

Kingdom ahead of Him. Among the disciples are those who have seen Him transfigured (e.g., Matt. 17:1–9) and those who have confessed Him to be “the Christ of God” (e.g., Matt. 16:16). By the time the narrator reaches Luke 10, he has already heard Jesus twice announce His coming death. Indeed, Jesus has now “set His face to go to Jerusalem” (Luke 9:51; 18:31). And Luke’s parables fall within Luke’s extensive account of the things Jesus says and does on the way.

Setting the Context: A Parable

It may seem strange or even unadvisable to turn to the parables of Jesus to find his teaching on justification, but the parables form an extremely important part of Jesus’ teaching in the Gospels. Fully one third of His recorded words come in the form of parables. It’s also true that several of the parables explicitly raise the question of justification. One example that comes readily to mind is the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector (Luke 18:9–14). How would it mean to claim that a particular parable teaches something contrary to justification by grace? Here we could then define our position that justification is the central and unifying teaching of all Scripture. This study will focus on the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25–37) to show that such a claim is groundless.

2. Why does Jesus teach with parables?

Setting our parable in its context involves understanding it as part of Luke’s Gospel, but it also involves understanding how it works as a parable. It will prove helpful in the context of this study to pause very briefly here to consider Jesus’ explanation of why He teaches with parables.

Tertium quid: 8:10–18. (A fuller discussion of these questionswould include also looking at Matt. 13:10–17 and Mark 4:1–12.) Why does Jesus teach with parables? The passage quoted by Jesus from Isaiah 8 may make it sound like His purpose was to prevent most of the people from understanding Him. One helpful approach to this difficult passage is to remind ourselves that, for learning to begin to take place, we need to admit that we don’t already know everything about the matter in question. There is significant unlearning that often has to take place before the learning can happen. There is a parallel between what Jesus says here about true learning and what He says about true healing in Luke 5:31. Another study in the CTCR series is called "Unjustified Faith." The parables force the hearer to begin to question whether he is, in fact, trustworthy. The parables express many of these man-made "faiths" as "unjustified.”

Setting the Context: Defining the Limits of "The Passage"

The relationship of Luke 10:25–37 to the passage immediately preceding it is a matter of disagreement. While some claim that the "and behold" of Luke 10:25 signals the beginning of a complete new episode, others see this phrase making a closer connection between the lawyer’s questions and what Jesus said about Himself in Luke 10:21–24. Luke’s own usage favors the latter view. 2

3. Read together Luke 10:21–24. What difference does it make for our reading of Luke 10:25–37 if we assume the lawyer was present to hear Jesus’ words in verses 21–22, or even 21–24? Although the interpretation of the parable given in this study does not depend on proving that the lawyer did hear Jesus’ words, it is interesting to note that, when Luke preached on this parable, the lectionary reading for that Sunday began two verses earlier at Luke 10:23.

1 The expression our Lord uses (Matt. 6:6, "and behind") occurs 20 times in Luke and eight times in Acts. Luke’s general pattern is to set the scene by means of an opening statement and then to set the scene by means of a narrative expression (e.g., Matt. 10:23ff, Luke 24:34ff). John, on the other hand, sets the scene by means of a narrative expression when it comes after the first verse of a new book (from what has gone before, see Luke 24:33ff, and John, even in these two passages, it sets the scene by means of a narrative expression). Luke 10:23ff is to be imagined as a deep gulf parting here between the two ways: one He thought worthless people were to be saved in the kingdom (Luke 10:23ff, 13:9–10) and the other way, His way (Luke 10:21ff).

2 The passage summarizing Jesus’ words ("and behind") occurs 20 times in Luke and eight times in Acts. Luke’s general pattern is to set the scene by means of an opening statement and then to set the scene by means of a narrative expression (e.g., Matt. 10:23ff, Luke 24:34ff). John, on the other hand, sets the scene by means of a narrative expression when it comes after the first verse of a new book (from what has gone before, see Luke 24:33ff, and John, even in these two passages, it sets the scene by means of a narrative expression). Luke 10:23ff is to be imagined as a deep gulf parting here between the two ways: one He thought worthless people were to be saved in the kingdom (Luke 10:23ff, 13:9–10) and the other way, His way (Luke 10:21ff).
Setting the Context: The Leading Questions

Acts 16:19–21:34; Eph. 3:14–21; 4:1–16; Phil. 3:20–21; Col. 1:21–23

When studying a parable, it is always important to notice what situation or question serves as the occasion for the parable. (Recall the questions above about the relationship between leseus and eth; Acts 20:31–32.) As we read verses 25–29, we see that several questions are raised that set the stage for the parable. Since they lead both the lawyer and the master into the parable, we will refer to them as “leading questions.”


LEADING QUESTION NO. 1. 

“Teacher, having done what, will I inherit eternal life?” or

“Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?” (v. 25, lawyer)

Each of these questions is important in its own way, so let’s look at them a little more closely.

Leading Question No. 1

The question in verse 25 would be better translated, “Teacher, having done what, will I inherit eternal life?”

This is exactly the same question asked by the ruler in Luke 18:18, but it’s actually very different from the question asked by the Philippian jailer in Acts 16:30 and even more so from the question of the crowds in Acts 2:37. The English translations often obscure the difference, so compare the question in the Greek (with a more wooden translation beside each question):

Luke 10:25

Ἀρχιμαχώ, δι’ ὃς θέλων ἐκτιμήσω

(οὐδενίσκεις, ὃς ποιεῖ τὰ ἄθλημα αἰώνια, ἀλλ’ ἔσοδον, ὃς ποιεῖ τὰ πίστεις αἰώνια, ἄνευ δύνασθαι)

Teacher, having done what, will I inherit eternal life?

Luke 10:18

Ἀνιποίητας, ὃς θέλων ἐκτιμήσω

(ἄθλημα, ἀλλ’ ἔσοδον, ὃς ποιεῖ τὰ πίστεις αἰώνια, ἄνευ δύνασθαι)

Good Teacher, having done what, will I inherit eternal life?

Acts 10:16–18

ἐπίκεισθαι τῷ πονίῳ ἡμέρας, ὃς δὲ ἠπέκειτο τῷ ἐκτιμήσαι (οὐδενίσκεις, ὃς ποιεῖ τὰ ἄθλημα αἰώνια, ἔσοδον, ὃς ποιεῖ τὰ πίστεις αἰώνια, ἄνευ δύνασθαι)

(ἄθλημα, ἀλλ’ ἔσοδον, ὃς ποιεῖ τὰ πίστεις αἰώνια, ἄνευ δύνασθαι)

Teacher, having done what, will I inherit eternal life?

It’s not so much that the lawyer desperately needs to know what to die for, rather, he wants to find out if he has the right answer. And it is at this point that we readers really wonder if the lawyer had heard Jesus’ earlier words in Luke 18:11–14. Was Jesus saying that “these things” had been hidden from the lawyer? How would this teacher, who claims to know “all things,” make plain the Father’s will?

What you find yourself thinking about your salvation, which of the questions above are you most likely to ask? Do you think in terms of a standard you need to meet, of a minimum entrance requirement? Do you simply wonder what can be done?

Leading Questions No. 2 and No. 3

Jesus responds by asking two questions of His own, and the two questions remind us that there are two very important ways we can go wrong when trying to find answers to our questions about salvation. First, do we know what God has said in His Word? Second, have we understood God’s Word correctly? Have we read and interpreted it? Rather ignoring or misunderstanding can lead people to incorrect answers to Question No. 1. In our passage, the lawyer knows what God has said in His Word, and Jesus responds that the man has answered correctly. The problem, if there are any, will clearly be with respect to understanding the Scriptures correctly.

Leading Question No. 4

The lawyer’s follow-up question seems a perfectly natural one, given the way the conversation has progressed. And quite often, we’re so eager to get to the parable itself that we don’t think about this question carefully enough. Two points stand out as especially important for our present study of this passage.

• Notice that the lawyer asks only about his neighbor—he does not ask about his God. Is one of his sermons on this passage, further, verse, He does not ask, “Who is my God?” as though he would say, “I owe God nothing, with God I am in good standing. I am also inclined to think that I am under obligations to no man, yet, I would like to know who my neighbor is.”

It is extremely ironic that the lawyer does not ask, “And who is my God?” since the lawyer’s God is standing right in front of him and he does not recognize Him.

Luke gives us the lawyer’s motivation for asking this question. It is the Philippian jailer’s detergent to his defensive aloofness: “But he, desiring to justify himself.” Since we are asking what this parable teaches about justification, it is especially important for us to note that the lawyer’s question comes in an attempt at self-justification. And yet, we need to ask, “Why should this lawyer need to justify himself? Justification for what?”

Flamer’s discussion is brief but to the point:

Not merely “wishing,” but “wishing to justify himself” for what? Some say, for having omitted to perform this duty in the past. Others, for having asked each a question, the answer to which had been shown to be so simple. The latter is perhaps nearer the fact, but it almost involves the ether. “Wishing to put himself in the right,” he means by the answer given is not adequate, because there is doubt as to the meaning of ‘next neighbor’.”
Does our Lord teach justification by grace through faith? We all immediately answer, "Yes, of course." But, where does He teach it? And how? We may find ourselves uncomfortably ill-prepared to answer those two questions. In this study, we're going to look at how Jesus used one of His parables to teach about justification.

Introduction
1. What has happened and is happening in Luke's account of our Lord's life and ministry in chapters 1–10 of his Gospel?

2. Read together Luke 18:9–14, another parable that has to do with justification. What does "justified" mean in verse 14? How might verse 9 provide help in understanding verse 14?


4. What difference will it make for our reading of Luke 10:25–29 if we assume that the lawyer was present to hear Jesus' words in verses 21–22 or even 21–24?

5. When studying a parable, it is always important to notice what situation or question serves as the occasion for the parable. As we read verses 25–29 we see that several questions are raised. Note them below.

Question 1: ____________________________

Question 2: ____________________________

Question 3: ____________________________

Question 4: ____________________________

6. When you find yourself thinking about your salvation, which of the questions above are you most likely to ask? Do you think in terms of a standard you need to meet, of a minimum entrance requirement? Do you simply wonder what can be done?

7. What question should the lawyer have asked?

8. Why do you think the lawyer felt a need to "justify himself"?

Looking Ahead
In our next session, we will carefully read through the parable together, but this is most likely a very familiar parable to most of us. After our discussion in this session, where do you think these "leading questions" are leading us? What would you say the parable is about? What is its message for us?
Introductory Remarks

Although this is not the place for a comprehensive review of the interpretation of the parable, a few introductory remarks ought to prove helpful here. Some instructors and students may be familiar with the history of the interpretation of the parable. Almost without exception, from the earliest commentators we possess until the interpretation of John Calvin, the parable of the Good Samaritan was interpreted as an allegory of salvation in Christ. The man traveling to Jericho was understood to be a picture of fallen humanity, and the Samaritan who rescues him was understood to be a picture of Christ. This approach is quite evident in Calvin’s preaching on this text. There will not be time to present the detailed ancient and medieval interpretations of the parable and then draw onto it a salvation history. It is very likely that even raising the issue of what the parable is to be read as an allegory or not will direct the attention of the reader toward a careful reading of the text itself. Even modern interpreters often present the student of the parable with a false dichotomy when they suggest that the parable is either an allegory about Christ or a story about human love and compassion. Rather than raise such big issues with neither preparation nor time to deal with them satisfactorily, this study suggests the parable be introduced as follows:

We have already seen how the story that Jesus tells is in response to the lawyer’s questions. Although his two questions are related, the parable is most directly a response to the second question. Try to imagine yourself in the lawyer’s shoes. How would you expect the story to answer your question? Because we know the parable so well, we usually don’t take the time to ask about what the lawyer would have been expecting and how he might have heard it. If Jesus is going to answer the lawyer’s question at all, wouldn’t you expect the story to be about a man who has to decide or who learns to answer the lawyer’s question at all, wouldn’t you expect what we want it to say, when we hear the Word in a way that only confirms our current iniquities or inadequately knowledge of God and His ways. We would, in this case, be a terrible and tragic story if the telling of this parable only served to reinforce our prejudices about certain kinds of people. We instructors of the Word must do all in our power to guard against our fear of the parable as a way that it teaches us that Jesus is hypocritical or that all outwardly religious people are self-righteous and sanctimonious. On that minority groups, marginalized people, and outsiders in general are all right because of their membership in those categories. Jesus tells a story that breaks down old categories of thinking and forces the hearer to rethink his questions. We must not let the parable become “a biblical enigma” — as if there could be such a thing.

He Is Our Righteousness
Leader’s Guide
Session 2: A Story to Answer Questions and to Reframe Them


Here again, the contemporary and pastoral status will provide abundant social and historical background on how a Samaritan would have been regarded by Jesus’ original hearers. And here again, we need to be careful that we don’t lose sight of the story for the sake of the background. Still, the contrast long adversity between Jews and Samaritans would certainly have determined the lawyer’s response to this particular parable. The lawyer is just that set of the man that the lawyer seems to want to exclude from his own legal and moral responsibility, the sort of man that the lawyer seems to want to exclude from his legal and moral responsibility, the sort of man that the lawyer seems to want to exclude from his legal and moral responsibility. The stark reality is simply that only con


Looking Ahead

As you begin to think differently about this parable, what questions do you have about what was involved in this story? What questions do you still have about this parable?

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He Is Our Righteousness
Leader’s Guide
Session 2: A Story to Answer Questions and to Reframe Them

2019 Convention Workbook

1. Try to imagine yourself in the lawyer’s place. How would you expect the story to answer your question? (Because we know the parable so well, we usually don’t take the time to ask about what the lawyer would have been expecting and how he might have heard it.)

2. What do you know about priests and Levites? How would you characterize them? How do you think Jesus’ original hearers would have characterized them?

3. What do you know about Samaritans? How would you characterize them? How do you think Jesus’ original hearers would have characterized them?

4. List the things that the Samaritan does for the wounded man. Why is the Samaritan so caring?

Looking Ahead

Are you beginning to think differently about this parable? What questions do you have about what was covered in this session? What questions do you still have about this parable?
In the Samaritan, Christ pictures and shows the kind-ness, bold, and comfort which he provides in Thick-ington through the Gospel, this is just that which initially spoke to the disciple. Beyond the eyes which see what you are, etc. (James 1). My points most convincingly what faith has in Him and how different His Gospel is from the teaching of the Law (which the priests and Levites also have). I have previously spoken about this abundantly. But in this picture we need to look at how we have fallen into sin against God’s command-ment, lie under God’s wrath, and must die eternal death.


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II. THEOLOGICAL DOCUMENTS—COMMISSION ON THEOLOGY AND CHURCH RELATIONS

divine compassion, a compassion that comes from deep within "the guts" of Father and Son.

Alfred Plummer, who has provided valuable help in dealing with many of the details of our passage, concludes his discussion:

The Fathers delight in mystical interpretations of the parable … Such things are permissible so long as they are not put forward as the meaning which the Propounder of the Parable designed to teach. That Christ Himself was a unique realization of the Good Samaritan is unquestionable. That He intended the Good Samaritan to represent Himself, in His dealings with fallen humanity, is more than we know. 9

Although Plummer’s commonsense caution is an approach we would usually endorse, where does it leave us in this case? We conclude that Jesus intends only to say that "best place but love makes neighborhood" and that He unintentionally gives us a beautiful and comforting picture of how God graciously rescues us in His Son borders on using the parable to demean its Author. There is no need to adopt all of the details of patristic and medieval interpretation to understand that in this parable Jesus is giving us a picture of Himself. And in this picture, we see Him as the One who acts freely out of grace to deliver from death, the One who makes things right for those under the curse of death and apart from any merit or worthiness on their part.

Looking Ahead

In light of this session’s discussion, what do you think the parable is about? What is its message for you? What difference would it make if the passage ended at verse 37a, after the lawyer’s response but before Jesus’ final words?

9 *Luther's Works* is formed from the noun *suffusio*, usually rendered as "inward parts, entrails." This suggests that it is the bowels or the guts that are the "seat" of such compassion.

10 Plummer, 289.
3. What do you think of this summary of the message of the parable? Any guesses as to whose summary this might be?

In this Samaritan, Christ pictures and shows the kindness, help, and comfort which he provides in His kingdom through the Gospel; this is just what He initially spoke to His disciples: “Blessed are the eyes which see what you see,” etc. [Luke 10:23]. He paints most comfortably what faith has in Him, and how very different His Gospel is from the teaching of the Law (which the priests and Levites also have). I have previously spoken about this abundantly. But in this picture we need to look at how we have fallen into sin against God’s commandment, lie under God’s wrath, and must die eternal death—and also at how we have been rescued by Him, so that we receive God’s grace, comfort, and life for our conscience and even begin to keep the Law.

4. What points from the text can be offered in support of such a reading of the parable?

a. 

b. 

c. 

d. 

e. 

Looking Ahead

In light of the session’s discussion, what do you think the parable is about? What is its message for you? What difference would it make if the passage ended at verse 37a, after the lawyer’s response but before Jesus’ final words?
The Final Verse — Luke 10:37
We still have one verse to cover. The first half of verse 37 is...
II. THEOLOGICAL DOCUMENTS — COMMISSION ON THEOLOGY AND CHURCH RELATIONS

He Is Our Righteousness

Participant’s Guide

Session 4: “Go and Do Likewise”
Luke 10:37

1. Rather than a single act of neighborliness, what does Jesus’ command require?

2. Read 1 John 4:13–21. What connections do you see between our parable and this passage from 1 John?

He Is Our Righteousness

1. How does Jesus answer the man’s questions about salvation and the requirements of the Law? Or, to ask it another way, how does Jesus teach the lawyer that he is asking the wrong questions?

2. Two common misunderstandings about justification are:
(1) “Whether it’s my works or my faith, it doesn’t matter — in the end, the deciding factor in my salvation is still me;” and (2) “Because I’m saved by grace, I don’t have to do anything for anybody. I have no neighbor but Jesus, and I know He always loves me.” How does the parable of the Good Samaritan challenge these two misunderstandings? (The two concluding Luther quotes should help here.)

3. How does the message of the parable as presented here impact the way you read the following passage, the story about Martha and Mary? Read Luke 10:38–42. Does that episode raise similar questions about the relationship between serving God and being served by Him? How do the two passages teach mutually reinforcing messages about the “one thing necessary”?

4. What have you learned about the doctrine of justification by grace through faith from this study?
Subjective and Objective Justification

LEADER’S GUIDE

Session 1

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Introduction of Terms

Did Jesus die for the sins of the whole world, or did He die only for the sins of those who believe in Him? Has the entire world been justified, or only those who believe? In the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, we use terms like subjective (individual) justification and objective (general or universal) justification to answer the above questions. In this Bible study we examine these terms and what they mean. We also seek to discuss their scriptural foundation and why these terms are important.

1. Subjective or Individual Justification

Most of the time, when we talk about justification, we talk about the justification of the individual person. Justification means that God forgives sin and declares an individual righteous. Read Romans 5:1-9.

"For the one who does not work but trusts him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness, just as David also spoke of the blessing of the one to whom God counts righteousness apart from works. "Blessed are those whose works are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; blessed is the man against whom the Lord will not count his sin" (Rom. 4:3-4).

Justification is thus by faith, not by works. God justifies a person when that individual hears the Gospel and the Holy Spirit creates faith in the Gospel in that person. "So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ" (Rom. 10:17).

Faith means what God promises in the Gospel: forgiveness of sins on account of Christ. The Gospel promises Christ's righteousness to the individual. Christ's righteousness as atonement and His fulfillment of the Law. This is what is called subjective or individual (personal) justification because it speaks about how God justifies and saves individuals when they believe the Gospel promise. Faith, subjective justification does not mean "only according to one's opinion" or "not really true." It means that justification spoken of in this way concerns the individual person.

"For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law" (Rom. 3:28).

Subjective justification means the justification of the individual. Subjective justification talks about the way in which Christ's work comes to you through the Gospel and is received in faith.

2. The Factors in Subjective or Individual Justification

• What Christ has done

The foundation of justification is what God has done in Christ. He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29). He bore the curse of the law in our stead, so that we would be free from it (Rom. 5:18). He has redeemed us with His blood (Rev 1:5; 19:13), the blood that cleanses us from all sin (1 Peter 1:19).

• The Gospel

The Gospel is the Good News about what God has done in Jesus Christ. But it is not only good "news" in the sense that it is informational. The Bible also speaks of the Gospel as a promise. One knows and accepts information. One trusts — or does not trust — a promise. "But the Scripture imprisons everybody under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe" (Rom. 10:14). Our Lutheran Confessions put it this way:

"But since justification takes place through a free promise, it follows that we cannot justify ourselves. Otherwise, why would a promise be needed? And since the promise cannot be grasped in any other way than by faith, the gospel (which is, strictly speaking, the promise of the forgiveness of sins and justification on account of Christ) proclaims the righteousness of faith in Christ, which the law does not teach." (Art. 70, ¶ 43)

• Faith

Faith is trust in this promise. It is believing God's promise and, as such, it is the instrument and means by which we cling to Christ. Christ is given to us through the Gospel and received only in faith. Faith is individual and personal. It is the person who believes; therefore, one person cannot believe for another person. Faith is a gift from God; it is not anything a person can produce in himself or herself (Rom. 3:28). We are justified by faith (Rom. 4:5).

Christ's work + our faithfulness unto death = salvation.

Another false view of salvation looks like this:

Christ's work + our works = salvation.

God wants us to do good works. But Christians do good works because they are God's children, not to become God's children or to remain God's children. Good works are a sign that we are children of God, or to other words, a sign of faith. The absence of good works is a sign that someone is not a child of God and does not know faith.

3. Things to Watch for When Talking about Subjective or Individual Justification

• Christ has accomplished salvation.

What Christ has done on the cross and through the empty tomb is sufficient for the salvation of all people. Our salvation does not need to be, in fact cannot be, supplemented by anything beyond what Christ has already accomplished in His life and death, nor by anything we may or must do. Thus, salvation is never something like this:

Christ's work + our works = salvation.

God wants us to do good works. But Christians do good works because they are God's children, not to become God's children or to remain God's children. Good works are a sign that we are children of God, or to other words, a sign of faith. The absence of good works is a sign that someone is not a child of God and does not know faith.

Another false view of salvation looks like this:

Christ's work + our faithfulness unto death = salvation.

Of course, we are admonished to stay faithful to Christ as long as we live. But this faithfulness is not something we do by our own power. Rather, God works faithfulness in us. By means of His Gospel He preserves and strengthens our faith so that we do not fall away from Christ.

So, this is the proper "salvation equation:

Christ's work = God's (Mons of Grace) + God's gift of faith = salvation!

• The Gospel is not an offer.

We live in a consumer society. The consumer is king, and a multitude of goods vie for our attention. Special offers flood our emails and social media. The Gospel, however, is not an offer from God that we are free to choose or not choose. It is the powerful Good News that creates faith when and where it pleases God. It is the powerful Word that makes all those who are dead in their sins. Wherever your path to faith is — whether you are a lifelong believer or someone who came to faith in Christ as an adult — you became a Christian not because you chose to, but because God created faith in you. He made you a Christian. Maybe you think: "But I do choose to be a Christian." If you "choose" the Gospel, it is only because you could choose the Gospel.

Robert Kolb and Timothy Wengert, eds., The Work of Counsel to the Conference of the Evangelical Lutheran Church (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000), 127.
And the only reason you could choose the Gospel is because God had already acted to make you eligible. “No one can say ‘Jesus is Lord’ except in the Holy Spirit” (1 Cor. 12:3). Yet you to Jesus is only possible because God has already given you the Spirit.

- Faith has no value in and of itself.

What about this equation?

Christ’s work + a person’s faith = salvation.

This one can be tricky! Lutherans certainly emphasize the importance of faith, as does the Bible. Read Romans 3:28 again. There are two ditches to avoid if one wants to stay on the straight road. The first ditch is to avoid the refusal to talk about faith at all, as if any discussion of faith and its role in justification would turn faith into part of the equation. The other ditch is to avoid the idea of thinking that faith is half of the work, what I “bring to the equation.”

In this point of view, what God has done in Christ is only half of what is needed for justification — as if God’s work is the unfinished bridge in the French city of Avignon — and our faith is what completes the building project.

Faith is always faith in something or someone: there is no such thing as “shaky” or “obscure” faith — faith as something that I possess or produce myself. Rather, faith is trusting in the Gospel and thus trusting in Christ as my Savior.

Faith is more than mere knowledge. It affects the entire person.

Without faith in the Gospel, a person does not receive the benefits of Christ’s death and resurrection.

4. Objective or Universal Justification: What do we mean when we talk about “objective” (“general” or “universal”) justification?

Until now, we have talked about the way in which God justifies an individual through the Word of the Gospel which is received in faith. Objective justification relies on the promise that God has justified the entire world. Justification and forgiveness of sins are the same thing. In subjective justification, this word of justification or forgiveness is received by the individual. When we talk about objective justification, we are considering the biblical truth — the Bible declaration and promise — that God has forgiven the sins of the whole world. Here is a helpful summary of this teaching:

“By objective or ‘universal’ justification one means that God has declared the whole world to be righteous for Christ’s sake and that righteousness has thus been procured for all people. It is objective because this was God’s unilateral act prior to and in no way dependent upon man’s response to it, and universal because all human beings are embraced by this verdict. God has acquired the forgiveness of sins for all people by declaring that the world for Christ’s sake has been justified. The acquiring of forgiveness is the pronouncement of forgiveness.”

We will start to unpack the content of this thesis in the remainder of this study (Session 1) and continue to explore it more fully in Session 2.

6. Conclusion

Objective justification means that God has justified the entire world. Subjective justification describes the way in which we, as individuals, are justified through the Gospel. Christ’s work on the cross becomes ours and is received by faith. We will explore both teachings more fully in Session 2.

Subjective and Objective Justification

P A R T I C I P A N T ’ S G U I D E

Session 1


To understand what is meant by objective or universal justification, we need to start by looking at God’s universal grace.

Read 1 Timothy 4:10. In what sense is God the “Savior of all people”? Does this simply mean that God makes salvation possible, that He is the “possible Savior of all people”? Or is God really only the Savior of the believers? Has God saved all people or only those who believe?

God is the Savior of all people. The Bible explicitly teaches that He desires all to be saved. “This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time” (1 Tim. 2:3-4).

According to this passage, for whom did Christ die?

Christ is the Savior of all people. His death is for the sins of all people, those who will believe and those who will not believe. The Gospel is a promise to all people. The grace of God extends over all people, and so does the merit of Christ. That is, what Christ has done meets the forgiveness for all time. The Gospel is the Good News for all people. All these universal statements are objective, that is, they are factual and not influenced by human opinion or perspective. They declare absolute truths. They become more (subjectively) through faith in the Gospel.

The first thing to remember about objective or universal justification, therefore, is that it is about the object of faith (what faith believes in), namely the work of Christ. This work of Christ is universal, that is, it concerns all people: Christ died for all people.
Subjective and Objective Justification

Introduction of Terms

Did Jesus die for the sins of the whole world, or did He die only for the sins of those who believe in Him? Has the entire world been justified, or only those who believe?

In the Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod, we use terms like subjective (individual or personal) justification and objective (general or universal) justification to answer the above questions. In this Bible study we examine these terms and what they mean. We also seek to discuss what their scriptural foundation is, and why they are important.

1. Subjective or Individual Justification

"To the one who does not work but trusts him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness, just as David also speaks of the blessing of the one to whom God counts righteousness apart from works: 'Blessed is the man against whom the Lord will not count his sin' (Romans 4:4-5).

Justice is thus by faith, not by works. God justifies a person when that individual hears the Gospel and the Holy Spirit creates faith in the Gospel in that person. "For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law" (Rom 3:28).

Subjective justification means the justification of the individual. Subjective justification talks about the way in which Christ's work comes to you through the Gospel and is received in faith.

2. The Factors in Subjective or Individual Justification

• What Christ has done
  • The Gospel
  But since justification takes place through a free promise, it follows that we cannot justify ourselves. Otherwise, why would a promise be needed? And since the promise cannot be grasped in any other way than by faith, the gospel (which is, strictly speaking, the promise of the forgiveness of sins and justification on account of Christ) proclaims the righteousness of faith in Christ, which the law does not teach. (Up Ps. 43)

3. Things to Watch for When Talking about Subjective or Individual Justification

• Faith has no value in itself. Consider this equation: Christ's work + Gospel (Means of Grace) + God's gift of faith = salvation. (Tricky! See discussion below.)

4. Objective or Universal Justification

How should we understand and talk about faith so that we stay on the straight, biblical path?

Faith is not a human work, even though it is we as human beings (not God) who believe. To reject Christ and refuse to believe in Him is to declare God's promises null and void for oneself.

Subjective and Objective Justification

Leader's Guide

Session 1:

The first thing to remember about objective or universal justification, therefore, is that it is about the object of faith (what faith believes in), namely the work of Christ. This work of Christ is universal, that is, it concerns all people. Christ died for all people.

5. Conclusion

Objective justification means that God has justified the entire world. Subjective justification describes the way in which we, as individuals, are justified through the Gospel. Christ's work on the cross becomes ours and is received by faith. We will explore both teachings more fully in Session 2.

Faith is always faith in something or someone. There is no such thing as "absolute" or "abstract" faith — faith as something that I possess or produce myself. Rather, faith is trusting in the Gospel and thus trusting in Christ as my Savior.

Faith is more than mere knowledge. It affects the entire person.

Without faith in the Gospel, a person does not receive the benefits of Christ's death and resurrection.

II. THEOLOGICAL DOCUMENTS — COMMISSION ON THEOLOGY AND CHURCH RELATIONS

2019 Convention Workbook
II. THEOLOGICAL DOCUMENTS—COMMISSION ON THEOLOGY AND CHURCH RELATIONS

Subjective and Objective Justification
Leader’s Guide
Session 2:

1. Subjective or Individual Justification

In Session 1 we talked primarily about “subjective” or individual justification.

Justification is receiving the forgiveness of sin—of all sin, so that we are free from the condemnation of the law. We are justified through the Gospel, the Good News. The Gospel is a promise that comes to sinners, preaching, Baptism, the Lord’s Supper and Absolution. We receive this Good News in faith alone because a promise is received only by one who believes it.

Therefore, we speak of justification by faith alone. This is how God applies the saving work of Christ to the individual person—through faith in the Gospel. That is what we mean by subjective justification, the justification of the individual person.

2. Objective Justification

We also started to look at what is meant by “objective” or “universally” justifications. By that we mean Christ is the Savior of all people and that the feminist and atonement for all sins. The message of the Gospel, therefore, includes all your sins are forgiven. (not may or be forgiven) because of what Christ has done. Look again at 1 Timothy 4:10 and 1 Timothy 2:3–6.

“For this end we toiled and strived, because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the savior of all people, especially of those who believe” (1 Thess. 5:24).

“Is this good, and is it pleasing in the sight of God our Lord, who desires all people to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth? For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time.” (1 Tim. 2:4–5).

3. Things to Watch for When Talking about Subjective or Individual Justification

Let’s look now at another text that is important for the teaching of objective justification.

Read 2 Corinthians 5:18–19.

“Now all this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.” (2 Cor. 5:18–19)

The message of the Gospel, therefore, is that all your sins are forgiven. (not may or be forgiven) because of what Christ has done. Look again at 1 Timothy 4:10 and 1 Timothy 2:3–6.

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6. The Relationship between Objective (Universal) and Subjective (Individual) Justification

The justifying act

We have looked at objective justification, that is, God’s declaration that all people are forgiven because of the work of Christ. God is reconciling the world through Christ, in Christ and on account of Christ, who bore the sins of all people and satisfied the wrath of God. This declaration is good news for all who fear the punishment of God because of their sins.

We have also talked about objective or individual justification. Besides objectively declaring the whole world justified, God also addresses individual persons or subjects. “Subjective” here means “belonging to an individual person,” not “existing only in one’s mind” or something that has no reality in eternal life.

The proclamation of the gracious judgment of God in the Gospel

Read 2 Corinthians 5:18–19. What is meant by the “message of reconciliation”?

It is the proclamation of the Good News by the apostles, that is, the Gospel. The good news of Christ’s death for the sins of the world is called the “message of reconciliation” because it is the reassuring announcement that God for Christ’s sake has forgiven the sins of all people.

Where does this message of reconciliation belong together. What Christ has gained for all people by declaring that the world for Christ’s sake has been forgiven. The assurance of forgiveness is the pronouncement of forgiveness.”

• Illustration: Parole and the prisoner

Objective justification has often been compared to the issuing of a pardon. The president or the governor has the right of pardon, so that a person who has been sentenced will not suffer the consequences of his crime. Some states, those who fled to Canada to evade being drafted during the Vietnam War were pardoned by the president, so that they did not have to fear punishment when they came back to the United States. This pardon, as all pardons, was pure grace. It was universal. It was an objective fact and reality. But what if a person were to think that this was “not good to be true” — that this was just a cunning trick of the government to get them back to the United States where they could be punished? Someone who did not trust the president’s word and did not believe the promise of pardon would not enjoy the result of the pardon. He would continue to exclude himself from the benefit of returning to the United States.

Objective justification is a similar pardon. God, because what Christ has done, announces a general amnesty to all people. Those who believe this good news will enjoy it. Those who do not believe it in this life but reject it (tragically) suffer the punishment from which God has already freed them in Christ.


4. Questions to Consider

A. What does “reconciling” mean?

B. What is the context of this passage?

C. What is the message of the Gospel of reconciliation?

D. What is the meaning of the “act of righteousness”?

E. What does Paul mean when he says that this act of Christ “justifies in life and judgements for all men!”

F. What means all people or only believers?

It applies to everyone. There is no indication that the work “world” has to do with any particular race. The work of God in Christ is for the entire world.

In what way are individuals reconciled to God?

They are reconciled to God because God has set aside His wrath and has declared them righteous. He is at peace with humanity because what Christ has done. He “does not count their trespasses against them.”

What does it mean when God does not count our trespasses against us?

It means nothing less than the forgiveness of sins for all people. To be forgiven means to be justified.

“Blindness is the one who transgresses in ignorance, whose soul is covered. Blindness is the man against whom the Lord counts no iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit.” (Ps. 1:11)

“Are you justified on the basis of grace, because of the sole merit, the entire obedience, and the bitter suffering, death, and the resurrection of our Lord Christ alone, whose obedience is reckoned to us as righteousness?” (Ps. 32:2, 4, 5)

“Are you justified on the basis of grace, because of the sole merit, the entire obedience, and the bitter suffering, death, and the resurrection of our Lord Christ alone, whose obedience is reckoned to us as righteousness?” (Ps. 32:2, 4, 5)

We have here that God, through His action in Christ, has done something for everyone else. Before any human being could do anything, God reconciled Himself to the world. No one else did anything that made this possible. For Christ’s sake, God does not count people’s trespasses against them—this includes all people. Paul does not say, God does not count man’s trespasses against all believers; He says, God does not count man’s trespasses against “them” (“the world”). And this covers everyone and everyone—not only some, or some people only, but all the sins of the world—past, present and future. Reconciliation is something that has already happened in Christ. The message of reconciliation, therefore, is that God is fully reconciled with the world in Christ. God is at peace with the whole in Christ. In the Old Testament, the entire world that He is at peace with us — rejected. Faith is a work and given to all people.

What is meant by subjective justifications?

The message of the Gospel, therefore, is that all your sins are forgiven. (not may or be forgiven) because of what Christ has done. Look again at 1 Timothy 4:10 and 1 Timothy 2:3–6.

“For this end we toiled and strived, because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the savior of all people, especially of those who believe” (1 Thess. 5:24).

“Is this good, and is it pleasing in the sight of God our Lord, who desires all people to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth? For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time.” (1 Tim. 2:4–5).
Subjective and Objective Justification

II. THEOLOGICAL DOCUMENTS—COMMISSION ON THEOLOGY AND CHURCH RELATIONS

by believing the message, the Gospel is received to... of the work as a whole, without the written permission of the copyright holder, is prohibited.

Photo: Erik M. Lunsford

Session 2

8. Preaching and Absolution

Because God has forgiven the sins of all the world, therefore a preacher of the Gospel can say: “God has forgiven all your sins.”

A preacher of the Gospel can say: “To the head and by the command of my Lord Jesus Christ, I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” For God has already said that, and the preacher simply repeating the Word of God. Without objective justification, there is no objective Gospel.

If there were no objective justification, how would one speak the Gospel? One could only say: “God will forgive your sins, once you believe.” But Jacob’s faith is no longer trusting in what Christ has already accomplished. Would the following still be an assurance in any real sense of the word? “To those who believe, I pronounce the forgiveness of sins, but to those who do not believe, God has no forgiveness to offer you.” How could such a “gospel” bring anyone to faith? Without objective justification, subjective justification is impossible to imagine.

The Lutheran Confessions speak this way about justification:

“The only essential and necessary elements of justification are the grace of God, the merit of Christ, and the faith that receives this grace and rests in the promise of God, through which Christ’s righteousness is reckoned to us” (AP III-D, 21). Thus, the Confessions speak about which is universal and objective—the grace of God, the merit of Christ, the promise of the Gospel, and how this comes to be ours personally (individually), namely through faith.

The teaching of objective justification, therefore, thus does not mock faith, rather, it physically provides the true place. Faith believes in the reconciliation and forgiveness of sins that God has proclaimed in the death and resurrection of Christ. Faith does not receive God so as to believe in God who has forgiven us and reconciled Himself to us. God does not cause us to forgive our sins, or rather, faith receives the forgiveness that Christ has granted, the forgiveness declared to us through the Gospel.

9. Objections to Objective Justification

Depending on how the discussion has gone to this point, the instructor may want to select or focus on specific objections that are most relevant to the particular context of the hearers.

The teaching of God’s objective justification may want to some extent to deny that God has sins, and that sins are particular, by nature “Children of sin” (Rom 5:13). It is true that God has sins, the reconciliation in Christ does not mean that God no longer has sins, but rather that in Christ there is forgiveness. Both are true. We are by nature sinful and unclean, and therefore “under God’s punishment (God’s wrath).” We are also, because of Christ, reconciled to God. Those who believe the Good News will live with God as His dear children, forgiven and reconciled in the relationship that Christ has established. Those who reject Christ and do not believe the message of reconciliation have chosen to reject God’s absolution and will bear the punishment of their sins.

Thus, the Church preaches both God’s Law and God’s Gospel. The purpose of the Law is to make sinners and to show God’s wrath over sin. This will be preached until the last day, God’s wrath is on the sinner, and it abides on him if he does not believe in the Gospel. The preaching of the Gospel proclaims that God has forgiven all people in Christ.

“Those are the two chief works of men, to terrify and to justify and to quicken the sinner. One or the other of these works is spoken of throughout Scripture” (Ap III-D, 51). One is the Law, which proclaims God’s wrath against sin, and the other is the Gospel, which imparts God’s mercy and forgiveness. “Since the beginning of the world these two proclamations have continually been set forth side by side in the church of God with the proper distinction” (AP III-D, 23).

It is true that Jesus died for all people, but some may object that it is not going far enough to say all people are justified! Here again, we have to look at 2 Corinthians 5:17: “If God does not impute sins, then he forgives them and justifies sinner, since justification and forgiveness of sins are the same.” This language is not going too far. It says what St. Paul says.

Does this mean that all people will go to heaven?

To answer that, let’s start with the basics of all talk about justification. Christ’s work bears the sins of all men on the cross. He paid for the sins of all men.

It’s paid for the sins of all people, how can it be that there are still people who will have to pay for their sins in hell?

We believe in the perfect, all-sacrificing sacrifice of Christ; and that those who reject Christ enjoy no benefit of this sacrifice. We do not say that Christ’s sacrifice did not pay for all their sins. We say that because of the sacrifice of Christ, all sins are forgiven. Those who reject this sacrifice of Christ it is proclaimed to them as the forgiveness of all their sins, but God does what they want. They do not want to be forgiven, and so God will regard their sins as they want it to be regarded—as not forgiven by Christ’s sacrifice. He who rejects God’s absolution will be treated as one who has rejected God’s absolution and will be judged according to the Law.

To help us understand this “hard teaching,” we can turn to the words of our Lord in the Gospel according to John.

There, Jesus speaks of the one thing that the Father wants us to do—to believe in the one He sent, that is to believe in His Son (Jn 3:16). Later Jesus tells His disciples that the Holy Spirit will show the world that it is all wrong about sin, for it is not believing in Jesus (Jn 14:12). To reject God’s word of promise in Christ means to judge oneself unworthy of eternal life (Rom 1:16).”}

10. Conclusion

The terms “subjective” (“individual”) justification and “objective” (“general”) justification are rather technical. But they are used to express something that is not merely technical, but essential—and very practical and comforting—for every Christian: God has forgiven the sins of all people on account of Christ. The Gospel is the announcement of this forgiveness. Faith does nothing more than receive this forgiveness.
Subjective and Objective Justification

Participants' Guide

Session 2

1. Subjective or Individual Justification

Justification is receiving the forgiveness of sin — of all sin, so that we are free from the condemnation of the law. We are justified through the Gospel, the Good News. The Gospel is a promise that comes to us in preaching, Baptism, the Lord’s Supper and Absolution. We receive this Good News in faith alone because a promise is received only by one who believes.

2. Objective Justification

For this end we tell and entreat, because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Savior of all people, especially of those who believe (1 Thess. 5:13). This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time (1 Tim. 2:3–6).

3. Things to Watch for When Talking about Subjective or Individual Justification

‘All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation’ (2 Cor. 5:18). What does ‘counting’ mean? How did God reconcile the world to Himself? Even ‘world’ mean all people or only believers? In what way are unbelievers reconciled to God? What does it mean when God does not count our trespasses against us? ‘Blessed is the one whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man whose lawless行为 counts no iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit’ (Ps. 32:1–2).

4. Romans 5:18–19

Read Romans 5:18–19 (see below). What is the context here? ‘Therefore, since one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men’. For as by the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man’s obedience the many will be made righteous.

What is meant by the ‘act of righteousness’?

What does Paul mean when he says that this act of Christ ‘leads to justification and life for all men’?

‘For as it is a fact that the offense of Adam resulted in the condemnation of death for all men, so it is a fact that the righteousness of Christ resulted in the justification of life to all men. What Paul, therefore, teaches in this section is briefly this, that, as the sin of Adam brought upon all men the condemnation of death, so, and much more so, did the righteousness of Christ bring upon all men the justification of life’.

5. Summary of Objective Justification

By ‘objective’ or ‘universal’ justification one means that God has declared the whole world to be righteous for Christ’s sake and that righteousness has thus been procured for all people. It is objective because this was God’s unilateral act prior to and in no way dependent upon man’s response to it, and universal because all human beings are included in this verdict. God has acquired the forgiveness of sins for all people by declaring that the world for Christ’s sake has been forgiven. The acquiring of forgiveness is the proclamation of forgiveness.

• Illustration: Pardon and the prisoner

6. The Relationship between Objective (Universal) and Subjective (Individual) Justification

• The justifying act of God

• The proclamation of the gracious judgment of God in the Gospel

Read 2 Corinthians 5:18–20. What is meant by the ‘message of reconciliation’?

4 Koehler, 226.

8. Preaching and Absolution

Because God has forgiven the sins of all the world, therefore a preacher of the Gospel can say, ‘God has forgiven all your sins’.

‘The only essential and necessary elements of justification are the grace of God, the merit of Christ, and the faith that receives this grace and merit in the gospel’s promise, through which Christ’s righteousness is reconciled to us’ (FC SD III, 25).

Thus, the Confessions speak about the work that is universal and objective — the grace of God, the merit of Christ, the promise of the Gospel; and how this comes to be ours personally (subjectively), namely through faith.

9. Objections to Objective Justification

If He paid for the sins of all people, how can it be that there are still people who will have to pay for their sins in hell?

10. Conclusion

The terms subjective (individual) justification and ‘objective’ (‘general’) justification are rather technical. But they are used to express something that is not merely technical, but essential — and very practical and comforting — for every Christian. God has forgiven the sins of all people on account of Christ. The Gospel is the announcement of this forgiveness. My faith does nothing more than receive this forgiveness.
II. THEOLOGICAL DOCUMENTS—COMMISSION ON THEOLOGY AND CHURCH RELATIONS

Justice and Evangelicalism

Introduction

We probably all have friends or colleagues who enthusiastically describe themselves as “born again Christians.” Perhaps we have even heard such people talk about a specific time or experience in their lives when they chose to begin following Jesus or “made a decision for Christ.” We may admire the openness and boldness with which they share their faith in Christ, but at the same time we may have questions about certain aspects of what they believe. Or maybe their testimony and Christian witness have led us to question our own faith or our salvation. Am I really a Christian if I haven’t made a “decision for Christ”? Have I done “born again”? Is simply believing in Jesus enough, without the sort of born-again experience that they believe goes beyond this de

(Slide 1) In this Bible study we look at the doctrine of justification and evangelism. Evangelism is a significant and influential part of Christianity in America. Some of you might have grown up in evangelical churches or circles, many of you have evangelical friends, and probably everybody has listened to evangelical radio stations, watched evangelical preachers on TV and read books by evangelical authors. In this Bible study we explore what Lutherans and evangelicals have in common and where they differ regarding justification. What do we mean when we talk about evangelism or evangelicalism?

(Slide 2) What are the characteristic features of evangelism? Are there different kinds of evangelism? If so, do they have in common?

Are we Lutheran evangelicals? Evangelism means “preaching the Gospel.” Lutherans are rightly referred to as evangelicals because we emphasize the Gospel in preaching and as the foundation of the Church. Therefore, many congregations have the word “evangelical” in their name. However, the term evangelical is also used by others in different ways.

In this study we are referring to “evangelicalism” as a particular movement in American Protestantism. It defines “evangelical” in ways that differ from the historic Lutheran usage of the term. The way in which Lutherans refer to themselves as “evangelicals” can be compared and contrasted with two alternate definitions. How evangelicals see and describe themselves, and how others see evangelicals. Evangelicalism describes itself as a movement in modern Christianity, transcending denominational and confessional boundaries, that emphasizes conformity to the basic tenets of the faith and a missionary outreach of compassion and urgency. Evangelicals is not a denomination or movement, but a movement in churches that emphasizes basic Christian teachings and zeal for missionary outreach.

Some church bodies are completely evangelical in this sense (Southern Baptists, for example); in other church bodies evangelicalism is one faction among others (evangelical groups within the United Methodist Church, for example). Among the traditional beliefs that evangelicals hold are the doctrine of the Trinity (shared by all Christians), the virgin birth, the divinity and humanity of Christ, and scripture as “the divinely inspired record of God’s revelation.” They emphasize the total sinfulness of man, and salvation by grace through faith on account of Christ’s sacrifice on the cross. They also emphasize the importance of following Jesus by living a sanctified life, the necessity of personal witnessing (“telling the story of God”), and the expectation of a “visible, personal return of Jesus Christ.”

(Slide 3) On the website of the National Association of Evangelicals the four points are used to summarize how evangelicals describe themselves:

“Conversion: a story of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross as making possible the redemption of humanity.”

This video, based on these four points, may be used and discussed if desired: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3XlihJkHJWw

(Slide 4) How do others see evangelicals?

Another helpful summary of evangelical identity identifies the following six distinct theological teachings:

1. Holy Scripture is the supreme authority …
2. The main theme of Scripture is God’s saving work. God sent his Son, who bore the sins of the world on the cross and made redemption possible …
3. Eternal salvation comes only through personal faith in Christ, which God gives. Yet since God leaves room for freedom of decision, the experience of becoming and being a Christian assumes great importance …
4. For this reason, evangelism and mission tend to take precedence over social action …
5. Dixie is developed, not out of the situation, but out of God’s Law and ordinances …
6. Christ’s return is expected literally.”

How do these definitions compare with what the class participants say about evangelicals? What did the participants mention that goes beyond this definition?

(Slide 5) Erich Geldbach, in his article in The Encyclopedia of Christianity, names “The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod” as a part of the evangelical movement. What do you think about this?

What sparks in favor of it?

What sparks against it?

There are obviously denominational and evangelical emphases on basic biblical doctrine as the Trinity, Christ’s two natures, the authority and inspiration of the Scriptures, etc. But is this enough to make a Lutheran “evangelical”?"
2. The Common Ground (slide 6–8)

As we have seen, there is common ground between Lutheranism and evangelicalism in some respects. When we are talking about justification, this common ground consists in:

- The centrality of Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross and the resurrection from the dead as the foundation of man’s justification
- Justification is by faith, not by works

We can be thankful that these important truths are taught in evangelical congregations and churches. As a result, other Christian teachings may be minimized and dismissed on many questions as soon as they are not part of one’s own salvation system. There are several examples of infants who were baptized when they were not regarded as Christians. The attitude towards other Christians, therefore, is often shaped by what one believes can bring us to God. In summary, one is left with the overall conviction that one’s Old Testament and New Testament faith must be guarded because salvation depends on it.

3. The Differences Between Evangelicals and Lutherans Concerning Justification

Despite the points of agreement on justification, there are differences between Lutherans and evangelicals. To take these differences seriously is not in serious dispute among evangelicals and Lutherans. Rather, the purpose is to sharpen our understanding of the challenge of justifying and be able to discern what is true and what is false in both viewpoints. The disagreement is not that we are not filled into error, but that we are able to explain to our evangelical relatives and friends what we believe and why we believe it.

- Making a decision for Jesus — Justification and Baptism

The answer is that Jesus has heard people — perhaps family friends and others — speak about the day they asked Jesus to come into their lives. A popular evangelical hymn is titled, “I have decided to follow Jesus.” The late evangelist, Billy Graham, followed the pattern of ending his sermons by asking people to come forward to “make a decision for Christ.”

Revelation 2:10

Can a dead person open the door? What has to happen so that I can open the door and let Jesus in? A dead person cannot do anything, nor can we open the door for them. Rather, it is the person who is revived and made alive — that is, the believer — who opens the door to Christ. When the Holy Spirit creates faith in us, he also creates the new life and the will to let Jesus in. This is what we receive when we invite Jesus into our lives as Christians. We do this as Christians and because of God’s life-giving Word, in which we become Christians. This is similar to the command to believe:

The words of Christ: “Repent, and believe in the Gospel” (Mark 1:15) do not prove that people are able to do this by their own power. Moreover, it cannot raise himself from the dead. Christ commanded Lazarus to come out of the grave (John 11:43–44). In the same way unconverted people who are dead in sin cannot raise themselves spiritually. They are restored and conformed by the power of God through the word (Rom. 10:16). Jesus says, “No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him” (John 6:44).

The late famed evangelist, Billy Graham, followed the pattern of ending his sermons by asking people to come forward to “make a decision for Christ.”

Revelation 3:20

Because you are close to Me, I will open the door and let Jesus in. While we are not able to do this by our own strength, we are able to call on Jesus to enter into our lives. In one’s own words, the verse is quoted in the Small Catechism, Chapter Three: “He saved us through the washing of rebirth and the Holy Spirit, who He poured out on us generally through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by the grace of God, we might become heirs of eternal life.” This is a trustworthy saying (1 Tim. 6:12–14).

This verse is quoted in the Small Catechism, Chapter Three: “He saved us through the washing of rebirth and the Holy Spirit, who He poured out on us generally through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by the grace of God, we might become heirs of eternal life.” This is a trustworthy saying (1 Tim. 6:12–14).

4. Conversionism and Free Will (slide 9–10)

As we have seen, the emphasis on conversion and a born-again experience tends to go hand in hand with an emphasis on making a decision for Jesus. Let’s look more closely at the assumptions and ideas that such an emphasis includes.

- What do you think about the emphasis on a born-again experience?

Evangelicalism is a very prominent strand of Christianity in America. We can that evangelical churches preach Christ as Savior and justification by faith is emphasized. A problem with evangelicalism is that Christ is often not touched 100%. Instead, it is taught that man has to do his part to be saved. There is also a problem with evangelicalism when it does not follow Christ’s instruction of Baptism as the washing of regeneration, in which we receive Christ’s righteousness and are justified freely as His gracious gift. Finally, there is a problem with evangelicals when it fosters a faith that relies on an inner experience instead of the Gospel — telling people that they have to make a decision for Jesus, or have a particular experience, or say the right prayer before they can be saved.

5. Conclusion

Evangelicalism is a very prominent strand of Christianity in America. We can that evangelical churches preach Christ as Savior and justification by faith is emphasized. A problem with evangelicalism is that Christ is often not touched 100%. Instead, it is taught that man has to do his part to be saved. There is also a problem with evangelicalism when it does not follow Christ’s instruction of Baptism as the washing of regeneration, in which we receive Christ’s righteousness and are justified freely as His gracious gift. Finally, there is a problem with evangelicals when it fosters a faith that relies on an inner experience instead of the Gospel — telling people that they have to make a decision for Jesus, or have a particular experience, or say the right prayer before they can be saved.

For Evangelicals, the Christian life begins with a “born-again experience” that he wants to mark for himself. Lutherans who are baptized as babies recognize that their Christian life begins with their Baptism. In Baptism God adopted you as His child, gave you Christ’s righteousness and gave you His Holy Spirit. Oh, as the Small Catechism puts it:

“What benefit does baptism give? — It works forgiveness of sins, rescues from death and the devil, and gives eternal salvation to all who believe this, as the words and promises of God declare.”

These gifts, as all of gifts, are received in faith. Without faith, Baptism does not benefit. But even small children can receive those gifts in faith. As an adult, I do not need some other sort of a “decision for Jesus” or “conversion experience.” Rather, I trust in the promises of God that has made in my Baptism and live a life of daily repentance (Small Catechism, fourth question on Baptism). For those who are adults and converted as adults, the foundation of their life as Christians is also not only a one-time experience, but consists in receiving the Word of the Gospel in faith and trusting in this Gospel.

There is another issue concerning the emphasis on experience. How do we know that I am a Christian? If the born-again experience is central, then it is not feared to say: “I know I am a Christian because of my experience” or “Because I made a decision for Jesus.”

How would you answer the question: “How do you know you are a Christian?” Don’t look inward to what you have decided or done. You are a Christian because God has said that you are His child through your Baptism — that is where your faith looks. Faith is not faith in an experience, faith looks to God’s gracious promise. The Christian life starts with God’s promise given to me in Baptism and believing his promise, not in a special experience.

4. Conversionism and Free Will (slide 9–10)

As we have seen, the emphasis on conversion and a born-again experience tends to go hand in hand with an emphasis on making a decision for Jesus. Let’s look more closely at the assumptions and ideas that such an emphasis includes.

- What do you think of the following idea?

Evangelicalism is a very prominent strand of Christianity in America. We can that evangelical churches preach Christ as Savior and justification by faith is emphasized. A problem with evangelicalism is that Christ is often not touched 100%. Instead, it is taught that man has to do his part to be saved. There is also a problem with evangelicalism when it does not follow Christ’s instruction of Baptism as the washing of regeneration, in which we receive Christ’s righteousness and are justified freely as His gracious gift. Finally, there is a problem with evangelicals when it fosters a faith that relies on an inner experience instead of the Gospel — telling people that they have to make a decision for Jesus, or have a particular experience, or say the right prayer before they can be saved.

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II. THEOLOGICAL DOCUMENTS — COMMISSION ON THEOLOGY AND CHURCH RELATIONS

Justification and Evangelicalism

What are the characteristic features of evangelicalism?

- Are there different kinds of evangelicals?
- If so, what do they have in common?

How evangelicals describe themselves:

- "Conversionism: the belief that lives need to be transformed through a 'born-again' experience and a life-long process of following Jesus."
- "Activism: the expression and demonstration of the gospel in missionary and social reform efforts."
- "Biblicism: a high regard for and obedience to the Bible as the ultimate authority."
- "Crucicentrism: a stress on the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross as making possible the redemption of humanity."

How others see evangelicals:

I. Holy Scripture is the supreme authority …
II. The main theme of Scripture is God's saving work. God sent His Son, who bore the sins of the world on the cross and made redemption possible …
III. Eternal salvation comes only through personal faith in Christ, which God gives. Yet since God leaves room for freedom of decision, the experience of becoming and being a Christian assumes great importance …
IV. For this reason evangelism and mission tend to take precedence over social action …
V. Ethics is developed, not out of the situation, but out of God's law and ordinances …
VI. Christ's return is expected literally.

Is The Lutheran Church— Missouri Synod Evangelical?

What speaks in favor of it?
- A common emphasis on many basic Christian teachings (the Bible's full authority, the Trinity, Christ's two natures, His atoning death, salvation by grace through faith, the importance of evangelism, etc.).

What speaks against it?
- Evangelicalism is a movement in many denominations vs. Lutheranism as a distinct church or denomination.
- Unity in doctrine vs. diversity in matters like infant/adult Baptism.
- Sacraments as God's Means of Grace vs. symbols.

The Common Ground on Justification between Evangelicals and Lutherans

- The centrality of Jesus' sacrifice on the cross and His resurrection from the dead as the foundation of man's justification
- Justification by faith, not by works

The Differences Between Evangelicals and Lutherans Concerning Justification

- Making a decision for Jesus — Justification and Baptism
- Conversionism: "the belief that lives need to be transformed through a born-again experience and a life-long process of following Jesus."
- Read John 3:3–5.
- "How can water do such great things? — Certainly not just water, but the word of God in and with the water does these things, along with the faith which trusts this word of God in the water. For without God's word the water is plain water and no Baptism. But with the word of God it is a Baptism, that is, a life-giving water, rich in grace, and a washing of the new birth in the Holy Spirit, as St. Paul says in Titus, chapter three: 'He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior; so that, having been justified by His grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life. This is a trustworthy saying' (Titus 3:5–8)."

"Making a Decision" and Baptism

- What do you think about the emphasis on a born-again experience? Do you think that such an experience is necessary for every Christian? How does such an experience relate to Baptism?
- "What benefit does Baptism give? — It works forgiveness of sins, rescues from death and the devil, and gives eternal salvation to all who believe this, as the words and promises of God declare."
- The Christian life starts with God's promise given to me and consists in believing this promise, not in a special experience.
Conversionism and Free Will

- “Making a decision for Jesus” – What do you think of it?
- “Lord Jesus, I need You. Thank You for dying on the cross for my sins. I open the door of my life and receive You as my Savior and Lord. Thank You for forgiving my sins and giving me eternal life. Take control of the throne of my life. Make me the kind of person You want me to be.”
  (https://crustore.org/fourlawseng.htm)
- Read Revelation 3:20.
- Faith and confession go together, but does that mean that a decision makes me a Christian?

- What does the fact that we are “by nature sinful and unclean” mean for our ability to choose?
- Read Revelation 3:20. How can a spiritually dead person “open the door”?
  - “The words of Christ ‘Repent, and believe in the gospel’ (Mark 1:15) do not prove that people are able to do this by their own powers. Lazarus could not raise himself from the dead. Christ commanded Lazarus to come out of the grave (John 11:43-44). In the same way unconverted people who are dead in sins cannot raise themselves spiritually. They are raised and converted by the power of God through the Word (Psalm 19:7). Jesus says, ‘No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him’ (John 6:44).” (Edward W.A. Koehler, A Summary of Christian Doctrine, 3rd rev. ed. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2006), 189.

Conversionism and Free Will

- God’s grace + our decision = Becoming a Christian=Justification (Wrong!)
- God’s grace in the Gospel (Word and Sacrament) + God’s gift of faith = Becoming a Christian (Right!)
- Arminianism teaches free will in matters of salvation.
- Synergism teaches that man cooperates in salvation.
- Lutheranism teaches that we are by nature dead in sin and that God revives us. Therefore, God alone saves us.
Ecumenical Discussions on Justification

– the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification

**Leader’s Guide**

**Introduction**

Have you ever attended a Roman Catholic funeral? How was it similar to a Lutheran funeral? What was different? How did the people and the priest talk about salvation? Did the topics of justification (how we are righteous before God) come up?

Alternatively, or additionally, a clip from the funeral service of Justice Antonin Scalia can be used, if it is deemed appropriate and will not lead the class into a different direction: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1PPLvic, from 10:20 to 12:55. What strikes the participants as different from what they hear at a Lutheran funeral? According to this sermon, what is the basis for entering heaven?

The difference in preaching at a funeral in a Lutheran and a Roman Catholic Church has to do primarily with the different beliefs on justification. But haven’t we overcome these differences?

A breakthrough between Lutherans and Catholics?

Almost 20 years ago, a major announcement went through the news. Lutherans and Roman Catholics had overcome their differences in the doctrine of justification, so there was a common answer to the question: How is a person saved? Some Lutherans hoped that, after this important step, unity between the churches could be initiated (i.e., that both churches would freely allow members of the other church to go to Communion at their altar) would be near. However, neither of these things have happened.

The “Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification” (JDDJ) in 1999:

It would have been a great step toward Christian unity if the document at the center of this news story had accomplished such an agreement. Called the “Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification,” the statement announced a new agreement on the doctrine of justification between the members of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), an international community of Lutheran churches, and the Roman Catholic Church. In this Bible study we will look at the background and some of the key content of this ecumenical document. We will seek to explain why the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod maintains that the Roman Catholic teaching on justification still contradicts the biblical teaching and that the divisions of the time of the Reformation are still necessary for the sake of the Gospel.

2. The Ecumenical Movement

The theme has been divided Christianity on the mission field. The ecumenical movement is one of the important movements in the history of the church in the twentieth century. It was born in part out of the frustration of the mission field. Many denominations were sending missionaries to the same area, competing with each other. Non-Christians were asking: Which of you is the true Christian? If you Christians do not even agree on this, how and why should we choose? It was also born out of the new situation after World War I, when the churches were confronted with aggressive atheist communism, bent on destroying all religion. Thus, the question was: Can different Christian churches cooperate? But in order to cooperate, churches had to discuss their theological differences.

Lutheran-Roman Catholic conversations:

As part of the ecumenical movement, there have been dialogues on a national level between Lutheran Churches and the Roman Catholic Church. The LCMS participated in these conversations for some time. Internationally, the LWF, an organization that encompasses a large number of Lutheran churches (but not the LCMS) also had a dialogue. In the 1990s, an effort was made to bundle the results of all these dialogues into one document that would be officially adopted.

On October 31, 1999 (Reformation Day), the “Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification” (JDDJ), was signed in Augsburg, Germany, by the LWF and the Papal Council for the Promotion of Christian Unity as an official agreement. Although this document is now almost 20 years old, it is still important. In July 2017, the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (W ARC) signed the JDDJ, and some Anglicans have given their assent.1 Many Lutherans in the LWF—this includes the ELCA in the United States—are convinced that the Roman Catholic Church has not given their assent. The LCMS did not agree with the JDDJ as presented. Although this document is now almost 20 years old, it is still important. In July 2017, the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) signed the JDDJ, and some Anglicans have given their assent.1 Many Lutherans in the LWF—this includes the ELCA in the United States—are convinced that the Roman Catholic Church has not given their assent. The LCMS did not agree with the JDDJ as presented.

3. The Reformation Background

**Discussion Question:** How was the doctrine of justification controversial in the time of the Reformation?

First, let’s review the Roman Catholic position at the time of the Reformation.

The controversy about indulgences was central to the Roman Catholic position on justification during this time. Indulgences were sold because even after sin was forgiven, there was still a stain — namely, temporal punishment for sin. If one did not fear the temporal punishment for sin, one had to bear it after death, in purgatory. But (said the church) an indulgence can remove the temporal punishment after death. The question on justification was: Was the blood of Christ alone a sufficient means to free man from sin and its consequences?

Maybe this statement will come up in the class discussion:

“Roman Catholics thought they could earn salvation.”

Strictly speaking, this was not quite true in the time of the Reformation. Most people did not know that an indulgence would be near. However, neither of these things have happened. The false teaching of the Roman Catholic Church being sold was绝对 forbidden. However, neither of these things have happened.

The theology that Luther was taught therefore amounted to a contract between God and human beings. God graciously initiated the contract for the sake of Christians, the elect. God did not by creating a world that included the church and human beings who serve for self-preservation. In this way, grace was protected by locating it both in the church and in the makeup of human nature. At the same time, a place was found for human initiative. Individual Christians had active roles to play in their own salvation. All that was necessary was to fulfill the human role in the contract. That theology made each good sense and was prevalent in Luther’s day that everyone encountered it. It appeared not only in depictions of God’s righteousness and mercy, but also in a slogan that at least university students knew by heart: God will not refuse grace to those who do what is within them. It appeared in sermons for lay people as well. One preacher commonly exhorted his congregation, ‘Do what is within you. Use well your natural powers and whatever special gifts God has given you’.” Salvation would follow.


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Christian's can earn the grace of God by simply doing their best?

All Roman Catholic theologians said that if a Christian does good works, then he merits more good graces. And to a Roman Catholic theologian, belief that man has a free will by which he could do something in regard to salvation.

Roman Catholic believed in salvation by faith plus works. Lutheranism believed in salvation by faith alone. This was one of the core issues. On Judgment Day, what will be the basis of God's judgment? Will our works be included as the basis of God's judgment? Some say, yes, the Lutherans said no.

What does it mean that a Christian is just or righteous before God? For Lutherans, you must mean the inner transformation of persons by which they are conformed to God's will. For the Lutherans, they would call this justification. The Lutherans said: No, the righteousness of the Christian is simply the righteousness of Christ. Christians are righteous because of Christ's righteousness. Lutherans perfection, the suffering of death, and the resurrection are considered as acts of righteousness. Thus, if one's righteousness, the Christian does not look to himself, he looks to Christ.

The question of whether one is just or righteous before God?

In this passage, the rightness of the law and justification by faith in Christ are opposed as alternatives. Justification by faith in Christ rules out any idea that justifies. If anyone says that man is justified either by the imputation of Christ's justice alone or by the remission of sins, excluding grace and charity that is granted to them through the Holy Spirit and in them, or also that the grace that justifies us is only in the favor of God, let him be anathema.

With this statement, the Roman Catholic Church rejected the Lutheran position that the righteousness of the Christian before God is justificatory righteousness of Christ and it is only by some other means that God renews or imparts it (in 1 Tim. 1:19). Instead, the basis of justification is that Christ died and rose. In the combination of the rightness of faith and the righteousness of works. The doctrine of justification shows how God's grace comes to us in Christ. The grace of God and justification is not the grace of God and the justification of man. Chris as ‘team work.’ God is no longer seen as the holy and just, but rather as a forgiving power who will not be so critical of us and our sins. The phrase ‘fear of God’ means that God will not be so critical of us and our sins.

Ecumenical Discussions on Justification

The lines between Lutherans and Roman Catholics had been drawn quite clearly for centuries. Could there ever be unity? Years of dialogue seemed to promise that a basic agreement in the central points was possible, even though there might be differences in how the central points are expressed. This was the method of IDJ.

In justification the forgiveness of sins or its making an individual righteous? Here is an excerpt from [IDJ]. This is rather complex, so one needs to reread it slowly and carefully.

We confess together that God forgives sin by grace and at the same time frees human beings from the enslaving power and imparts the gift of new life in Christ. What persons come by faith to share in Christ, God no longer imparts to them their sin and through the Holy Spirit effects in them an active love. These two aspects of God's gracious action are not to be separated, for persons are not justified united with Christ, who in his person is our righteousness (1 Corinthians 1:30); both the forgiveness of sins and the saving presence of God himself. Because Catholics and Lutherans confess this together, it is true to say that:

23. When Lutherans emphasize the righteousness of Christ is our righteousness, their emotion is above all to insist that the sinner is granted righteousness before God in Christ through the declaration of forgiveness and that only in union with Christ is one's life renewed. When they stress that God's grace is forgiving love ("the favor of God"), they thereby deny the denial of the Christocentric liturgy. They insist rather to express that justification remains free from human cooperation and is not dependent on the life-removing effects of grace in human beings.

24. When Catholics emphasize the renewal of the interior person through the reception of grace imparted a gift to the believer's personal in God's grace always brings with it a gift of new life, which in the Holy Spirit is not sacrificial but active. They do not thereby deny that God's gift of grace in justification remains independent of human cooperation.
Introduction

Have you ever attended a Roman Catholic Church? How was it similar to a Lutheran Church? What was different? How did the people and the priest talk about salvation? Did the topics of justification (how we are righteous before God) come up? Did you attend a Roman Catholic funeral? How was it different from a Lutheran funeral? Did you ever read a Book of Concord? Do you know what justification is? How do you feel about it?

2. The Ecumenical Movement

The purpose of a divided Christianity on the mission field

Lutheran-Roman Catholic conversations.

3. The Reformation Background

Discussion Question: How was the doctrine of justification contextualized in the time of the Reformation?

First, let's review the Roman Catholic position at the time of the Reformation.

The Lutheran teaching was summarized in the Augsburg Confession, presented in 1530. Furthermore, it is taught that we cannot obtain forgiveness of sins and righteousness before God through our merit, work, or satisfactions, but that we receive forgiveness of sins and become righteous before God out of grace for Christ's sake through faith when we believe that Christ has suffered for us and that for him we are in forgiveness and righteousness and eternal life are given to us. For God will regard and reward this faith as righteousness in his right, as St. Paul says in Romans 4:21–26 and 4:17. ACT IV

4. Trent: Rome's Answer to the Reformation

The Council of Trent (1545–1563)

If anyone says that the sinner is justified by faith alone in the sense that nothing else is required by way of cooperation in order to obtain the grace of justification and that it is not at all necessary that he should be prepared and disposed by the movement of his will, let him be anathema.

Read Galatians 2:14–21. How does this text address the question of whether one is justified by faith alone?

Conclusion

Differences among Christians are sad, but unity without truth is even worse. Instead of arguing over differences, Christians are to be humble about what separates them. As Lutherans, we rejoice in the Gospel. The free forgiveness we receive on account of Christ alone, through faith alone, by grace alone. It is a source of continual sadness that large parts of Christianity have rejected this joyous and freeing message. Therefore, continued conversations with Roman Catholics, be it on an individual level or in ecumenical dialogues, are important. Our prayer as we engage in this task is that the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of truth, will enable unity in this task.

GLOSSARY OF IMPORTANT TERMS

Grace – Catholic: God’s unmerited favor toward people according to which He forgives sins to those who deserve eternal death. It is the unmerited love of God toward people according to which He forgives sins to those who deserve eternal death. It is the unmerited love of God toward people according to which He forgives sins to those who deserve eternal death.

Grace – Lutheran: Grace is the unmerited favor of God. “It is that merciful, affectionate disposition or goodness of God toward people according to which He forgives sins to those who deserve eternal death. It is the unmerited love of God toward people.”

Grace – Roman Catholic: Grace can mean several things. It can mean that an individual looks with favor on another person, or that someone because of that receives a gift (“favor favor”). In regard to God, God’s grace means that He looks at man favorably and then does something that changes man. God’s grace is therefore a gift that changes us. The initial grace that makes a person a Christian cannot be changed, or tempered, or influenced by any workmanship in us.

Justification – Lutheran: Justification is the conferring of Christ’s perfect righteousness on Christians so that they are righteous before God and do not lack anything. This righteousness does not need to be complemented by anything in order to be saved.

Justification – Roman Catholic: Justification is the beginning of the Christian life. God makes people righteous, that is, He forgives their sins and transforms them internally so that they can do His will. Justification is not the same as salvation.

25. When Lutherans emphasize that the righteousness of Christ is our righteousness, their intention is above all to mean that the sinner is granted righteousness before God in Christ through the declaration of forgiveness and that only in union with Christ is one’s life renewed. When they mean that God’s grace is forgiving love (“favor of God”), they do not thereby deny the renewal of the Christian’s life. They intend rather to express that justification remains free from human cooperation and is not dependent on the life-renewing effects of grace in human beings.

26. When Catholics emphasize the renewal of the inner person through the reception of grace imparted as a gift to the believers, they wish to mean that God forgiving grace always brings with it a gift of new life, which in the Holy Spirit becomes effective in active love. They do not thereby deny that God’s gift of grace in justification remains independent of human cooperation.

What does this section of (DIT) say about the controversy concerning whether justification is the forgiveness of sins alone or also the inner transformation of the Christian?

Did the Roman Catholics (in this section of (DIT)) change their view that justification is not the remission of sins alone or the imputation of Christ’s righteousness, as it was defined in Trent?

Although change has taken place in the Roman Catholic church since Vatican II, (DIT) shows how very little heading has been made toward a genuine resolution of the difference between Lutherans and Roman Catholics on justification. This statement is not a breakthrough.

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GLOSSARY OF IMPORTANT TERMS

Grace – Catholic: God’s unmerited favor toward people according to which He forgives sins to those who deserve eternal death. It is the unmerited love of God toward people according to which He forgives sins to those who deserve eternal death. It is the unmerited love of God toward people according to which He forgives sins to those who deserve eternal death.

Grace – Lutheran: Grace is the unmerited favor of God. “It is that merciful, affectionate disposition or goodness of God toward people according to which He forgives sins to those who deserve eternal death. It is the unmerited love of God toward people.”

Grace – Roman Catholic: Grace can mean several things. It can mean that an individual looks with favor on another person, or that someone because of that receives a gift (“favor favor”). In regard to God, God’s grace means that He looks at man favorably and then does something that changes man. God’s grace is therefore a gift that changes us. The initial grace that makes a person a Christian cannot be changed, or tempered, or influenced by any workmanship in us.

Justification – Lutheran: Justification is the conferring of Christ’s perfect righteousness on Christians so that they are righteous before God and do not lack anything. This righteousness does not need to be complemented by anything in order to be saved.

Justification – Roman Catholic: Justification is the beginning of the Christian life. God makes people righteous, that is, He forgives their sins and transforms them internally so that they can do His will. Justification is not the same as salvation.
The Natural Knowledge of God in Our Christian Witness

Bible Study and Discussion Guide

This Bible study is based on the 2013 report by the Commission on Theology and Church Relations, The Natural Knowledge of God in Christian Confession and Witness.1 This Bible study may be used independently or in connection with the CTCR report. The following items are used in this study:

1. Natural Revelation: God’s revelation of Himself in nature, in the things He has created (Rom. 1:19, Ps. 19:1).

2. Special Revelation: God’s revelation of Himself through His Son and in His written Word (Heb. 1:1-2).

3. Natural Knowledge: The dim and incomplete knowledge of God that human beings have through His revelation of Himself in nature (Rom. 1:20).

4. Natural Law: God’s universal moral laws written on the hearts of all people, believers and unbelievers alike (Rom. 2:15).

Read Ps. 19:1-6 and Ps. 104. According to these psalms, how does creation reveal its Creator? What is revealed about Him? Where and when have you seen evidence of this proclamation by the natural world?

The most important text in Scripture about the natural knowledge of God is Romans 1:19-20: “For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.”

God has shown even unbelievers “what can be known” about Him. This revelation of His power and glory in creation is not a complete or saving knowledge of God, but it is “clearly perceived” (Rom. 1:19-20) and it is “the truth about God” (Rom. 1:25).

What do the following accounts from world religions reveal about humanity’s natural knowledge of God?

Read Rom. 3:10-11; 1 Cor. 1:21 and Gal. 4:7-8. What does the apostle Paul say in these verses about humanity’s natural knowledge of God?

The verses in the previous section show us that human beings can acknowledge the existence of God, but the above verses indicate that unbelievers do not have any natural knowledge of the saving word of God in Christ. According to Galatians 4:8, those who do not know God are enslaved “to those by nature are not gods.” In Galatians 4:9, Paul speaks of believers who have come “to know God.” Here, for us, “to know” does not mean “to perceive” or “to acquire knowledge about,” but is used in the biblical sense of “to have a relationship with,” specifically to trust in the grace of God. The ignorance of God discussed in these verses is not absolute ignorance but it is an ignorance of the Gospel.

The Lutheran Confessions and Natural Knowledge

The Apology of the Augsburg Confession states that original righteousness (the righteousness that Adam and Eve had before the fall into sin) included “a more certain knowledge of God,” implying that human beings, even after the fall into sin, do not lack all knowledge of God, but have a less certain knowledge.2 In his Large Catechism, Martin Luther writes that “there has never been a nation so wicked that it did not establish and maintain some sort of worship.”3 Luther hastens to add, of course, that those outside the Christian church do not know God rightly and do not have saving faith.

Sinful human beings have some knowledge of God, but it is not the knowledge revealed in the person and work of Jesus Christ and granted by the Holy Spirit. The Formula of Concord states that “paganism had something of a knowledge of God,” but remarks that “they did not truly know him.”4 The Formula also states: “Even though human reason or natural intellect may still have a dim spark of knowledge that a god exists . . . nevertheless [that knowledge] is ignorant, blind, and perverted so that even when the most skillful and learned people on earth read or hear the gospel of God’s Son and the promise of eternal salvation, they still cannot comprehend, grasp, understand, or believe it on the basis of their own powers; they cannot regard it as truth.”5

Read I Cor. 2, 6-16. Why are even “the most skillful and learned people” unable to understand or believe the Gospel? Who alone grants such understanding?

Read Is. 44:1-28. How do these verses illustrate the “ignorant, blind, and perverted” knowledge of God that human beings have through natural revelation?


3 North American Omaha creation story in Novak, 334.

4 Writing about the sailors whose ship carried Jonah away from Nineveh (referring especially to Jonah 1:5), Talmud comments: “When the mariners were afraid, and each cried to his god.”

5 The whole world talks about the Godhead, and natural reason is aware that this Godhead is something superior to all other things. This is here shown by the fact that the people in our text called upon a god, heathen though they were. For if they had been ignorant of the existence of God or of a godhead, how could they have called upon him and cried to him? Although they do not have true faith in God, they at least hold that God is a being able to help on the sea and in every need. Such a light and such a perception is innate in the hearts of all men, and this light cannot be subdued or extinguished . . . Let us here also learn from nature and from reason what can be known of God. These people regard God as a being who is able to deliver from every evil. It follows from this that natural reason must conclude that all that is good comes from God, for He who can save from every need and misfortune is also able to grant all that is good and that makes for happiness. That is as far as the natural light of reason sheds its rays—it regards God as kind, gracious, merciful, and bountiful. And that is indeed a bright light.

6 Luther goes on to comment on two defects in the “bright light” of human reason. People may know that God can help them, but they do not know if He wants to help them, and even though they believe that there is a God, they cannot know or find the true God.

9 Writing about the sailors whose ship carried Jonah away from Nineveh (referring especially to Jonah 1:5), Talmud comments: “When the mariners were afraid, and each cried to his god.”


though they do not have the law. They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them” (Rom. 2:14-15).

Read Rom. 1:28-32 and Eph. 4:17-19. According to these verses, what do people, by nature, know about God or His laws? Unintentionally teach that “human nature is imperfect, but not inherently bad … no man stands condemned.”15 How does such a belief contradict what is taught in these verses?

There is other biblical evidence concerning natural law. In the Old Testament, nations are condemned because they violated God’s natural law. Even though the God of Israel had not revealed His commands to those nations, His law was written on the hearts of the rulers and their subjects.

Read Amos 3:13-15 and Hab. 2:6-20. What had the unbelieving nations done to violate natural law?

Martin Luther said that the knowledge of natural law is a fact of human nature, written on the hearts of all. He commented that the Ten Commandments summarize the content of natural law.

How do the following statements from other religions support the idea that natural law is summarized in the Ten Commandments?

“I have not slain men … I have not stolen” (ancient Egyptian confession from The Book of the Dead).16

“My hands have not been stained in evil. I have not been grasping” (ancient Egyptian confession).17

“Utter not a word by which anyone could be wounded” (Hindu saying).18

“Has he despised Father and Mother?” (Babylonian list of sins)19

The Scottish philosopher David Hume (1711-1776) argued against natural law, saying that morality is only “a sum of societary conventions that are adapted to serve human needs and urges according to our experiences, which, however, may be superseded by different experiences at some future time” (32).

Read Acts 22:1-5. What common ground does Paul establish with the angry crowd in Jerusalem? Read Acts 26:24-29. What common ground does Paul use in his witness to King Agrippa?

In speaking with the people of Athens, Paul establishes a point of contact with them, noting that they are “very religious” (Acts 17:22). The apostle’s proclamation of “the unknown god” (Acts 17:22-31), however, was not the beginning of his preaching in Athens. Paul’s preaching began in the synagogue and in the marketplace as he proclaimed Christ and His bodily resurrection (Acts 17:16-21).

Read Acts 17:16-21. What is the Athenians’ response after listening to Paul’s first proclamation about Jesus and the resurrection?

Some of the Athenians requested that Paul speak to them again, prompting his later speech. As Paul does in Athens, we can begin our witness by proclaiming the Gospel, although the good news may sound strange to those who are listening. As they become curious, or as objections arise, we might then use their curiosity and objections as points of contact with them.

Paul found a point of contact with his listeners in the many idols and altars of Athens, a sight that provoked the apostle (Acts 17:16). Yet in addressing hiskolosaudience, he does not tell his listeners that the Bible forges images (Ex. 20:4) or that the Bible teaches that God is one (Deut. 6:4). Instead of quoting biblical teachings that his audience does not know or accept as having authority, Paul begins with what his hearers already know.

Read Acts 17:22-23 and 28. What common ground with his hearers does Paul highlight?

Paul’s hearers accept the fundamental importance of religion. Quoting their own points to them, Paul transitions from what his non-Christian hearers do know to what they should know. “Being then God’s offering,” he proclaims, “we ought not to think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of man” (Acts 17:29). Paul calls such thoughts “ignorance” (Acts 17:30). He then calls on them to repent of their false worship and draws their attention to the “man whom he [God] has appointed,” and through whom “he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead” (Acts 17:31).

Read Acts 17:23-24. How does Paul’s audience respond to his proclamation of judgment and of Jesus’ resurrection?

All people know that God exists, even if they suppress that knowledge (Rom. 1:18). Many opportunities for Christian witness may occur in conversation with those who, like the Athenians of Paul’s day, readily profess belief in a god—a starting point for telling them about the true God.

Man’s inborn knowledge of the law, even when suppressed or distorted, also provides common ground shared by Christians and non-Christians alike (Rom. 2:14-15). Such an inborn knowledge is increasingly recognized even by non-Christians, as noted in this comment on a study of moral

behavior in infants: “Babies possess certain moral foundations—the capacity and willingness to judge the actions of others, some sense of justice, gut responses to altruism and nastiness. Regardless of how smart we are, if we didn’t start with this basic apparatus, we would be nothing more than amoral agents, ruthlessly driven to pursue self-interest.”20

Read the classroom situation described below. How do these students reveal their inborn knowledge of God’s law?

“When we students tell me that ethics are merely expressions of cultural norms and not beholden to universal truths, I catch them off guard. ‘If I grade you down just because I do not like you, has anything wrong happened?’ These students who were all relativists very quickly become ethical absolutists: ‘Of course it is wrong to grade someone down just because you do not like them.’ When I push with ‘Why?’ they explain, ‘It isn’t fair!’”21

Even in talking with atheists or agnostics, we might establish common ground from which to proclaim the Gospel by emphasizing concerns about the law. All people recognize the simple ethical absolutists: “Of course it is wrong to grade someone down just because you do not like them.” When I push with ‘Why?’ they explain, ‘It isn’t fair!’”21

common ground with those who listened. They met their fellow Jews “where they were,”22 appealing to the authority of the Hebrew Scriptures and the belief in a promised Messiah. The apostles often began their witness by referring to beliefs they held in common with their audiences. The apostolic proclamation progressed from that which the audience did know to that which it should know.


An understanding of the natural knowledge of God and of the law written on the heart may be helpful as we witness to unbelievers. Appeals to natural revelation and natural law may help us establish common ground or a point of contact with non-Christians.

Even though Jesus and His apostles were not witnessing to atheists or agnostics, they established common ground with those who listened. They met their fellow Jews “where they were,”22 appealing to the authority of the Hebrew Scriptures and the belief in a promised Messiah. The apostles often began their witness by referring to beliefs they held in common with their audiences. The apostolic proclamation progressed from that which the audience did know to that which it should know.

Read Acts 25:1-12. How does Paul, as a Roman citizen, appeal to Roman law so that he might continue his proclamation of the Gospel?

We can appeal to human reason and natural law when talking to people who may ignore or dismiss the authority of the Bible. Since many non-Christians in the United States recognize the existence of God, it is not surprising that “God talk” is often heard even in public discussions. For example, American presidents may close a speech with the words, “God bless America.” Such references to God are part of our culture and are often described as America’s “civil religion.” Appeals to Scripture, to Christian doctrine or to religion in general provide opportunities for Christian witness.


When have you heard “God talk” in public discussions concerning political issues (for example, references to displays of the Ten Commandments or phrases such as “God bless America” or “In God We Trust”)? How might you use such “God talk” as an opportunity for Christian witness?

A peaceful civil society allows for the preaching of the Gospel. Civil religion creates room in the public square for religious discussions. The “anonymous God” of civil religion, however, is not the revealed God who took on human flesh, suffered, died, and rose from the dead to redeem sinful human beings. We must realize that even our well-intentioned references to God can be easily misunderstood.

Since God reveals Himself in nature, scientific information can be useful as we witness to people. Research in biology, astronomy or physics may raise questions about the design of the universe and the existence of a divine designer, but even establishing such common ground is merely a means to an end. The goal of our Christian witness is the proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Other points of contact with non-believers might include literature and the arts. Folk tales and myths of many world cultures tell of a divine creation, a “fall” and a longing for paradise, a great flood, evil “tricksters” and “redeemer” heroes.

What books, movies or television shows feature a longing for paradise, an evil trickster, a redeemer hero or similar themes? How do such themes reflect natural law? How might these themes serve as a point of contact for witnessing about Jesus Christ?

Such themes continue to resonate with people. This human longing for redemption and paradise reflects the inborn but obscured knowledge of God and His law. St. Augustine (A. D. 354–430), addressing God in his book, Confessions, writes: “You have made us for yourself, and our heart is restless until it rests in you.”

Conclusion

Created by God to live in communion with Him, people remain restless so long as they are separated from Him, “having no hope and without God in the world” (Eph. 2:12). Even in the relatively religious United States, the number of the “restless” grows annually. More than 20% of Americans describe themselves as unaffiliated with any religion. This includes more than thirteen million individuals who describe themselves specifically as atheists or agnostics. Yet even those who claim to be atheists or agnostics retain the law of God written on their hearts. They know their Creator exists, even if they suppress that knowledge.

20 The God of civil religion is “anonymous” because the God to whom people refer in phrases such as “God bless America” is not necessarily the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. The anonymous God is the “unknown god” of the people of Athens (Acts 17:23).


22 As of November 2015, “the religiously unaffiliated (also called the “nones”) now account for 23% of the adult population.” “U. S. Public Becoming Less Religious,” November 3, 2015, at http://www.pewresearch.org/2015/11/03/u-s-public-becoming-less-religious. It is our great privilege and the Lord’s command (Matt. 28:19-20) to tell the world the good news that God Himself has sought, found and redeemed fallen human beings. He sent His Son to suffer the penalty of death for sinners and to rise from the dead, offering salvation to all. We proclaim the name of Jesus, “the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the Glory of God the Father” (Phil. 2:9-11).
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II. THEOLOGICAL DOCUMENTS­­—COMMISSION ON THEOLOGY AND CHURCH RELATIONS

A REPORT OF THE COMMISSION ON THEOLOGY AND CHURCH RELATIONS
THE LUTHERAN CHURCH—MISSOURI SYNOD SEPTEMBER 2018

The Royal Priesthood
IDENTIT Y AND MISSION
DISCUSSION GUIDE AND BIBLE STUDY

THE ROYAL PRIESTHOOD:

You yourselves like living stones
are being built up as a spiritual house,
to be a holy priesthood, to offer
spiritual sacrifices acceptable
to God through Jesus Christ.

IDENTITY AND MISSION
DISCUSSION GUIDE AND BIBLE STUDY

This discussion guide and Bible study is based on the 2018 report, The Royal Priesthood: Identity and Mission,
produced by the Commission on Theology and Church Relations of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod1

OLD TESTAMENT BACKGROUND

1 Peter 2:5

What comes to mind when you think of an Old Testament priest? How would you define the word “priest”?
God freed His people from slavery in Egypt. Then, at
Mount Sinai, before the Lord gave His Law or established the Levitical priesthood, He declared His intention
for all Israel to be His priests. He said to Moses:
Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell
the people of Israel: “You yourselves have seen
what I did to the Egyptians and how I bore you
on eagles’ wings and brought you to myself. Now
therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and
keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured
possession among all peoples, for all the earth is
mine; and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests
and a holy nation. (Ex. 19:4–6)
Scripture presents the priest as a mediator between
God and man.2 The priest had certain duties to fulfill.
Read Heb. 5:1 and Lev. 6:1–7. What are priests to do
according to these verses? Read 1 Sam. 7:5; Ezra 9:5–9
and Heb. 5:7. In these verses what priestly work is carried
duty is mentioned in these verses? Read Gen. 14:17–20.
Who is this priest — the first in the Bible to be identified
by that title — and what does he do?
1
The report is available for download from the CTCR website at lcms.
org/ctcr.

The English word “priest” is derived from the Greek word presbyter
by way of Latin and then German.

2

THE ROYAL PRIESTHOOD

Eve, as pious parents, preached often and much to their
children about the will and worship of God, inasmuch
as both bring an offering to God.”4 Luther also draws a
direct connection to the priesthood: “Adam and Eve are
not only parents, nor do they merely provide for their
children and educate them for this present life; but they
also perform the office of priests. Inasmuch as they are
filled with the Holy Spirit and are enlightened by the
knowledge of Christ, who is to come, they set before
their children this very hope of a future deliverance and
exhort them to show their gratitude to so merciful a
God. It is evident that the sacrifices which were handed
down had no other purpose.”5
Throughout the book of Genesis, God’s people were
involved in priestly work, although they did not bear
the title “priest.” They gave thank offerings, prayed and
proclaimed the works of God. They interceded for others
and handed His blessing and promises down to the following generations.
Read Gen. 4:1–4 and Gen. 8:20–22. In these verses,
what priestly work is done, and by whom is it done? Read
priestly tasks does Abraham carry out in these verses?
tasks are performed by Isaac and Jacob?

Called by Grace to Be Priests
Although God applied the title “priests” to His people
in Exodus 19, His kingdom of priests had been carrying
on priestly work as long as God had been working to
redeem people and to show to others His gracious will.
God called all of Israel His priests because He had set
them apart. He had brought Israel out of slavery and to
Himself. They were freed to live in sacrificial service,
worship and witness to Him. They were set apart from
the surrounding nations as a “holy nation” (Ex. 19:5–6).
Read Ps. 145:10–12. What were the people of Israel to
do as God’s priests?
As God’s priests, Israel itself would serve as a mediator — a beacon — to all the nations: “Strangers shall
stand and tend your flocks; foreigners shall be your
plowmen and vinedressers; but you shall be called the
priests of the Lord; they shall speak of you as the minis4
Martin Luther, “Lectures on Genesis: Chapters 1-5,” Luther’s Works,
vol. 1, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House,
1958), 246.
5

Luther’s Works 1:247, emphasis added.

THE ROYAL PRIESTHOOD

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ters of our God” (Is. 61:5–6).
God called Israel first a “kingdom,” that is, a people
gathered and organized by Him and in Him as their
King (Ex. 15:18), the King over all nations. They have
not earned this status for themselves. God initiates, He
promises, He forgives, He redeems. Priesthood is a gift, a
blessing graciously bestowed on people called into a relationship with God to carry out His will, to be His instruments. “No one takes this honor for himself ” (Heb. 5:4).
The royal priests do not serve themselves, but the
One who made them priests, and they serve all others
within the covenant. They are servants and mediators of
God’s salvation to the world. Toward others, the priest’s
most important task was to teach.

serve as mediators on behalf of Israel, administering the
sacrifices of forgiveness and grace, proclaiming, teaching
and praying.
God’s revelation to His people was a revelation of
grace and their identity rested on His continuing favor,
sealed with His pledge of faithfulness in the covenant.
But Israel would forget God’s faithfulness and come to
think they possessed something that had drawn God
to them. Many misunderstood their identity as a
privilege exclusive to them and meant for no one else.
They would lose track of the promise that the blessings
given to them would result in a blessing for all the
nations (Gen.12:1–3; 26:4–5).

Israel’s service rested on God’s promise of a faithful Servant of the Lord yet to come, one who would fulfill the
service Israel could not achieve.

Read Num. 3:5–13. What does God say about the tribe
of Levi? What are their duties? Read Num. 18:7; Deut.
17:8–12 and Deut. 33:8–10. What are the duties of the
Levitical priesthood as described in these verses?
Of the tribe of Levi, God said, “For the Lord your
God has chosen him out of all your tribes to stand and
minister in the name of the Lord, him and his sons
for all time” (Deut. 18:5). The Levitical priests served as
mediators or go-betweens in formal worship. The entire
tribe maintained the Tabernacle. From among the tribe
of Levites, Aaron and his sons were appointed to be
the priests who offered up the people’s daily and yearly
sacrifices (Lev. 1:7–8). The high priest alone stood in for
the Aaronic priests, the Levites, and the entire people,
making yearly atonement for all sins in the Holy of Holies (Ex. 30:6–10; Lev. 16:32–34). The priests reminded Israel
of their present relationship to God and of the work of
the Messiah still to come.
Israel’s worship was given by God to make Him
known within Israel and through Israel to the surrounding nations. In Genesis, Noah (Gen. 8:20) and Abraham
(Gen. 21:33) served as priests for their families. The formal
Levitical priesthood would carry out these duties for all
of Israel in a public worship setting. Still, the Levitical responsibilities did not put an end to the identity and work
given by God to His entire kingdom of priests (Ex. 19:6).
There is a both/and nature to the priesthood. All
Israel was called to priestly standing before God, to serve
as mediators on behalf of their future generations and
on behalf of the surrounding nations, the Gentiles. At
the same time, there were priests from within Israel to

3

53:10. What is said about the Lord’s Servant? What will
He do?
The Servant’s faithfulness would involve sacrifice and
priestly service, but not in the way of Aaron. The Servant
would suffer in self-sacrifice — offering Himself for sin,
silent as a lamb (Is. 53:7), bearing all griefs, sorrows,
transgressions, iniquities and chastisement (Is. 53:4–5) for
the Lord “laid on him the iniquity of us all” (Is. 53:6).
Read Gen. 3:15; Micah 5:2; Deut. 18:15–18; 2 Sam.
7:4–5, 12–13; Is. 7:14; Dan. 7:13–14 and Ps. 2:1–2. In
these verses, what promises does God make to His people?
How are all of these promises fulfilled in Jesus, the promised Servant of the Lord?

The Order of Melchizedek
The Lord’s Servant has many titles and He will also be a
“a priest forever.” The Old Testament describes Melchizedek’s mysterious appearance. He reappears in one of
the great messianic psalms (Ps. 110) as the pattern for an
eternal royal Priest who sits at the Lord’s right hand.
Read Ps. 110:2–4 and Heb. 7:1–22. What is distinctive about the new, promised Priest of the order of
Melchizedek?
In the eternal, royal Priest to come, the earthly call of
Israel as a royal priesthood will be fulfilled in the universal priesthood of all justified believers, old and new.

THE ROYAL PRIESTHOOD

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As the priesthood unfolds through the Old Testament, it is a work of mediation, of offering gifts and
sacrifices for sin, of supplication and prayer and of
proclaiming God’s Word. Martin Luther summarizes the
biblical duties of a priest:
According to the way the Scriptures picture him,
a priest is a person whom God has ordained and
commanded to mediate between God and men.
That is to say, a priest comes from God and brings
us His Word and doctrine; again, he presents
himself to God to sacrifice and pray for us. Hence
the priestly office consists of three parts: to teach
or preach God’s Word, to sacrifice, and to pray. All
three of these functions are abundantly referred to
in the Scriptures.3
These three duties of sacrifice, prayer and proclamation are carried out long before Sinai, before the declaration of Israel’s royal priesthood and before the establishment of the Levitical priesthood. Adam and Eve served
as priests before God. Luther, speaking of Gen. 4:3, says:
“In the first place, we are reminded here that Adam and
3
Jaroslav Pelikan (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1956), 315,
emphasis added.

DISCUSSION GUIDE AND BIBLE STUDY

God’s Faithful Servant
The Levitical Priesthood

DISCUSSION GUIDE AND BIBLE STUDY

2019 Convention Workbook

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The first priest mentioned by that title in Scripture is
the mysterious Melchizedek, “priest of God Most High,”
who blessed Abram in God’s name and brought him
bread and wine (Gen. 14:17–20). Then he disappears, but
we will meet him again.

2

“PRIEST” IN THE NEW TESTAMENT
The Servant, the Seed, the Son, has come. He is “God
with us” (Matt. 1:23), the anointed Son of Man, serving
and saving people. His coming is the fulfillment of every
promise to Israel, the righteousness that Israel failed to
offer and the atonement that every other sacrifice anticipated. The work promised in the Servant, who is King
and Priest, creates the kingdom of priests. Their priestly
service is forever grounded in Him.

Promises Fulfilled
This is the New Testament. Its newness is that of promise
(prophecy) and fulfillment. The New Testament makes
plain the preparatory character of the Old Testament.
The New Testament is utterly dependent upon Christ,
the fulfillment of the Old Testament in all its parts.
Read Matt. 5:17–18; John 5:39–40, 46–47 and
Luke 24:44–47. What does the Lord Jesus say about the
fulfillment of the promises concerning Himself in the Old
Testament Scriptures?
God delivered the people of Israel from slavery. He
chose them as His covenant people and promised to
send His Servant, who would be Prophet (Deut. 18:15),
Priest (Ps. 110:4) and King (Ps. 2:6). The Old Testament
royal priesthood was grounded entirely in God’s gracious
provision, His redemptive work and His promises. The
royal priesthood of the Old Testament was redeemed
by grace through faith alone, just as the New Testament
royal priesthood. Yet the New Testament priesthood is
just that — new.
Read Heb. 3:1–6. What is “new” in the New Testament
priesthood?
The New Testament royal priesthood is defined entirely in the light of Christ, who is our great High Priest.
He offered the full atoning sacrifice of Himself, the sacrifice anticipated by the countless Old Testament sacrifices.
In Jesus we share “in a heavenly calling” in a priesthood
conferred in the covenant of Baptism, intended for all
nations (Matt. 28:19). This new priesthood is not focused
on Israel or its sacrifices, but on proclaiming the Gospel
of Christ’s sacrifice for all people.
Read Luke 1:67–79. What does Zechariah (a member
of the Levitical priesthood) say about the promises of God
and about sunrise and shadows? Read Col. 2:16–19 and
Heb. 10:1. What is said in these verses about the shadows
that were the Old Testament sacrifices and festivals?

DISCUSSION GUIDE AND BIBLE STUDY

4


The High Priest

Priesthood and mission. Evident both by the work of Christ. His radical mercy and deep sympathy for sinners results in complete and eternal forgiveness: “there is no need to bring sacrifices to God for sin” (Heb. 10:19-20) His priestly mission is to offer a sacrifice of praise: “Christ is the mediator of the new covenant, in the blood of Christ” (Heb. 9:12). Christ as our High Priest, “the only-begotten Son of God” (John 1:14). Jesus is the only-begotten Son of God, “other gods” cannot be a mediation for sin: “there is no other name” (Acts 4:12). When we turn to Christ, we find a perfect priest that established His own eternal priesthood: “his work is perfect” (Ps. 110:4). What has our High Priest done for us? We should defend the doctrine of Christ’s eternal priesthood to the end: “all things must be held in subjection to him” (Heb. 2:8).

II. THEOLOGICAL DOCUMENTS  —COMMISSION ON THEOLOGY AND CHURCH RELATIONS

Read 1 Cor. 12:4–11.

Read 1 Peter 2:11–17.

What has our High Priest done for us? We should become teachers: “As for you, brethren, you are builders of the temple of God” (1 Cor. 3:9). The Church is the temple of God: “Christ is the head of the church” (Eph. 5:23). We have the church as our High Priest: “he is at the right hand of God” (Acts 7:56). He is our mediator that makes the reconciliation between us and God possible: “he was reconciled to God by him” (Rom. 5:10). Our High Priest presents redemption in the new covenant, “and not by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood” (Heb. 9:22). Christ is the mediator of the new covenant, “and he is faithful to do what he has promised” (Heb. 10:23). What has the sacrifice of our High Priest accomplished for us? How does our High Priest “greet the sacrifices under the old covenant” (Heb. 9:26). The New Testament priesthood is not a renewal of the Old Testament priesthood. Our High Priest is not simply a priest of the Levitical system, “he is the mediator of a better covenant” (Heb. 8:6). Our High Priest, “Christ Jesus, and His work.” His work is not a repetition of the Old Testament priesthood, but rather a new work of salvation: “he is able now for the second time to forgive sins” (Heb. 9:12). Our High Priest, “he is the mediator between God and people.” He mediates the new covenant to people: “Jesus Christ as the mediator of the new covenant” (Heb. 9:15). Our High Priest is the one who represents us before God: “we have one mediator between God and people” (1 Tim. 2:5). Our High Priest is the one who offers us the sacrifice of praise: “Jesus Christ our mediator” (1 Tim. 2:5).

The Priestly Calling of All Christians

But what about carrying the message “to the end of the earth” (Mark 16:15)? What is the mission of the priests in the modern church? Does the modern church have a priest? Yes, “the ministry is exercised through the members” (1 Cor. 12:28). The ministry also applied to all Christians: “we have an allotment in the service of the Priesthood” (Rom. 15:16). Priestly prayer is both corporate and individual. Priestly prayer is also extended to laypeople: “now you also, when you pray, enter into the same presence” (Heb. 4:16). What is the relationship between pastoral and laypeople? How are clergy and laypeople to respond to one another? How are we to participate in the life of the congregation?

The Royal Priesthood

Read 1 Peter 2:23 and Heb. 7:23–28.

Read Ps. 137.

Read Ps. 50:7–15, 23; Ps. 51:17 and Ps. 107:20–22.

Jesus Christ our mediator, believed that the church had a priestly nature because of the priestly character of all those who make up the church: “there is one priesthood for all” (Heb. 2:13). Tertullian understood that there are many spiritual priests in every church: “we are priests, all who believe in him” (Heb. 5:14). The priestly promise is fulfilled in the new church: “you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people” (1 Pet. 2:9). Our High Priest is the one who represents us before God: “we have one mediator between God and people” (1 Tim. 2:5).

Origen (ca. 185–254)

Origen responded to the accusations of the pagan Celsus that Christians do not serve any valuable role in society. In order to demonstrate that the church was not a threat to society, he should work together with the emperor, and thereby serving as a counterbalance to his accusation of disloyalty. Origen responded that Christians do serve and generate “an army of priests” who “fight” for the emperor, and the emperor itself: “Christ is the mediator between God and people.” God’s church is the one that represents us before God, “All scripture is written for instruction to the church” (2 Tim. 3:16). God’s church is the one that represents us before God, “if we are faithful to him, he will guard us” (1 Thess. 5:23). The church is the one that represents us before God, “he is faithful to do what he has promised” (Heb. 10:23). The church is the one that represents us before God, “he is faithful to do what he has promised” (Heb. 10:23). The church is the one that represents us before God, “he is faithful to do what he has promised” (Heb. 10:23).

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The royal priesthood. The role of the royal priesthood in the early church was significant, as it was a concept that emphasized the idea that all believers, not just the clergy, had a direct relationship with God. This idea was rooted in various sources, including the teaching of Jesus Christ and the apostles. For example, Jesus taught that all believers, not just the clergy, were able to approach God directly, as He said, “All things are possible to him who believes” (Mark 9:23). This teaching was further developed in the writings of the apostle Paul, who emphasized that all believers were “priests” in the sense that they had direct access to God through their faith and prayer (1 Peter 2:9). Over time, this idea of the royal priesthood continued to evolve, with different interpretations and applications in various church traditions.
not identical with Priesthood or Ministry — for one is to be a priest, one becomes a minister.25 When Christians do not have someone in the public office, someone should be selected from the priesthood of the Word and should be put into the office. The community then hands upon the person to show that he is now pastor or bishop. When that happens, then all should believe “beyond a shadow of a doubt that this has been done and accomplished by God.”26 This approach is biblical, historical, and the public office “established by holy ordination” is the highest and greatest of the functions of the church, on which the whole power of the church depends, once the church is working with the Word and everything in it is rooted by virtue of the Word alone.27

Luther commanded a view of a church that would include the priesthood of the baptized being active in the ministerium of the Word, while not undermining the public preaching office. The royal priesthood would ask one or more from among them to accept the public office for the good of the whole priesthood.

After about 1527, Luther tended to distinguish more between the priesthood and the public office. He did not depart from the idea that all offices possess all the same rights and responsibilities, but he also noted that not every individual baptized Christian is prepared to fulfill every task; some are better suited to do some things than others. That does not deny that the royal priesthood possesses all that God gives, but it rather recognizes that God also gives talents and abilities differently to various people. It is the competency of priests — the congregation in most cases — that calls someone to the public office and honors on that person the right that goes with the gifts that belong to all.28

READ ROM. 12:1–2; 1 PETER 4:11. What kinds of gifts does God give to His people? According to the apostle Peter, what is the ultimate purpose of each gift?

Growing in Faith

Luther contends that the Gospel would shape hearts and minds and relate to the institutional church, but the paroxysm variant is seen in 1528 when little progress had been made. The devil, the world, and the sinful flesh still plague those in Baptism. It was up to the priesthood to keep trying and up to the faithful to use their gifts effectively.

II. THEOLOGICAL DOCUMENTS — COMMISSION ON THEOLOGY AND CHURCH RELATIONS

SUMMARY STATEMENTS

1. The royal priesthood is a biblical way to identify, teach, and confess the “one, holy, catholic (Christian), and apostolic Church.” That is, the royal priesthood is all believers, “from every tribe and language and people and nation” where God has made a kingdom and promises (Acts 1:8) by a creating-faith in Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit.

2. Individuals become priests of the royal priesthood, the Church, by the saving promises of Baptism into Christ, where we receive the washing of rebirth, the forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit (1 Peter 2:2-3, Acts 2:38; 10:47).

3. Luther propounds his identity only in Christ, the Great High Priest and only mediator between God and man. Royal priests are in terms called to live in the power of mediatorial position between God and the world. They offer living sacrifices of thanksgiving, not sacrifices of meats or statement. In prayer they intercede on behalf of all people. They make known the excellencies of God in Christ, sharing the Word, gifts and offerings with all nations (Rom. 1:10, Phil. 2:1, 1 Peter 4:11).

4. As the people of God, both corporately and individually, we mediate God’s truth of salvation and life to the world around us. Every individual believer is called to confess the faith to others since the mission of the whole Church, that is, the entire royal priesthood, is to make disciples of all nations (Matt. 28:19, 20). Members of the royal priesthood share in the calling and in their daily lives, give a defense ... for the hope that is in them (1 Peter 3:15).

5. Each royal priest is to exercise the functions of the royal priesthood — sacrifice, prayer and profession — in a way that accords with his or her vocation within the three estates of home, church and society (see Romans 12:1, Colossians 3:11, Ephesians 4:11).

6. The Holy Spirit is at work wherever the saving work of God in Christ is made known, whether that message is delivered by a layman or a pastor. The Gospel alone is the power of salvation (Rom. 1:16). This means that the proclamation of the Gospel by members of

the royal priesthood as they speak of Christ to others, at home, with fellow believers and in society, is an effective means of grace by which the Holy Spirit creates and nurtures saving faith (Acts 4:4).20

7. The royal priesthood does not undermine or negate the Office of the Public Ministry which Christ gives to the Church. Members of the royal priesthood, on various ways, choose one from among them who is equipped to teach and called in an orderly manner to hold the Office of the Public Ministry and to perform its distinctive function(s) (1 Cor. 12:4–11, 28; Eph. 4:11, Titus 1:5).

“The grace of God has made us free from the power of sin and death, and this freedom does not lead us into licentiousness, but into holiness, and into the freedom of the children of God (Gal. 5:1).” Resolution 1.7–8


Luther’s Works: Right and Power to Judge Teaching and to Call, Appoint, and Discipline Teachers, Established and Proven by Scripture, vol. 65 (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975), 29.


Intinction: A Study Document

**Background:** At the February 2013 Council of Presidents meeting, a discussion arose about the propriety of intinction in the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. The task force on this matter was convened at the November 2014 LCMS leadership conference. After some conversation, the assembly decided to request from the practice of intinction in the CTCR to assist the Council in their study. This document was prepared by the CTCR to respond to this request, as a study document for use by the CLC in discussing this issue. Discussion questions are offered here for that purpose.

1. On what basis did Church leaders argue against intinction?
2. What benefits did intinction offer that made it acceptable to some?
3. What considerations led to exceptions to the general prohibition of intinction?
4. What did the doctrine of consecration lead to the demise of intinction?

**The Question of intinction did not exist in the New Testament:** The practice of intinction, which marks the bread as the body of Christ, has not appeared in the New Testament. When Jesus said, "Give ye因此 drink ye all of it!" Matthew 26:27; Mark 14:23. Intinction would be a direct violation of the words of Christ given at the Last Supper. The practice of intinction offers no clear basis in Scripture. Therefore, the Council should give serious consideration to the issue of intinction as a means of preserving the proper administration of the Sacrament of the Lord's Body and Blood.

**Discussion Questions:**

1. In their argumentation against withholding the cup from the laity, how did the Lutherans follow the same argumentation of previous generations concerning intinction? Do the same principles apply? When the Council of Tours decreed, "Let no one communicate from the altar unless one receives the body and the blood in the same way, except for infants and those very ill, who are unable to consume the bread."
2. What effect might be created in the minds of communicants by administering the Sacrament in ways not in keeping with the Words of Institution? What does this say about the thought or understanding of the communicant in the situation?
3. How does the church's historic practice inform our discussion on this matter today?

**II. Current Developments**

Given the strong prohibition against the practice of intinction as noted above, it might be surprising to learn that current practice in the Roman Catholic Church allows for its use in one mode of distributing the Sacrament when addressing an incident where the priest gave the cup before the host. The story, in this case, admits, the essence of the Sacrament is present but not according to such manner as is necessary. Where present in the texts, the Greek words are the common words for eating and drinking, emiss and rivis. One concern which intinction raises in the minds of some is how far one can stretch the meaning of "drink" and remain faithful to our Lord’s command. For Luther, at the heart of the Words of Institution is the consecration of the elements, not the words said or the manner in which the words were said.

**Summary:**

- **What is intinction?** An act of marking the bread as the body of Christ by dipping it into the wine after the Words of Institution have been pronounced.
- **Why was intinction practiced?** To assist in the consumption of the elements, especially by children and the ill or elderly who found it difficult to swallow the bread.
- **Who against intinction?** Church leaders argued against intinction, noting that it is in conflict with the words of Christ given at the Last Supper.
- **What benefits did intinction offer?** It allowed for the consumption of the elements by those who found it difficult to swallow the bread.

**Conclusion:** Intinction is a practice that should be considered carefully by the church, as it may lead to confusion and a lack of fidelity to the words of Christ given at the Last Supper. It is important to ensure that the practice of intinction is done in a manner that is in keeping with the Words of Institution and the teachings of the church.
3. Lutherans insist that the efficacy of Baptism does not depend upon a specific means of administering it. Might the same be said true for the administration of the Lord’s Supper?
4. How much variation in the practice of the Supper is permissible? Does variation in practice ever negate the Sacrament so that it is not Jesus’ body or blood? Can variations in distribution practice cause doubt in the minds of communicants?

IV. Final Considerations

Important questions remain. If Synod disapproved of intinction in 1944, but various publications in the LCMS congregations have viewed it more positively thereafter (to say nothing of the presence of intinction in practice in many LCMS congregations), what does that mean? Does intinction invalidate the Sacrament? If intinction does not invalidate, would it not be appropriate for the Synod in convention to speak once more, either reaffirming or revoking the prohibition, since intinction is currently being practiced in varying degrees within the Synod?

Discussion Questions:
1. Should intinction be permissible at all? Why or why not? Under what circumstances? How much freedom should individual congregations have in a matter of communion practice such as intinction?
2. Sometimes one faces difficult choices in pastoral care and practice. Luther chose not to alienate or confuse the laity and so introduced the cup in Wittenberg slowly. Chemnitz notes that intinction was preferable to receiving only the body of Christ. How do such considerations influence our discussion of intinction and other matters of communion practice?
3. What is the relationship between Word and action in the Sacrament? At what point do concerns about the distribution make human actions more important than the Word in the Sacrament?
4. How do we determine the relevance of synodical resolutions such as the 1944 rejection of intinction today? Do past judgments always reign (consider, for example, Synod’s 1850 resolution against public prayers by laymen and against as corde prayers unless there is no approved written prayer available)?

Commission on Theology and Church Relations
Approved February 25, 2017

4 Ibid.
5 Ibid., 232–233.
6 Mitchell, 160–162.
8 Ibid., 244.
9 Ibid., 245.
10 Ibid., 245. “Now it is obvious that this custom, introduced contrary to God’s command and to the ancient canons, is not right” (RW, 62). The argument seems to be that neither the Scripture nor the tradition of the church support this practice. Notice how Melanchthon begins his argument by citing Saint Paul, then Cyprian, Jerome, Gelasius [better Gratian], and Nicholas of Cusa. Until the rather recent withdrawal of the cap, church practice had confirmed to “God’s command.”
II. THEOLOGICAL DOCUMENTS—COMMISSION ON THEOLOGY AND CHURCH RELATIONS

Response to Two Questions: Is the Gospel Effective when Spoken by a Lay Person?

On February 25, 2016, President Matthew C. Harrison wrote to Dr. Lawrence H. Jr., the chairman of the Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR), and Dr. Joel D. Lehenbauer, the CTCR’s executive director (see Appendix A). The letter made a formal request for a study, noting:

I am seeking a brief and posted study by the CTCR addressing these two vital topics.

1. Am the convention and the saving Gospel effectively spoken only when by a pastor? 
2. Do the Scripture, Lutheran Confessions and the public doctrine of the LCMS particularly Walther’s “Church and Office” allow laymen to carry out the specific functions of the pastoral office (public apostleship, public preaching and administration of the sacraments in the divine service) under the sole proviso that this is done ‘under the oversight of a pastor’?

The first question is: “Are the Word of God and the saving Gospel effective only when spoken by a pastor?”

Our answer is No. The Scripture is replete with examples of Christian men and women—lay people—who share the saving truths of God’s Word with others. The Old Testament tells of “ordinary” men and women (other than those of office of public ministry) who shared the good news of the Lord’s mighty acts—proclaiming the saving truth of the mighty deeds that culminated in the life, death, and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. Consider that every household of Israel kept the Passover in their houses, hearing the story of God’s great saving deed from parent and head of households (Ex. 12:26-27). Further evidence of the vital work of proffering and narrating faith is evident in faithful parents like Rachel and Elisabeth (1 Sam. 1). Moreover, effective use of the Gospel beyond the bounds of Israel is illustrated by Naomi who was the Spirit’s instrument in narrating the faith of Ruth (Ruth 1:16-18).

The efficacy of the Word of God, regardless of the speaker, is just as apparent in the New Testament. The President’s request refers to the Samarian woman in John 4 who shared the new Israel with God with the people of her village with this result: “Many Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman’s testimony” (John 4:39). This incident clearly

The second question is: “Are the keys to the kingdom in the house of God? The keys to the kingdom are in the house of God. The doors of heaven are not for the taking at will. They are only for those who have been given the key by Jesus Christ.”

Reformed theologians have always held that the true, holy, Christian Church is Christ’s ‘priestly and kingly’ kingdom. It is the Church that proclaims, teaches, and applies the Word of God and administers the Sacraments. The Church is the body of Christ, and as such, it has the keys to the kingdom of heaven, and the authority to open and close those keys. The Church is not just a group of people who believe in Christ; it is the body of Christ, the spiritual temple built by Christ and sealed by the Holy Spirit. The Church is the one true mediator between God and people, and it has the obligation to proclaim the Word of God, administer the Sacraments, and apply the teaching of Christ to all aspects of life.

The Church is not just a group of people who believe in Christ; it is the body of Christ, the spiritual temple built by Christ and sealed by the Holy Spirit. The Church is the one true mediator between God and people, and it has the obligation to proclaim the Word of God, administer the Sacraments, and apply the teaching of Christ to all aspects of life.

III. SACRAMENTS

sacraments (in the divine service) under the sole proviso that this is done ‘under the oversight of a pastor’?”

Again, our answer is No. We must speak somewhat more carefully, so that we do not appear to contradict our answer to the first question. The quote from Walther on Thesi VII on the preceding page provides a helpful balance. It affirms that every Christian—every person—is “vested and called to share the Word of God with others. Walther goes on to say, however, that “where Christians live together” the Gospel is preached and sacraments are administered “only” by one called to that office.

Teachings about the efficacy of the Word and the royal priesthood have led some Christians to mistakenly understand the need for or in designating the office of the public ministry. Many modern churches have abandoned the practice of having a pastor to lead the congregation in the administration of the Sacraments. This has led to a situation where laypeople are administering the Sacraments without oversight, which is contrary to the teachings of Scripture and the Church.

The Church is not just a group of people who believe in Christ; it is the body of Christ, the spiritual temple built by Christ and sealed by the Holy Spirit. The Church is the one true mediator between God and people, and it has the obligation to proclaim the Word of God, administer the Sacraments, and apply the teaching of Christ to all aspects of life.
II. THEOLOGICAL DOCUMENTS — COMMISSION ON THEOLOGY AND CHURCH RELATIONS

administer the sacraments without a proper [public] call (AC IV German).38 The Confessions are consistent in assuming this office. While the pastors confessed the refusal of a public call to ordain men to the preaching office, their response was not to dispense with this office (or ordination), but to insist that because their churches required the office, they would continue (opposing, ordinal, vehemently — such verbs are used interchangeably) men without seeking approval from Rome (Ap XIV, SA 11:20; Tt 6:6-7, 22). We also note that Luther’s Table of Duties in the Small Catechism (1540 edition) includes a section titled “What Christians ought to do for their teachers and masters” which assumes not only the office (Seelsorger) but also the kind of respect and provision that the office holder is to receive.

Moreover, the actions of the office always assume work that is done in the regular life of the church — in its worship especially. In a mission setting where there is no church — every believer may be the church’s instrument in the work of gathering a church. But, as a church is gathered — when there is ordered assembly marked by the preaching of the Gospel and the administration of the sacraments for those gathered (AC VII, VIII) — the gathered church is rightly served by a man who is appointed to be its shepherd. The office of the public ministry is therefore inextricably linked to the church and its gathered life.

This is the understanding of Church and Office. Walther’s theme on the ministry are clear in their teaching, developing an understanding of the preaching office that maintains its necessity while preventing clerical arrogance, God established the office, having it not on the merits of the office holder, but on the power of the Word. He endows it by the church’s call, because of its divine institution the preaching office is the highest churchly office.

Thesis VII on the office is notworthily given the question we are addressing. It reads:

The holy preaching office is the authority, conferred by God through the congregation as the representative of the people and all churchly authority, to exercise the rights of the spiritual priesthood in public office on behalf of the congregation. (Ephesians added.)

Walter keeps priesthood and public ministry together, unlike some Lutherans of his day and ours, and many other Christians. The authority of the office is exercised “on behalf of the congregation” which is “the possession of the priesthood and of all churchly authority.”

Walter relies heavily on Luther, who firmly defends the rights of the royal priesthood and, from that, draws forth what some might suspect — that no office is needed or that it is simply optional — but the conclusion that you must have a ministry.42 Luther affirms that all believers have “the functions of a priest” by the fact that they are priests of the Great High Priest. Indeed,

38 The solution of AC IV German Latin text reads: “Concerning church under the truth that one can should preach publicly in the church or administer the sacraments unless properly called. The adverb publicly and the adjective public have indicate more than something purely spiritual, for example in church services one to the public, but the inclusion of what is done on behalf of the church. As the CTCR said in 1981: THE POWER OF THE OFFICE OF THE KEYS, given by God to Christ in the Person of his Church, is exercised publicly on behalf of the church by the called ministers” (see The Ministry: Office, Procedures and Nominees/Candidates, pages 6-9 in printed book, page 11 for electronic edition at www.ctcr.org/4). 39 Concerning the Ministry, AE 40:5, 5.

those in which the pastor of the congregation observes while a layman assumes the specific responsibilities the pastor was called to fulfill.

Even as Luther acknowledged that emergency knows no rules, he also carefully preserved the importance of the public ministry and was quick to respond to critics who said he had undermined the office. “You also lie that I have made all laymen pastors, priests, and spiritual in such a way that they may exercise the office without a call. But, as godly as you are, you conceal the fact that I added that one should undertake this office without a call until it be an extreme emergency.”41

We note that the president’s question envisages neither an emergency nor an educational setting in which a pastor supervises and approves a seminarian’s sermon, rather, his question pertains to a situation in which a pastor has decided that he will have a layman preach in his stead, even though he might just as well preach himself. His defense for such a practice is that the layman is under his supervision.

In the opinion of the CTCR, there is no biblical or confessional justification for having a layman preach in such cases. The pastor’s action claims pastoral authority to “call” someone to the preaching office. Only the church as a whole has such authority, not individuals. He may not arrogate to himself what belongs to the whole church, even if he arrogates it in order to share it with another. To act in this manner is contrary to the good order of the church and inevitably results in dissension (1 Cor. 14:35).

President Hartsook’s request makes note of a 2019 CTCR opinion, “Request for a Theological Opinion from the Wisconsin District President Regarding Aschagho Confession Article XIV” (see Appendix B). That opinion includes the following:

Article XIV of the Augsburg Confession (which is grounded in the teaching of Holy Scripture) forbids such a practice [the practice of regular preaching and administration of the sacraments by laymen] because it would deny the necessity of a distinctly ordained public ministry. Based on this understanding a 1958 CTCR report addressed the question: “Are certain functions in the church limited to the office of the public ministry?” In its answer the CTCR stated the following:

Functions that are essentially executive functions of the Ministry and sacrament should be performed by those who hold the office of the public ministry. Thus, preaching in the worship service, leading in public prayer, celebration of the Sacrament of the Altar,

38 AE 32:791.
39 As Walther (briefly taught), local congregations have the right to call their own pastor (Dit C. F. W. Walther, The Congregations’ Right to Choose Its Pastor. Fort Wayne: Wayne Office Development, n.d.). At the same time, local congregations that have voluntarily affiliated with the synod enjoy not only rights, privileges, and responsibilities that members from one congregation assume the responsibility of walking together according to the synod’s constitution and bylaws. One of these responsibilities is to call pastors according to the agreed upon process each congregation’s by-laws outlines. Thus, the congregation’s election rights to select, even limit the manner in which it exercises its calling prerogative as outlined by the Handbook, Bylaws 2.1.1, 2.1.2, and 2.1.3. See C. F. W. Walther, “Digest of an Evangelical Lutheran Synod,” in Twenty-Fourth Menor, in Essays for the Church (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1992), 2:6-60.
40 Both the opinion and the referenced report are available online at www.lcms.org/ctcr.

baptisms, weddings and funeral services should be carried out by those who hold the office of public ministry. However, in exceptional circumstances, or emergencies (as when a pastor is incapacitated), members of the auxiliary offices or other qualified individuals may temporarily be called upon to perform, under proper supervision, functions that are otherwise performed by the pastor and that are not for either reason prescribed (e.g., women teachers or deacons/ministers in the public service).

It is therefore important to note that the president’s request assumes neither emergency nor exceptional circumstances. Rather, he refers to a view that seems to favor the royal priesthood and office of his ministry in making a more contentious than complementary relationship.

This view, so far as I have heard, maintains that any layperson may carry out any of the functions or tasks of the office of the ministry in any setting (including public settings) PROVIDED that person is under the oversight or supervision of a pastor.

Then we have had and continue to have circumstances where a pastor is present in the church while a layperson is administering the elements or preaching. This includes acts only instances in which the pastor is a visitor or serving in a vacancy capacity, but also

40 AE 40:21.
41 AE 40:14, emphasis added.
42 There is always this assumption that there are clear boundaries in which specific functions of the public ministry shall necessarily be undertaken by laymen. Thus, in an emergency anyone may baptize and there have been many circumstances (e.g., prevention, church planting, evangelism, outreach) where a layperson is called upon to perform functions for the Word, doing so as a faithful Christian, even as one among the office.
43 AE 40:115.

In conclusion, then, our answer to both questions is No.

Adapted by the Commission on Theology and Church Relations
Adopted May 14, 2016

2019 Convention Workbook
II. THEOLOGICAL DOCUMENTS — COMMISSION ON THEOLOGY AND CHURCH RELATIONS

LUTHERAN CHURCH
Missouri Synod

Office of the President
The Revised Book of Concord is the President of the Synod

Thursday of Lent II, A. D. 2016
February 25, 2016

Dr. Lawrence Rast, Jr.
Chairman-CTCR
6690 N Clinton Street
Fort Wayne, Indiana 46825

Dr. Joel Lehenbauer
Executive Director
Commission on Theology and Church Relations
1311 S Kickrood Road
St. Louis, Missouri 63122

Dear Dave Rast and Lehenbauer,

Grace and peace.

Per bylaw 3.9.5.2, “the CTCR shall assist the President of the Synod at his request in discharging his constitutional responsibilities for maintaining doctrinal unity within the Synod,” I am making the following request.

I continue to hear of two issues, which I believe are related as two extremes which have developed in opposition to each other, and neither of which I believe represents the doctrine of Scripture, the Lutheran Confessions or the stated doctrine of the LCMS.

On the one hand, I continue to hear reports from district presidents and others that there are some pastors who assert that the Word of God is effective only when spoken by a pastor and that the task of sharing the Gospel — evangelism or witness — is to be done only by pastors, not laymen. This is a serious denial of the objective power of the Word of God, and a serious rejection of the rights and responsibilities of the spiritual priesthood to speak the Word of God to family, friends and neighbors in the context of every vocation.

Now what John 4:9 says of the woman at the well, “Jesus Saarainen from that town believed in him because of the woman’s testimony.”

On the other hand, I am increasingly concerned when I read and hear nebulous statements such as, “the LCMS needs to unshift the laity for mission.” We CERTAINLY do encourage lay people in the mission of telling the lost about Jesus, but it seems clear to me that underlying this statement is often a doctrine which assumes competition and even conflict between the spiritual priesthood and the office of the ministry rather than a godly and harmonious relationship between them. Such a view is at odds with Holy Scriptures, the Lutheran Confessions and the stated public doctrine of the LCMS. This view, so far as I have heard, maintains that any layperson may carry out any of the functions or tasks of the office of the ministry in any setting (including public settings) PROVIDED that person is under the oversight or supervision of a pastor.

Thus we have had and continue to have circumstances where a pastor is present in the external while a layperson is carrying out the elements or preaching. This includes not only instances in which the pastor is a visitor or serving in a vacancy capacity, but also those in which the minister prescribes the congregation observes while a layman assumes the specific responsibilities the pastor was called to fulfill. Of course, the LLD task force has noted that LLDs are being used in this fashion (especially even to the directives of Wlcns 1989 in some circumstances), and certainly contrary to CA 14.

Moreover, a misnomer is being expressed in some circles within the Synod, which as I see it assumes the erroneous position that the Pastor’s SMP programs as well as specialized training programs for cross-cultural outreach, are not enough. On more than one occasion I have witnessed leaders express the idea that our entire synod is programmed and that all education should be carried out contextually. Another aspect of this is the notion that, so long as a house church or cell is under the “supervision” of a pastor, any person as needed may be chosen to “pastor” that particular cell or house church, including administering the sacraments. This is contrary, of course, to the CTCR’s “Response to Questions Regarding Augustana Confession Article XIV” [December 18, 2014].

As noted in the LLD Task Force report, the New Testament expressions for “oversight” (episkopos) or group are not used of pastors overseeing other pastors, or those doing pastoral functions or tasks on behalf of the pastor.

Rather, it is the sheep themselves [who are overseers by pastors—shepherds]. This can be seen in Acts 20:28—“I take you to myself and to all the flock, among whom the Holy Spirit has placed you overseers, to equip you for the work of ministry, for building up the church of God.” One oversees by acting as a shepherd among the people whom God has commanded to over a charge, not by overseeing others doing the work of shepherding. A comission delegated model is not at all in view. This is why we desire that virtually all Lutherans have for our entire history acknowledged and supported situations where laymen have had the energy, and delivered a sermon prepared by a pastor to remove or truly overseeing circumstances. In addition, there is no objection to a laymen gathering others in a house or other local setting, to start a small mission. Such a person would well lead聚会, Bible study etc., as that group moves toward becoming a mission congregation. Such would be done in conjunction with a pastor, who at the proper time would begin offering the public office of Word and Sacrament. And we have SMP and other options for men in various non-Anglo circumstances, which require flexibility.

Finally, I am requesting a brief and pointed study by the CTCR addressing these two vital topics. 1. Are the Word of God and the saving Gospel effective only when spoken by a pastor? 2. Do the Scriptures, Lutheran Confessions and the public doctrine of the LCMS (particularly Walther’s “Church and Office”) allow laymen to carry out the specific functions of the pastoral office (public absolution, public preaching and administration of the sacraments in the divine service) under the stated proviso that this is done “under the oversight of a pastor”? I do hope you can attack these questions with some alacrity.

Thanks for your fine work.

Rev. Dr. Matthew C. Harrison, President
The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

Request for a Theological Opinion from the South Wisconsin District President Regarding Augustana Confession Article XIV

In a letter dated August 20, 2016, the Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR) was asked to assist the South Wisconsin District president in answering two questions (quoted verbatim with original emphasis):

1. In light of our Lutheran understanding of Church and Ministry would you please address the appropriateness of a layman regularly carrying out the functions of the pastoral office, via the public proclamation of the Word and the administration of the Sacraments?
2. In light of Holy Scripture and the Confessions would you please address the appropriateness of a layman as a laywoman proclaiming the Word and alsoadministering the sacraments in a house church, small group, or cell group setting?

Response

With respect to the first question, the Commission’s answer is that “qualified” public preaching and public administration of the Sacraments by a layman is not appropriate. Article XIV of the Augustana Confession (which is grounded in the teaching of Holy Scriptures) forbids such a practice, because it would deny the ministry of a rightly ordained public ministry, based on this understanding a 1981 CTCR report addressed the question: “Are certain functions in the church limited to the office of the public ministry?” In its answer the Commission stated the following:

Functions that are essentially exclusive to the ministry of Word and sacrament should be performed by those who hold the office of the public ministry. Thus, preaching in the worship service, leading in public prayer, celebration of the Sacraments of the Altar, baptisms, confirmations and other services should be carried out by those who hold the office of public ministry. However, in exceptional circumstances, a layperson may temporarily be called upon to perform, under proper supervision, functions that are otherwise performed by the pastor and that are not for other reasons precluded (e.g., women teachers or deaconesses preaching in the public service).

In this matter there needs to be a concern for order in the church. The indiscriminate assignment of functions of the office of the public ministry brings confusion and disorder in the church. A disregard of canonicity of practice is contrary to the very reason for the existence of the Synod.

It is clear from background information that the District President’s correspondence that this request does not pertain to questions about the service of “ordinand lay deacons,” but about laymen “commissioned” by the congregation to carry out certain functions of pastoral ministry, such as public preaching and regular sacramental administration.

The Ministry, Officers, Procedures, and Nominations, p. 35. Available online at: www.lawww.org (pg. 31 in online version).

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Two matters require clarification regarding the second question. First, the CTCR understands the phrase "eloquently proclaiming the Word" to refer to public preaching and teaching within the "house church" setting. Second, the CTCR understands that "administering the Sacraments" is not speaking of any external consequences, such as the Baptism of someone who is dying. Rather, it is understood to refer to the regular, public administration of Baptism and the Lord’s Supper in and on behalf of this "house church." According to the respondents, the Commission’s answer to the second question is that this refers to public preaching and public administration of the Sacraments by a lay person and is not theologically appropriate. Article XIV would forbid such a practice because it is a denial of the doctrine of the Sacraments. Moreover, a lay person exercising these responsibilities would also violate the scriptural teaching that women are not publicly to teach and preach on behalf of the church and are ineptible to be candidates for the public ministry (see 1 Cor 4:13-14 and 1 Tim 2:12).

Background

Only when the Word of Christ’s forgiving Gospel is being proclaimed and His Sacraments (Baptism and the Lord’s Supper) are being administered can people come to faith and become part of His Body the church. Therefore Christ sends His people, the church, to preach His Gospel and to administer His Sacraments (Matt 28:19).

It is clear that the church itself possesses the Word and Sacraments of forgiveness (the Keys of Christ, see Matt 16:19; note the plural). By virtue of Baptism, each Christian is a member of the priesthood of believers (1 Peter 2:9). It is therefore appropriate for individual Christians in their daily vocations to witness to Christ, confessing before men (Matt 19:32-33) and, in cases of necessity, to baptize and to absolve.

The scriptural foundation for a public "office of ministry," distinct from the priesthood of believers, is also found in 1 Peter 5:2-3: "All the prophetic gifts... teach..." to make the point that not all are called into public ministry in the church. The public office of the ministry is not a matter of temperament, a mere human arrangement to "get things done" which is adjusted or established however and whenever a group of Christians will. Rather, the office of the ministry is instituted by God. Christ Himself ordained the preaching and teaching ministry by calling the twelve Apostles and giving specific responsibilities to them, apart from the rest of his followers (Mark 3:14-15; Luke 6:13-16; see also John 4:2). While the original Apostles were distinctive from all others in the public office of ministry by virtue of being eyewitnesses of our Lord, the call into public ministry did not end with them. As Peter indicated by calling himself a "believing disciple" (1 Peter 5:1), both Apostles and later pastors (or episcopos [often called "bishop" in the NT]) were equally holders of the office of the public ministry.

The New Testament indicates that as the church moved into the future it continued this divine office of calling men to serve the church by preaching and publicly administering the Sacraments (see Acts 1:22-26; 20:17-21; 2 Cor 1:12: 1 Cor 15:1-12; Tim 1:3-7, 15-17; Tit 2:1, 2).

Various other terms are also used, such as pastoral office, pastoral ministry, public ministry, office of the public ministry, preaching office. As for scriptural terminology, see The Ministry, Offices, Procedures and Nomenclature, p. 13-15 (4, to avoid confusion). In this case, ministry exists by divine mandate and are not mere human arrangements. They are not in competition with one another and neither may be used to negate the other. Lutheran congregations therefore, by virtue of their subscription to the Scriptures and Confessions, do not view the pastoral ministry as an option. Rather, they take care that no pastor who is rightly called preaches, teaches, and administers the sacraments.

What is perhaps less clear, however, is how a pastor is "rightly called." In David Call the CTRC addresses the matter of how to understand the stipulations of AC Article XVI that only those who are "rightly called" may publicly preach and teach and administer the sacraments in the church. The Commission points out that the understanding of "rightly called" is dependent upon other confessional documents, such as those by Melanchthon in the Treatise on the Power and the Primacy of the Pope (TTP).

After addressing the unitary character of the office and the equality in authority of pastors with bishops (TTP 60), Melanchthon names the issue of obtaining pastors for the churches (TTP 65). Regrettably he uses several terms in order to describe the process: the right of calling (pas vocatur), the right of choosing (pas elegitur), and the right of ordaining (pas instituitur). At times he refers to all three together, "vocat, elegit, et indebit" (TTP 67), and at other times he simply uses two expressions, "elevat et ordinet" (TTP 47, 70, 72). The terminology here indicates that the entire church is involved in obtaining pastors, people through election and through ordination as well. Moreover, Melanchthon describes those who are called, elected, and ordained as competent (sane peritus, German text of 1529) which presumes some form of determination of their times.

It is particularly important to emphasize that the "entire church" is involved in a right call. Our Synod has put this practice into establishment by an orderly practice of training, certifying, ordaining, and calling men into the pastoral office in a way that is recognized by the entire Synod. For the most part, those who serve in the public ministry in the LCMS are prepared and certified by the Synod’s seminaries, called (placed) and ordained by means of the cooperative work of the Council of Presidents and congregations (or other entities), and receive any later calls again by means of cooperation between district presidents and congregations/leaders. However, because of a combination of reasons, including growing ethnic and linguistic diversity in the U.S. and growing numbers of congregations that cannot support a pastor, other means of providing for public preaching and teaching of the Word and administration of the Sacraments are necessary. In some cases, these may be the calling of pastoral counselors. However, in our Synod’s context, there has been a conscious effort to meet the need for qualified candidates for the public ministry while continuing to recognize that our traditional seminary training in not able to meet that need completely. There have been vigorous debates about pastoral preparations and about the validity, necessity, and propriety of certain practices and programs seeking to prepare candidates. Still, the very exceptional characteristic of the Synod deals with these issues in a Synod-wide process of debate and decision-making illustrates that the LCMS is committed to maintain an orderly process of preparing ministers that all can affirm.4

As noted above in this response (p. 3), the circumcision described in the request from the District Presidents does not indicate an emergency or exceptional circumstances. A congregation that is served by a retired pastor has chosen to designate duties (which the one who has been placed into the office of the public ministry is to fulfill, namely, preaching and teaching the Gospel and administering the Sacraments on behalf of the congregation to groups within the congregation). This is the very essence of the work of public ministry (AC VII, XIV) and not the work of the priesthood of believers. By appointing individuals to carry out these responsibilities, the congregation has, in effect, reappointed them to the office of the public ministry apart from the congregational fellowship of the Synod. In 1981 the CTRC affirmed the necessity that churches which are banded together in a common confession not act unilaterally in ordaining individuals to the pastoral office. We state the fact that ordination is the declaration of the whole confession of the Synod. In the end, a single congregation or an agency representing larger segments of the church does have this authority. Nevertheless, a synod of congregations bound by a common confession and loyalty, good order demands that admission into the pastoral office or into its closely allied auxiliary offices is not the act of a single congregation or agency.5

Adopted by the CTRC
December 18, 2018

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4 This was reported publicly by 2017 Rev. 13012, which sought to address both a pressing need for pastors and the benefit "of the ministry, any matching in the highest standards of pastoral education and formation.

II. THEOLOGICAL DOCUMENTS—COMMISSION ON THEOLOGY AND CHURCH RELATIONS

Life USA
Observations, Questions, and Concerns: For Use by LCMS Seating Task Force
CTCL—February 2017

History, Organization, and Beliefs

Identity

Trail Life USA (TLUSA) is a Christian adventure, character, and leadership movement for young men. Its K-12 program on outdoor experiences offers a young man’s skills and “allows him to grow on a personal level and as a role model and leader for his peers.” The motto for TLUSA participants (called trailmen), taken from Colossians 1:10, is “Walk Worthy.”

History

In May of 2013, the Boy Scouts of America (BSA), changed their policies to allow openly gay youth into membership. An existing organization called On My Honor, which opposed the promotion of homosexuality and political agendas in scouting, created a new adventure and leadership program for young men. In June of 2013, a coalition of leaders in Louisville, Kentucky, established Trail Life USA. “Our whole life is about the trail, both in the outdoors and in the journey of life as believers,” said Orlando, Florida, lawyer John Stemberger, TLUSA chairman of the board and founder of Of My Honor. “So Trail Life is a way of life that is centered on following Christ in the outdoors.” In July and August of 2013, the initial Board of Directors planned the Trail Life USA organization and program infrastructure.

In September of 2013, Trail Life USA held its first convention in Nashville, Tennessee, with the theme of “Honoring the Legacy … Raising the Standard.” Representing 44 states, more than 1,200 Scoutmasters, Eagle Scouts, parents, and church leaders attended the convention. 1101 The nationwide program roll out for Trail Life USA took place in 2014. Within the first year after its initial convention, TLUSA had 450 troops with 14,000 members in 47 states, with nearly 300 more troops in the chartering process. 1112 For girls interested in a similar Christian leadership program, TLUSA recommends its sister program, the American Heritage Girls.

The TLUSA membership standards state: “The basic for the program’s ethical and moral standards is found in the Bible. In terms of sexual identification and behavior, we affirm that any sexual activity outside the context of the covenant of marriage between one man and woman is sinful before God and therefore inconsistent with the values and principles of the program. Within those limits, we grant membership to adults and youth who do not engage in or promote sexual immorality of any kind, or engage in behavior that would become a distraction to the mission of the program.”

The youth programs or ranks are arranged according to age and grade level:

For Boys: Kindergarten and at least 5 years old by October 31. Hawks: Second Grade and at least 7 years old by October 31. Mountain Lions: Fourth Grade and at least 9 years old by October 31. Navigators: Sixth Grade and at least 11 years old by October 31. Adventurers: Ninth Grade and at least 14 years old by October 31, till the 18th birthday. Trailmen: for TLUSA participants (called trailmen), taken from Colossians 1:10, is “Walk Worthy.”

USA.”1113 Members of Eastern Orthodox, Roman Catholic, and Church of Christ congregations may earn awards designed by their denominations.

Leadership

The Charter Organization selects its own Troop leaders. Most leadership positions can be filled by men or women. However, to preserve the principles of male mentorship, direct contact positions in the Navigators (6th to 8th grade boys) and the Adventurers (9th to 12th grade boys), as well as the position of Troop Chaplain, are reserved for men. The Troop Chaplain is responsible for "instilling the faith-based program of the Troop." The leadership positions of Ranger, Trailmaster, and Advisor must be held by adults age 21 and over. Trail Guides, who assist the Ranger, Trailmaster, and Advisor, must be adults age 18 and over.1114 Adult leaders must sign and abide by the membership standards and the TLUSA Statement of Faith and Values.1115

A background check, ordered by TLUSA, is required for all leaders. “Child Safety Youth Protection Training” is also required of adult leaders. For child protection purposes, there must never be less than two registered leaders present with a Unit of Boys. 1116 Trail Life USA provides the Charter Organization with monthly program themes (for example, teamwork, wisdom, or character), guidelines, and suggested activities for Troop meetings. Statement of Faith

“We believe there is One Triune God—God the Father, Jesus Christ, His one and only Son; and the Holy Spirit—Creator of the universe and eternally existent. We believe the Holy Scriptures (Old and New Testaments) to be the inspired and authoritative Word of God. We believe each person is created in His image for the purpose of community with and worshipping God. We believe in the ministry of the Holy Spirit, who enables us to live godly lives. We believe each of us is called to love the Lord our God with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength, and to love our neighbors as ourselves. We believe God calls us to lives of purity, service, stewardship and integrity.”

Statement of Values

Purity … God calls us to live lives of holiness, being pure of heart, mind, word and deed. We are to reserve sexual activity for the sanctity of marriage, a lifelong commitment before God between a man and a woman.

Service … God calls us to become responsible members of our community and the world through selfless acts that contribute to the welfare of others. Stewardship … God calls us to use our God-given time, talents, and money wisely.
Integrity … God calls us to live moral lives that demonstrate an inward motivation to do what is biblically right regardless of the cost.

Vision:
Our vision is to be the premier national character development organization for young men which produces Godly and responsible husbands, fathers, and citizens.

Mission:
Our mission is simple and clear: to guide generations of courageous young men to honor God, lead with integrity, serve others, and experience outdoor adventure.

Oath:
On my honor, I will do my best to serve God and my country; to respect authority; to be a good steward of creation; and to treat others as I want to be treated.

Core-Values:
Christ-centered; church-owned and operated; outdoor-focused; safety; courage; male-centered adult leadership; volunteer-driven; program flexibility; shared leadership; youth-centered leadership; character-focused, not awards-focused; servant leadership; family-oriented; decentralized decision-making; and debt averse.

Concerning its Christ-centered core value, TLUSA describes its program as “unapologetically Christian.” The description continues, stating that “the program is designed and intended to be presented without being ‘churchy’ or ‘religious,’ focusing on outdoor adventure, character, and leadership development.” Using the analogy of a “carrot cake,” TLUSA states that “the assumptions of a Christian worldview are throughout the entire program” as pieces of carrot are found throughout the entire cake. The Trail Life program “is not intended to replace or compete with other youth groups, Bible studies, or church programs, but rather to complement them and give youth an opportunity to exemplify and demonstrate Christian values in their relationships with others.”

Observations, Questions, and Concerns

• Trail Life USA describes itself as a character-building, and leadership organization, and its Charter Organizations and adult leaders must sign and abide by the TLUSA Statement of Faith and Values. TLUSA presents itself as a religious and civic organization that operates according to biblical principles.

• Since TLUSA materials have a particular, largely Evangelical theological perspective, and offer suggested prayers for opening and closing activities (e.g., the Focus and Faith portions of Woodlands components), may an LCMS congregation that sponsors a troop modify such materials when necessary?

• Troop meetings are to close with prayer and may include discussions of Bible verses and biblical concepts (for example, a Mountain Lion meeting discusses stewardship and conservation based on Genesis 1:26–28 and Psalm 24:1). This would most likely not be a problem on a local level as long as TLUSA respects the theological positions and practices of the LCMS charter organization and its freedom to adapt materials as needed or desired.

• Trail Life USA is both similar and dissimilar to the Boy Scouts of America. This is important when considering the relationship of either group to its chartering organizations/congregations.

• Historically, the Synod addressed the matter of Scouting not by “endorsement” but by stating that involvement in Scouting was not divisive of synodical fellowship (see 1944 Convention Proceedings, 257). What is the advisability of a similar approach toward TLUSA?

• BSA was (and is) primarily “civic” with religious elements that could be addressed as adapted by LCMS charter organizations in acceptable ways. TLUSA is as much or more “religious” than civic. What special challenges or opportunities does the different character of TLUSA present?

• What prayers and worship services might be expected at troop meetings or national gatherings? Will allowances be made for distinctive groups to hold their own worship at such gatherings?

• The TLUSA Statement of Faith is Trinitarian, and although Jesus is rightly confessed as the Son of God, no mention is made of salvation through faith in His name. TLUSA states: “We expect God to make Himself known and endeavor to create every opportunity we can for boys to acknowledge and grow in their knowledge of Him.” The Trail Life statement does not explain just how God might make Himself known. While the words “ministry of the Holy Spirit” are not precisely defined in the TLUSA Statement of Faith, the context suggests that it is the Spirit who enables Christians to live godly lives.

Websites
Trail Life USA
http://www.traillifeusa.com

American Heritage Girls
http://www.americanheritagegirls.org

2019 Convention Workbook
God’s Word shall ABIDE

**A GUIDING STATEMENT ON THE CHARACTER AND PROPER USE OF THE SACRED SCRIPTURES**

**Part 2: What Kind of Book Is the Bible?**

The Bible, inspired by God and written by men, is a divine-human book. However, this is not to say that these are two parts that can be separated. The divine and the human in the Bible are combined in an inextricable union analogous to the union of the two natures in the Person of Christ.

**Part 1: How Did the Bible Get Here?**

**1. Lutheran confessional theology teaches that God has given humankind a revelation of Himself in His works of creation. The self-disclosure of God in the nature of things is called “general revelation.” The revelation of God in nature, which does reveal God’s wisdom and power (Rom. 1:20), nonetheless is finally a revelation of God’s law.

a. Even since the entrance of sin into the world, the whole creation groans under the bondage of corruption (Rom. 8:20). Our whole physical environment witnesses to the judgment of God, which visits the whole world because of human rebellion against Him.**

b. Since general revelation does not witness to the grace that pardons but only to the wrath that punishes sin, the sinner responds to the revelation to which it testifies (Rom. 1:18). The sinner either denies that there is a God (Ps. 141:5; 53:5) or imputes an idol’s wrath which can be appealed by human devices (Gen. 1:18-23).

2. The revelation in which God makes Himself known as a gracious God is called “special revelation.” While special revelation cannot be equated with the Holy Scriptures, since God spoke to His people in many ways before any Scriptures were written and has spoken to us in those last times especially in His Son (Heb. 1:1-2), it is nevertheless true that it is in the Scriptures that the knowledge of these special revelations of God’s mercy has come to us.

The revelation given to us in the Scriptures about all God that He has done in human history to effect our salvation comes from God. No prophetic teaching about what God was doing through His people to keep His promise of sending a Redeemer arose from any more human reflection on an interpretation of Israel’s history. But more spoke from God about those things they were moved by the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:20-21).

Apostolic proclamation concerning all God did in Christ was “reveled… through the Spirit” and imparted “in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit” (1 Cor. 2:16, 15; Gal. 1:11-12). The apostle Paul could declare of the Scriptures that nourished Timothy (and us as well) that “all Scripture is breathed out by God” (2 Tim. 3:16). So also, he can claim the same Spirit as the One who inspired his own writings (Rom. 15:14-19; 1 Cor. 15:3, Eph. 3:5-6).

Scripts inspired by God were written by human beings: God gave His Word to His Old and New Testament people through human beings whom He Himself chose and endowed to speak His Word to concrete situations and circumstances in the history of His people.

**Part 1: How Did the Bible Get Here?**

**1. Lutherans acknowledge and teach that the Bible, even though it is and remains God’s very Word, is a thoroughly human book. They do not have a doctrinal view of the Bible:**

1. One obviously human aspect of the sacred Scriptures is that the language of the Bible is human, written to be read and understood by human beings. Accordingly, the Biblical language conforms to the usual principles of grammar and syntax. The biblical literature contains many of the literary forms and devices used by other literatures for the purpose of effective communication.

2. The Bible, considered as written communication, is human also in that it has a history.

   a. In a sense, the biblical literature represents a development. The Bible did not fall full-blown from heaven, but grew upon earth. The biblical literature came into existence over a period of many centuries and was written by human beings for human beings who lived in varying cultures and conditions, but the message remains the same.

   b. Inasmuch as the Bible was written in history by authors who were not insulated from the cultures in which they lived and wrote, and inasmuch as its literature was not produced in a vacuum but was originally composed and addressed to distinct discreet situations and circumstances, this literature has a historical dimension that gives it its own peculiar and concrete particularity. In other words, it bears the marks of a particular time and culture.

2. A book inspired by God

Lutherans, therefore, do not surrender the Bible to historians as though they could by their meth-

ods give a full account of the origin and nature of the biblical literature.

b. Lutherans will not admit that the historian has the last word to say about the kind of a book the Bible is. They will not permit the historian to rule that the Bible is the product of precisely the same processes that produce other literatures.

b. Lutherians believe that in the history that occurred the written biblical literature was active in a unique way, so that there is a qual-

itative difference between the inspired Scriptures and every other form of human expression.

**3. A perfect unity**

Since God is his primary Author, the Scriptures differ qualitatively from other literatures in that they possess such attributes as unity and complete truth-

fulness or reliability.

a. Lutherism theology has always acknowledged that there is a certain progression discernible in the revelation that God gave of Himself and in the sav-

ing actions in history when earlier Scriptures are compared with later Scriptures (as when the Old Testament is compared with the New Testament.)

b. Lutheranism theology also acknowledges that there are in the Scriptures no conflicting or contradictory conceptions of God and His ways with humanity, but rather that a perfect blend of both, due to differ-

ent emphases in different biblical books and authors.

b. For Lutheranism, theology as a solid, evident truth that God’s revelation of Himself in the sacred Scriptures is always perfectly consistent with itself.

b. Lutherans differ in some of the implications of their two distinct natures united in His person and the Bible. The Bible as a book that is both human and divine.

1. With the Church through the ages we confess that the Bible is the Word of God given to us by the authors, the fathers of the Church through the ages, and through our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and that you believe and confess that there is no doubt, a mystery at work here not unlike that of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit in the understandings of the one God who made heaven and earth, redeemed all humanity and will renew the justified in the new creation.

Nevertheless, even so as confess these great
I. THEOLOGICAL DOCUMENTS — COMMISSION ON THEOLOGY AND CHURCH RELATIONS

II. WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS ABOUT ITS RELIABILITY

a. The Bible is fully human and fully divine — in its content. While Lutheran students of the Bible gladly avail itself of the determination of the apostolic writings.

b. Lutherans employ principles for interpreting the Holy Scriptures to God's actions in human history in which God acted savingly is true.

c. We may not simply reduce scriptural inerrancy or complete reliability can be demonstrated (FC SD Summary 9), and clearly affirm that the imperfections that characterize human writing are not found in the Scriptures (Acts 17:11; 1 Cor. 14:37).

d. In interpreting the Bible, Lutherans remember the "spiritual and literal" method (FC SD Summary 9).

2. With these indispensable emphases in mind, Lutherans employ principles for interpreting the Holy Scriptures to God's actions in human history in which God acted savingly is true.

3. Our God's humble work in this divine-human marriage, and the human nature, and who can therefore carry out His eternal counsels of salvation.

4. The Bible is fully human and fully divine — in its content. While Lutheran students of the Bible gladly avail itself of the determination of the apostolic writings.

5. Lutherans are not "fundamentalists." We note that fundamentalism, historical

6. Lutherans do hold that to declare the inerrancy or complete reliability can be demonstrated (FC SD Summary 9), and clearly affirm that the imperfections that characterize human writing are not found in the Scriptures (Acts 17:11; 1 Cor. 14:37).

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3. Our God's humble work in this divine-human marriage, and the human nature, and who can therefore carry out His eternal counsels of salvation.

4. The Bible is fully human and fully divine — in its content. While Lutheran students of the Bible gladly avail itself of the determination of the apostolic writings.

5. Lutherans are not "fundamentalists." We note that fundamentalism, historical

6. Lutherans do hold that to declare the inerrancy or complete reliability can be demonstrated (FC SD Summary 9), and clearly affirm that the imperfections that characterize human writing are not found in the Scriptures (Acts 17:11; 1 Cor. 14:37).

d. In interpreting the Bible, Lutherans remember the "spiritual and literal" method (FC SD Summary 9).

2. With these indispensable emphases in mind, Lutherans employ principles for interpreting the Holy Scriptures to God's actions in human history in which God acted savingly is true.

3. Our God's humble work in this divine-human marriage, and the human nature, and who can therefore carry out His eternal counsels of salvation.

4. The Bible is fully human and fully divine — in its content. While Lutheran students of the Bible gladly avail itself of the determination of the apostolic writings.

5. Lutherans are not "fundamentalists." We note that fundamentalism, historical
foundational doctrines of Christianity such as the Trinity, the two natures of Christ and the justification of the ungodly by grace through faith in Christ Jesus — these great truths — is sure and certain. It is just as certain in the biblical teaching on God’s ordering of human life within His creation according to the commandments. We rejoice in our consensus in these truths. We pray that our shared understanding will be a sure and solid foundation for us to address future conversations and discussions, both in matters of agreement and areas where we do not share a common teaching or practice.

Resources for Further Study

- Sengsau, David. Authority in the Church: two unpublished papers presented at the NALC Pastors’ Conference in Orlando, Florida, on 10 February 2015.
III. Resolution 3-04 Task Force Report

Introduction

The 66th Regular Convention of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (Milwaukee, Wis., July 9–14, 2016) adopted Res. 3-04 ("To Create Task Force for Study of Issues Relating to Procreation, Fertility, and Care for the Unborn"), which affirms the Bible’s teaching that God’s creation of human life begins at conception and that “children are a blessing from the Lord” (Ps. 127:3). This resolution also identified the complexities and ever-changing landscape of procreation, fertility and care for the unborn. It noted that science and technology have significantly changed since the publication several decades ago of various Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR) documents and reports on life issues.

The adopted resolution called for the President of Synod to appoint a task force to take up these issues and report back to the next convention. The members of this task force (including representatives from pertinent Synod offices and entities, Lutherans For Life, the seminaries, and laypersons who have expertise in the fields of medicine, procreative science, theology, ethics, etc.) were specifically asked to do the following:

- identify the important issues to be addressed to best help and support families and parents dealing with the issues of procreation, fertility and care for the unborn.
- identify specific actions leading to the production of appropriate LCMS responses to these issues.

Task Force Membership

The resolution specifically defined task force membership to include the Director of Life and Health Ministries from the Office of National Mission; representatives from Lutherans For Life, the Commission on Theology and Church Relations, and each of the Synod’s seminaries; and rostered LCMS church workers or laymembers of LCMS congregations who are respected for their expertise in the fields of medicine, procreative science, theology, ethics, etc.

Unfortunately, the position of LCMS Director of Life and Health Ministries was vacant during the duration of the work of this task force. Also vacant at the beginning of the task force’s work was the position of Executive Director of the Office of National Mission. Full-time task force members, all appointed (per Res. 3-04) by the President of the Synod were:

- Rev. Dr. James Bachman, Concordia University Irvine, emeritus
- Dr. Debra Grime, OB/GYN Physician
- Dr. Donna Harrison, American Association of Pro-Life Obstetricians and Gynecologists
- Rev. Dr. Gilbert Meilaender, Senior Research Professor, Valparaiso University
- Rev. Dr. Joel Okamoto, Concordia Seminary (St. Louis)
- Dr. Andrea Pitkus, Commission on Theology and Church Relations (lay representative from the CTCR)
- Rev. Dr. John Pless, Concordia Theological Seminary (Fort Wayne)
- Rev. Michael Salemink, Lutherans For Life
- Ann Stillman, Concordia Plan Services (advisory member)
- Rev. Dr. Kevin Voss, Concordia Center for Bioethics, Concordia University Wisconsin
- Rev. Dr. James Bachman, Concordia University Irvine, emeritus
- Dr. Debra Grime, OB/GYN Physician
- Dr. Donna Harrison, American Association of Pro-Life Obstetricians and Gynecologists
- Rev. Dr. Gilbert Meilaender, Senior Research Professor, Valparaiso University
- Rev. Dr. Joel Okamoto, Concordia Seminary (St. Louis)
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- Rev. Dr. John Pless, Concordia Theological Seminary (Fort Wayne)
- Rev. Michael Salemink, Lutherans For Life
- Ann Stillman, Concordia Plan Services (advisory member)
- Rev. Dr. Kevin Voss, Concordia Center for Bioethics, Concordia University Wisconsin

The task force met three times: December 8–9, 2017; May 25–26, 2018; and September 28, 2018. Below is a summary of the discussion that took place at each of these meetings.

December 8–9, 2017: At its initial meeting on December 8–9, 2017, each member of the task force was given an opportunity to share his or her own thoughts and ideas about how the task force might best serve the church within the framework of the assignment given by the Synod, speaking from the vantage point of that individual’s own particular area(s) of expertise, interest, and concern. Questions posed were: What are the most pressing or critical issues? What resources would be most helpful in addressing them? Which LCMS individuals or entities are best equipped to produce such resources? What is the most appropriate target audience for such resources, and how can they most effectively be disseminated and used?

In the course of these conversations, the members discussed the breadth of the issues raised both directly and indirectly by Res. 3-04. Although the items raised all relate to human procreation and tend toward a consideration of technological “advances,” there are also underlying cultural assumptions and questions that challenge the Christian. There are also important terminological issues that need clarification, such as the fact that “conception” should be understood to mean the union of sperm and egg rather than implantation. The task force agreed that it was important to try to address “foundational matters” relative to these questions and assumptions. For example, the biblical view that parents are blessed with a child as a gift of God today faces a competing view wherein children are viewed more as a parental reproductive project and an entitlement. Toward this end, Dr. Meilaender was asked (and agreed) to prepare a brief paper on such “foundational issues” for consideration by the task force.

After seeking to address such substantive and foundational matters, the task force agreed to turn to a discussion of some of the moral and ethical questions about human procreation and the reproductive technology that is now in use. Toward this end, it asked several members of the task force to make presentations at the May meeting on certain specific issues such as procreation, medical advances in areas such as genomics, questions raised by medical consent forms, and questions and concerns about reproductive technologies such as in vitro fertilization. Following consideration and discussion of these issues at its May meeting, the task force resolved to begin the process of seeking to “identify actions leading to the production of appropriate LCMS responses to these issues ... with the CTCR and/or other appropriate LCMS entities” (Res. 3-04). Additional specific topics may include infertility, embryo adoption, and genetic therapy (CRISPR/Cas9), among others.

May 25–26, 2018: Prior to this meeting, a paper titled “The Child as a Gift of God,” authored by Dr. Meilaender at the request of the task force, was distributed to all members of the task force.
Considerable time was spent at this meeting reviewing this report, which was well received and prompted vigorous, substantive discussion. All members agreed that the paper succeeded in helpfully addressing both “foundational matters” and certain specific issues pertaining directly to the task force’s work, and that broader dissemination, study and discussion of the paper should be encouraged. At the same time, members were not asked or expected to endorse every point or conclusion expressed by Dr. Meilaender in his paper; this was clearly understood by members of the task force. Ultimately, the task force agreed to commend this report to the Synod in some way by means of an overture to the 2019 Synod convention to be drafted by staff and reviewed at the next meeting.

Also at the May meeting, the task force heard presentations (as requested) on the following topics:

- Concerns and challenges regarding medical consent forms (Dr. Grime)
- Concerns and challenges involving various aspects and methods of contraception (Dr. Harrison)
- Developments and challenges in the area of genomics (Dr. Pitkus)
- Questions and challenges in the area of in vitro fertilization (IVF) (Rev. Dr. Voss)

Lively and productive discussion accompanied each of these presentations.

Toward the end of the meeting, task force members compiled a list of specific issues to discuss at the next meeting, especially relative to the question raised by Res. 3-04 regarding the possible need for “the production of appropriate LCMS responses to these issues (reports, study documents, essays, other media and the like) with the CTCR and/or other appropriate LCMS entities.” It resolved to spend time at its third and final meeting (September 2018) considering possible overtures to the 2019 Synod convention that would make specific recommendations in this regard. Also at the end of this (May) meeting, Dr. Meilaender agreed to take into account comments and questions raised in the discussion of his paper, “The Child as a Gift of God,” and to consider making some modest revisions to his paper in light of certain of these comments and suggestions.

September 28, 2018: The task force heard brief reports from seminary representatives on the task force about the attention given to procreative questions and issues at their respective institutions. The task force returned to the list of issues compiled at the May 2018 meeting, and discussed the matter of bringing recommendations to the Synod regarding certain of these issues by way of overtures to the 2019 Synod convention. As a result of this discussion, specific recommendations to the Synod were incorporated into an overture prepared by the task force. Following review and discussion of the modest revisions of Dr. Meilaender’s paper “The Child as a Gift of God,” the task force included its commendation of the paper to the Synod for reflection, study and discussion as the first recommendation of the overture.

Included below are materials approved by the task force as part of its report to the 2019 Synod convention (i.e., Dr. Meilaender’s paper “The Child as a Gift of God” and an overture titled “To Give Guidance and Encourage Action on Beginning-of-Life Issues” containing specific recommendations to the Synod).

Joel D. Lehenbauer, Chairman

IV. The Child as a Gift of God

In the last half-century or so we have experienced what might well be called a revolution in reproduction. We are likely to describe it as a technological revolution, and it surely is that. But it is also—and perhaps more importantly—a revolution in our way of thinking about the relation between parents and children. Which came first—a changed way of thinking or technological development—is not easy to say. But, however exactly we tell the story, a commitment to the use of technologies of assisted reproduction is increasingly well established in our society and in many other societies throughout the world. Moreover, the goodness of such technologies is often taken for granted—and even commended—by many Christians. Might it be that sometimes our views are formed less by the structure of Christian belief than by our feelings and emotions? Or more by a desire for genetic connection than by the grace of Baptism that creates and sustains the church? This document is an invitation to reflection upon reproductive technologies in light of our belief that children are a gift of God.

The technologies of assisted reproduction

Artificial insemination has, of course, been used for a long time in animal breeding, and its use among human beings is more than a century old. The more far-reaching technological breakthrough came, however, with the procedure of in vitro fertilization (IVF), in which both sperm and ova are externalized and then joined in the laboratory, where fertilization takes place. The resulting embryo (or, more likely, embryos) can then be transferred to a woman’s uterus in the hope of achieving a pregnancy. The first child known to have been produced by means of IVF—called at that time the first “test-tube baby”—was born in 1978. Now, however, approximately four decades later, it is estimated that about 400,000 children are born worldwide each year by means of IVF.

IVF was first developed in order to assist married couples struggling with infertility. When people think of that as its purpose, they may easily see IVF as good and praiseworthy. For, whatever one’s reservations about the use of technology for reproductive purposes, sympathy for infertile couples is quite natural. This may be true especially for many Christians. Accustomed as we are to thinking of children (in the psalmist’s terms) as a “heritage of the Lord,” and sympathetic to the natural desire to have what we often call “a child of one’s own,” we may be reluctant to raise questions or concerns about the use of IVF. Surely, however, the technology has now developed (and will continue to develop) in such far-reaching ways that to think of it simply as help for infertile couples is to miss what is significant about the reproductive revolution. In fact, in the minds of many people it has no connection to the institution of marriage—that is, to the desire of a husband and wife to see their marriage express itself in a child who incarnates their one-flesh union. Rather, it is about individual desire to experience a certain kind of fulfillment. We need, therefore, to ask ourselves whether our understanding of the meaning of the presence of children is being formed by the basic Christian belief that a child is God’s gift to those who are married, or whether our attitudes and actions increasingly reflect a belief that what counts is satisfying the desire to have a child of one’s own (and, perhaps even, a particular sort of child).

IVF can and often does involve much more than simply taking sperm from a man and an ovum from his wife, uniting them in the laboratory, and then transferring the resulting embryo to the wife’s uterus. IVF can also be a way to produce children free of certain de-
fects or children of a desired sex. A couple or an individual desiring a child may commission others to fill some of the necessary roles. Thus, the sperm or the ova (or both) may come not from the commissioning parent(s) but from “donors” (as they are usually called, although often they have sold rather than donated their gametes). The embryo(s) produced in the laboratory—whether from one’s own or acquired gametes—may be transferred not to the woman who has commissioned the reproductive project but to a surrogate, who agrees to gestate the child and then give it after birth to the couple or the individual desiring a child.

Because more embryos may be produced in the laboratory than can safely be transferred to a woman’s uterus, the commissioning couple may decide to freeze the remaining surplus embryos. They may use them at a later date to try again to conceive a child, or they may never use them, leaving the embryos frozen indefinitely, or discarded, or perhaps made available for use in research. An embryo that is produced in the laboratory but not implanted in a woman’s uterus is often referred to as a “preimplantation embryo,” as if it were simply an accident of nature that this embryo was somewhere other than in the womb of its mother. We should, however, train ourselves to call such embryos “unimplanted embryos,” making clear that their condition is no accident but, rather, one that we have willed and chosen. Such frozen, unimplanted embryos now number in the hundreds of thousands, and our society seems willing to permit that number to continue to grow.

Many of these frozen embryos will never be needed or wanted by those who produced them in an effort to achieve a pregnancy. What, then, is to be done with them? There is no satisfactory answer to that question. As long as we permit, and even encourage, freezing of embryos, we create for ourselves a moral problem for which there is no good solution. Leaving embryos frozen indefinitely seems unsatisfactory, but using them for research—which will inevitably involve their destruction—would be wrong. They have already been used once as a means to someone else’s reproductive project; surely once is enough.

One proposed solution to the problem of surplus, frozen embryos—a solution that has been attractive to some Christians—has been called embryo adoption. This means simply that a woman (and, generally, her husband) make use of IVF technology to gestate someone else’s frozen and now unwanted embryo, hoping to bring that child to term and raise it as their own. No doubt those who do this are often moved by several considerations—both desiring to become parents and wanting to offer the possibility of continued life to an abandoned embryo. For some it may also be a way to deal with infertility. Although we cannot say that such embryo adoption is wrong, we can hardly recommend it when we remind ourselves of the millions of orphaned and abandoned children in the world who need a familial home. If we are searching for children in need of adoption—children who need but lack a family committed to their wellbeing, children who are likely to suffer continued harm unless they find such a family—these children are all around us in our society. If we have the resources and the ability to adopt, it seems better for us to direct that energy toward children already born who need a place of familial belonging.

More recently and increasingly, young, single women are using IVF technology to take the further step of freezing their unfertilized eggs. They do this not because they experience fertility problems but as a kind of insurance against any future health or reproductive problem, or simply in order to have time to pursue career opportunities before committing to marriage and parenthood. Closely connected to the practice of IVF is the use of genetic testing. Our society has by now come to regard genetic testing of fetuses in utero as almost routine. Amniocentesis was available in the 1950s and chorionic villus sampling (taken from placental tissue) in the 1980s. Still more recently, Noninvasive Prenatal Testing, which can isolate fetal DNA in blood drawn from the mother, can be done early in the first trimester of pregnancy, and, at least in principle, it could enable the entire genome of a fetus in utero to be sequenced. (It has also, we might note, been extraordinarily profitable, with worldwide revenue in 2016 estimated at more than a billion dollars.) Of course, at least at the present time, no treatment is available for most of the conditions that can be detected by means of prenatal screening of fetuses in utero. The only “treatment” that can avoid the birth of a child who will suffer from disabilities and genetic defects is abortion, which eliminates suffering only by eliminating the sufferer.

Preimplantation genetic diagnosis (PGD)—that is, genetic testing in the laboratory of the unimplanted embryo—moves the testing process back still further, prior even to the establishment of a pregnancy. It is now possible to identify in an unimplanted embryo hundreds of disease mutations as well as its chromosomal makeup. This allows the commissioning parent(s) to select only some of the embryos for implantation, avoiding in particular any that may have genetic defects (and, of course, any of what they regard as the “wrong” sex).

In principle, therefore, it is now possible for a child to be born with as many as five people who might be called its “parents” (the donors of sperm and ovum, the surrogate who carried the child during pregnancy, and two commissioning parents who undertook the reproductive project in order to have a child to rear). We stand on the brink of a world in which we will hardly know how to name some of the relationships produced by technological reproduction. A woman can give birth to her own “grandchild” by gestating a fetus produced in the laboratory from gametes taken from her child and his or her spouse. People can “have children” posthumously if their frozen embryos are implanted and gestated in someone else after their death. A woman lacking ovaries can receive an ovary transplant from an aborted fetus, in which case that fetus could become the genetic “mother” of a child born to the woman. By means of eggs made in the laboratory from induced pluripotent stem cells (iPSCs) it may soon be possible to avoid the costly and medically burdensome process of retrieving eggs from women. And given that sperm are readily available, this would mean that an individual or a couple could produce many embryos from which to choose. Perhaps even—it is too soon to say for certain—researchers may be able to use iPSCs to make sperm from a woman’s cells or ovum from a man’s cells, meaning that a child could be produced using sperm and egg derived from cells of the same “parent.” And it is not impossible to imagine that—as has already been done with a lamb—a child could be gestated entirely in an artificial womb. Thus, without any bodily connection of child to mother, we would have achieved in fact what Aldous Huxley only imagined in Brave New World.

Competing narratives: procreation vs. reproduction

Clearly, two quite different and competing ways of understanding the bond between parents and children are at work in our society; we tell two different stories about this most basic of human relationships. It is worth considering how they differ and the implications of each.

One story, deeply embedded in Christian teaching and belief, understands the child as a blessing given to a man and woman who
have given themselves in love to each other. Aiming to express their love for each other as fully and completely as they can, they sometimes find that, in the providence of God, their love-giving has also been life-giving. Then they receive the child not simply as a product of their aims and intentions, but as a gift and a mystery, springing from their embrace—a blessing love gives into their arms. They might well say what the biblical writer says of Hannah after the birth of Samuel: “The Lord remembered her.”

Such an understanding of human procreation shaped Christian thinking about parents and children. Moreover, when taken seriously it can provide young men and women in our society something they are often lacking today and desperately need—namely, a “cultural script” that helps them understand both their individual identities and their relation to each other. They can learn to see their relation not merely as a matter for choice but as entry into a pattern for life given by God. They can learn that the erotic desire they experience for each other is also a desire to give birth, to turn outward as a couple. They can learn to think of the body not as an instrument used by a person to produce desired outcomes, but, rather, as the very place in which we are personally present to others in friendship and in love. Moreover, the script they enact is not just a natural fact. It has its basis in the mystery of God’s own creative work. The opening chapter of the Gospel of John is clear that our world was created in and through Jesus, the One who is God’s Word of love to us. So also, our own procreation, growing out of the giving and receiving of love between a man and a woman, can image the mystery of God’s creative work.

According to the other, competing story, which is becoming increasingly influential in our culture, parents are simply people who undertake what we might call a reproductive project. The purpose of that project is to produce a child of their own—that is, one who satisfies their desire for a child to rear, a desire that they feel must be satisfied for life to be fulfilling and complete. If for one reason or another they are unable or unwilling to produce a child of their own through sexual intercourse, they can have recourse to technological means of assisted reproduction to accomplish that goal, and they can (if needed) hire a woman to serve as a surrogate, using her body as an instrument to gestate the child.

If we think only in terms of results, we may suppose that they have simply found another way of doing the same thing others do through ordinary procreation—namely, have a child. In fact, however, although a child may result from both sexual intercourse and various forms of assisted reproduction, these are not simply different ways of doing the same thing. In the first, spouses align themselves with God’s act of creation in love. They do not suppose that the person exists apart from the body. They do not use the body as an instrument to produce a desired result. Rather, they simply give themselves to each other in love—not just in spirit but also in body. And then, sometimes, God blesses such mutual love with the gift of a child.

Thus we have two stories marked by different ways of thinking about our bodies and our children. Is the body the place of personal presence, in which we give ourselves in love? Or is the body an instrument we use to accomplish our goals? Is the child a product of our own will and choosing, one whom we have made? Or is the child one who is begotten, springing from our mutual love and our equal in dignity?

When we use our bodies as instruments for reproduction, we learn to think of ourselves less as the embodied creatures God has made and more as free spirits—detached from the body and free to use it as an object for achieving whatever purposes we desire. Then it is hard not to think of the desired child as a product we have made—and, quite possibly, made to meet desired specifications. Moreover, we may then have no reason to refrain from using gametes acquired from third parties or from hiring a surrogate to gestate the desired child; these may, after all, simply be among the necessary means of production. Indeed, Christian women have sometimes been eager to serve as surrogates, thinking of their fertility simply as a capacity they can give to others. Compassion for those who are infertile becomes then a formless emotion, no longer taking its shape from God’s own creative work. For if we have come to think of ourselves as free spirits who may choose to use the body for whatever good purposes we have in mind, it may be that our churches have failed to teach us how rightly to honor our creation as embodied persons.

God so structures human life that marital love serves both to strengthen the bond between spouses and, sometimes, to give rise to the next generation. We might say that in both the love-giving and the life-giving dimensions of marriage the most basic gift God gives a husband and wife is the gift of a shared time. They are given time to learn what fidelity in love means; time for each to learn to care for another who is as different as their bodies are different; time to shape a future together; time for their union to give rise, by God’s providence, to the next generation; time for their union to turn outward in other shared ways as well. The companionship of marriage is, therefore, much more than a series of isolated sexual acts; it is a shared history within the time God gives us. Likewise, when we think of the gift of children, we should see them within the context of that gift of time, as the fruit not of isolated sexual acts—as if a marriage were a series of one-night stands—but of the marriage as a whole. Hence, although contraception (for which different methods are available) may be misused, it can also be rightly used when husband and wife seek to shape their time together in response to God’s calling. The shared history of each married couple, the time God gives them, will have its own particular shape, with children differently spaced and in different numbers, in ways appropriate to their own particular and peculiar life together. Each married couple will need to attend to the shape of that shared life; there is no one shape that fits all. We can only say that their shared time should be marked by companionship that is faithful for the whole of life, a companionship that turns outward to the world—usually, though not necessarily, through the gift of a child or children born to them or adopted by them.

A child of one’s own?

When married couples who hope for children experience infertility, it is natural that they should feel sadness; for erotic love naturally desires to give birth. It is natural for them to hope that their mutual embrace will be creative, will give rise to a child who embodies the oneness they share. It is natural that they (and, no doubt, their parents who want to be grandparents) should value the human significance of the lines of kinship and descent that locate us in the world. And it is not surprising that, driven by desire for what they think of as a child of their own, they may consider turning to technologies of assisted reproduction.

To be sure, an infertile couple could turn to IVF, use no third-party gametes and no surrogate, implant all the embryos produced, and refrain from using PGD to screen those embryos. Perhaps in such a case the deeper significance of procreation will not have been lost, although even such a limited use of IVF risks beginning to think of the child not simply as gift but as product. Moreover, we
should realize how rare such an approach would be, how difficult it would be for a couple to set themselves against the momentum that beginning a process of IVF involves, how hard it would be to resist the pressure to use acquired gametes, to produce additional embryos that are not implanted, to screen those embryos for defects, or to secure the service of a surrogate. Part of the sadness of life is that we sometimes cannot and at other times ought not do what we deeply desire to do. If technologies of assisted reproduction often distort the meaning of the presence of children, we should not allow a sense of desperation to tempt us to transform the meaning of procreation into a technical act of reproduction.

Although we recognize and acknowledge the sadness of infertility, Christians have good reasons to resist the desperate desire for a child of one’s own. In the first place, we should be clear that there is for Christians no continuing obligation to have children. The one-flesh union of husband and wife should always turn outward; a child is the way in which that most naturally happens, but it is not the only way for them to do so. The divine word “be fruitful and multiply,” spoken at the creation, is as much a blessing as a command. And insofar as it is a command, it has been reshaped and transformed in the history of redemption. Because The Child has been born—that is, the promised Child in whom human life has been created anew—we have no need to produce generation after generation of children.

Moreover, those who are unmarried or childless, whether that state is deliberately chosen or an accident of one’s personal history, have an important role in the life of the church. In their singleness they remind us that the wedding feast of the Lamb is something quite different from the restoration of our earthly marriages; in their childlessness they remind us that the church grows not because of our natural capacity to give birth but through the grace of adoption as God’s children. Theirs is a special vocation in service to the whole church.

Indeed, the antidote to a desperate search for a child of one’s own is given us in Baptism. There we learn to take seriously that, as St. Paul writes, “flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God.” There we relinquish any claim to a child of our own and, having given it up, receive the child back as one before whom we now stand as the representatives and mediators of God’s covenant love and care. Therefore, it is neither biology nor genetics that is at the heart of parenthood; rather, it is the lifelong commitment to be a parent to the child whom God has adopted as His own and now places into our hands. Knowing ourselves to be God’s children only by adoption, we can rejoice in the truth that, whether our children have been given us through natural birth or through adoption, they are not our possession but a trust given us by God.

Conclusion
We can draw together these several lines of discussion and summarize what it means to think of a child as God’s gift if we think of children within three angles of vision: in the light of our created nature; in the light of the new creation into which we are baptized; and in the light of the redeemed creation God promises, when all of us will share as members of Christ’s Body in the marriage feast of the Lamb.

We are created as embodied creatures, occupying a fixed place within the generations of humankind. Lines of kinship and descent locate and identify us, and the sexual union of a man and a woman is naturally ordered toward the birth of children. Hence, the child is less a product of our will and choice than a gift God bestows on the embodied love of a man and a woman. In this way God continues to sustain and care for the creation.

Nevertheless, that natural kinship is always in need of transformation. We need to be shaped in a way of life that does not think of children as our possessions. Therefore, within the church we bring children for Baptism into the new life we share in Jesus, the crucified and risen One. In handing the child over for Baptism, parents acknowledge that, in the most fundamental sense, this child is not “their own.” The kinship that identifies us is not determined by DNA; it is the life we share in the new community that is Christ’s Body.

Finally, we live toward a day in which the creation redeemed in Christ will be fully perfected. Even now we are given a hint of that day in the Eucharistic meal the church shares. And in that redeemed creation all of us—husbands and wives, parents and children—will share as brothers and sisters in the great Eucharist that is the wedding feast of Christ and His church.

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V. Report of the 2016 Res. 4-03B Task Force on Recognized Service Organizations

1. Revitalizing the Recognized Service Organization Program

Taking note of the Synod’s long history of recognizing contributions made by service organizations (RSOs), as well as the changing needs of the Synod and of social service organizations (especially with changes in governmental regulation and oversight), and the concerns raised over the years as to the continued health and usefulness of the RSO program, the 2016 convention of the Synod (Proceedings, pp. 146–7) assembled and charged the 2016 Res. 4-03B Task Force:

- To review and report on the original purpose and intent of the RSO program and its predecessors.
- To determine the needs of and benefits to the Synod with respect to the RSO program.
- To identify the best model for the Synod to engage with organizations that (1) foster the mission and ministry of the church and that (2) engage in programs that are in harmony with the programs of the Synod.
- To 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.
- To recommend appropriate changes to the LCMS By-laws, as needed.
- To 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.

2019 Convention Workbook
As directed by the noted resolution, the task force comprised:
Chief Mission Officer Kevin Robson (Chairman); Secretary of the Synod John Sias (Secretary); Chief Administrative Officers Ron Schultz and (subsequently) Frank Simek; Office of National Mission Executive Directors Bart Day and (subsequently) Bob Zago;
Recognized Service Organization Program Director Dorothy Krans; Office of the President representative Barb Below, Assistant to the President; Council of Presidents Representative Dan Gilbert (President, Northern Illinois District, now retired); and RSO Chief Executive Officers Ron Drews (Luth. Social Services of S. California) and Max Phillips (Lutheran Family Services of Iowa and Perry Lutheran Home; Chairman, LCEF Board of Directors). The group met six times during the triennium, with subcommittees meeting several additional times, and with information and feedback being gathered from program constituents, both in the Synod and reflecting the RSO population. This report, reflecting the consensus of the task force members at the conclusion of the work, is our attempt to achieve these broad and apparently counter-indicative goals:

- First, to improve the connection of organizations with the Synod (congregations, schools, and institutions) and their respect for and embrace of the doctrine and practice of the Synod, so that the congregations’ synodical objectives are advanced through the RSO program.
- At the same time, to recognize that organizations also relate to important partners in public agencies and funding sources and do some of their work under restrictive regulatory domains—some of which are increasingly disposed to impose on charitable work an ethic that is foreign to the church.

The task force believes, fundamentally, that the success of the RSO program has been challenged by its excessive uniformity. Its policies and procedures require clear differentiation in at least three dimensions:

- Organizational work: The program involves, under one set of standards, monolithically, too many disparate types of organizations (witness, mercy, education).
- Organizational governance and mission: Some organizations are closely held by the church, clearly and fully profess a single confession, and have work closely aligned with the Gospel mission. Others, while operating alongside the Gospel mission, perform civic good works in which cooperation-in-externals is the model. These (often pan-Lutheran) organizations may have governance structures reflecting cooperation in externals with those of other confessions—some differences of which relate manifestly to natural law questions and mercy work. They may also suffer adverse regulation or strictures that often accompany funding or reimbursement by governments.
- Organizational scope: The program requires significant centralized administrative overhead (and therefore distances supervision of status) even in the case of organizations that have decidedly local impact and would benefit from closer and more frequent interaction with those providing ecclesiastical oversight (a term defined precisely in Section 6 below).

A lack of differentiation along these three axes has increased administrative expense, bred confusion, and limited the value of participation in the program for organizations of all types, as none has received just what is proper to its situation. A proper intention to include as many allied organizations as possible has led to a perceived default “least common denominator” approach which is not maximally helpful to any of them—or to the Synod or its congregations.

Commonly raised and long-term issues have surrounded the questions of RSOs—especially those having a diversity of confession among the leadership. What are the implications today of “pan-Lutheran” organizations calling rostered workers of the Synod? Concerns have also been raised from time to time regarding the supervision, in general, of RSO called workers. Some RSOs have also come to have vast geographical scope, operating across multiple districts. Some are involved in church planting, provision of pastoral service to congregations, etc., sometimes challenging the practical ability of a local district president to exercise effective oversight. Regarding call and supervision of rostered workers employed by RSOs, the proposal aims for clearer expectations of doctrinal and practical fidelity, increased protection for workers, and a more explicit role for district presidents in supporting the call process (areas also being addressed in an independent proposal from the Council of Presidents and Commission on Handbook, dealing with call and roster matters). On the threefold differentiation above the proposal builds—or builds toward—solutions for these issues.

2. Aspects of Proposed RSO Program

Revitalization

Fully aware that detailed definition of the program must rely on policy bodies (the LCMS Board of Directors and mission boards) and the mission offices of the Synod (proposed Bylaw 6.2.3), and that this process may take some time, the task force is submitting an overture proposing bylaw changes with the following aims:

- Clarifying the Objectives of the RSO program: The RSO program, as an activity of the Synod, must be broadly shaped by Synod’s Constitution (especially the Preamble and Articles II and III) and Bylaws in addition to those of section 6.2, dealing explicitly with RSOs: those dealing with Synod’s purpose, structure, and function “in support of and on behalf of Synod’s congregations” (Bylaws 1.1.1, 1.3.1, 1.3.3, 1.4.1); those delineating the function of conventions, including the setting of triennial mission and ministry priorities (Bylaws 3.1.1, 4.2.1 [d], 5.3.4); and those laying out the function of Synod’s mission offices, with which RSOs coordinate and by which they are recognized (Bylaws 3.8.2.7, 3.8.2.6). At a fundamental level, recognition that an RSO “extend[s] the mission and ministry of the Synod” (Bylaw 6.2.2) requires positive definition of that mission and ministry (a task aided by the 2010 restructuring of the Synod and its creation of convention-determined triennial mission and ministry priorities) and concrete assessment of how an RSO’s work relates...
b) Differentiating for Diversity—Nature of Mission: The RSO program should continue under its current, well-known name but with RSOs classified, according to the type of work they do, into three fundamental categories, enabling appropriate standards, policies, and practices to be specialized to best serve each. These, including Witness Service Organizations (WSOs), Educational Service Organizations (ESOs) and Mercy Service Organizations (MSOs), are detailed below under “Segmentation of the Revitalized RSO Program” (see also proposed Bylaw 6.2.2).

An important beneficial aspect of this differentiation is that it allows identification and recognition of RSO ministries in which cooperation-in-externals is possible, or in which external inputs are economically necessary but where such inputs limit the degree to which the church can dictate the totality of activity. This is not possible in the WSO area, which is closely tied to the church’s pure proclamation. Considering present RSO population, to a great extent the MSO-type participant organizations and to some extent the ESO participant organizations are already divided into two broad areas of ministry: one in which the church acts freely with its own resources (and to some extent, among its own people); the other, in which the organization leverages external resources or operates in the regulated public sphere—perhaps on a much larger possible scale, but suffering the constraints inherent to such an arrangement. This leads to another dimension of differentiation, applicable only to these two areas:

c) Differentiating for Diversity—Mission—Performing to Mission—Multiplying: With regard to educational (ESO) and mercy (MSO) organizations, the task force notes an existing diversity in the degree to which the doctrine and practice of the church can be at the evident forefront of an RSO’s work. Some RSOs are governed and funded by the church and suffer little or no odious regulation, thus being able to operate in all respects in an unconditioned way, “from the strength that God supplies” and “as the Spirit moves.” Others leverage government funding, or for other reasons labor under the regime of government regulation. Their choice in any number of difficult questions is probably not as simple as whether to “follow the ways of the world, instead of the ways of the church.” In many cases, access to (or capacity for) the broad swath of mercy work the organization was formed to accomplish relies on accepting sometimes odious governmental regulation or government funds with odious strings, or perhaps on maintaining partnerships with confessional bodies increasingly divergent from ours on matters not only of the Gospel but of revealed and even natural Law. (On this issue, of how RSOs and program administrators navigate such a situation, and how the proposal will help both, see the excursus below.)

The distinction of tiers of RSO membership (proposed Bylaw 6.2.2.1) is intended to

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differentiate between, on the one hand, those RSOs (Tier I) that have the ability to advance the mission of the church purely and explicitly in every circumstance, positively advancing our churchly confession, performing the mission of the church, so that these may be urged to that standard of practice, and, on the other hand, those (Tier II) operating under such regulatory and financial constraints that the doctrine and teaching of the church cannot be at the overt forefront of all activities. Nonetheless, these latter are recognized for multiplying the mission of the church. (The distinction is not made in ignorance of the fact, noted above, that direct confrontation of sin with the Law or a correction of client’s errant belief is not always what is immediately called for.) While the word tier may suggest degrees of value, that is not the intended sense. One may picture a multi-tier wedding cake, in which the upper layers may be closer to the figure of the bride and groom at the top—but the lower are much larger in diameter and ultimately feed more guests. Organizations operating in challenged, but larger, domains are of immense value to the church’s mercy and in supporting and surrounding the church’s nearer and higher work of the proclamation of Law and Gospel.

Tier II organizations are expected to demonstrably “do the best they can with what they’ve got” in the mercy sphere (suffering contrary forces rather than joining, endorsing, or welcoming them) and demonstrably to do what they do in coordination with congregations and schools so that their churchly mission is multiplied. They may operate with one foot in the kingdom of the left, suffering what such a foot suffers, but they have the left foot in that game in order to do the mercy work of (and ultimately, to seek to advance) the foot of the kingdom of the right. It may be the best they can do is carry out some merciful purpose in a moral fashion, and to do it in proximity to congregational ministries of the Synod with more freedom to proclaim. These would be on the far “mission-multiplying” end of the spectrum but can still be of great value—if such concern for augmenting the mission of the church is in earnest—to the Synod’s congregations and mission to the world.

An MSO, for example, that uses public funds to aid the homeless might embrace the congregations referring clients to its services, helping them to understand not only how to help their communities’ homeless access the MSO’s social welfare services, but how to invite those served fully into the life of the church. As one CEO put it, “an MSO [by itself] can reach out with services but cannot bring people into the community, the church, that will ‘be here for you until you die.’” The MSO can foster opportunities, however, for its partner congregations to do that—and this is a fundamental part of its reason for existence and recognition. Another perspective is that an MSO exists to “wrap the church around the community,” not simply to exist “because it exists for the public service.” The task force recommends that this aspect of an MSO’s work—its tangible connection with the “ultimate ministry” of the Synod’s congregations—be much more explicitly and concretely sought, demonstrated, and cultivated—especially in Tier II, where this “mutual benefit” might be understood as the chief reason for an organization’s recognition in a challenged and conflicted domain.

The Synod, through its RSO program, has entered with these organizations into feeling their way through such a conflicted situation—working with the organizations to be faithful in the face of challenge, to carry out the mercy of the church in spite of weakness, and—in an especially important way—to coordinate their works of mercy (which may not be able to be explicitly advancing or proclaiming the ultimate goods the church has) in near proximity to and in direction towards the “Word- and Word-and-Sacrament” ministries of the Synod.

These two tiers are distinguished only for Mercy and Educational Service Organizations. There are, for obvious reasons, no “Tier II Witness Service Organizations” (such might be examples of “heterodox tract and mission societies” prohibited by Const. Art. VI 2). Even among Mercy (MSO) and Educational (ESO) categories, the intention is not to create a new space in which “anything goes,” but to acknowledge frankly the present situation, so that the Synod can make appropriate and thoughtful decisions about how and why it relates to these organizations that are more subject to constraint and compromise, and what are the benefits and risks. This second tier is an uncomfortable territory, certainly for the organizations and also for the Synod. It is not, though, an area from which the task force feels—on account of that discomfort—the Synod should hastily retreat, but should instead stay and fight alongside those who, in challenged circumstances, aim to perform real mercy maximally within their constraints, to “do what comes to hand and to do it with vigor.” Acknowledging the existence of this tier and its reality among the current RSO organizations is a first step toward a frank, lively, God-pleasing, and mutually strengthening conversation—of which this report is not the end—between the Synod and...
such organizations about doing God’s work in compromised circumstances. These concerns are certainly not confined to a few RSOs.

The task force notes that inclusion of Tier II organizations in the RSO program is not without risk. One fundamental benefit of RSO participation for Tier I organizations is a united “religious freedom” defense against the imposition of odious regulation or the demands of social pressure. The inclusion of Tier II organizations that may (to one extent or another) bend to such forces may complicate the argument, on behalf of Tier I organizations, that the doctrine and practice of our religion requires them to act differently than the culture expects. This tension is by no means new, nor does the task force consider that it has exhausted its discussion.

d) Differentiating for Diversity—Scope of Operations: In a third dimension of diversification, for organizations operating within one geographical district, within the various subtypes of the program, instruments will be developed eventually to shift the bulk of evaluation, visitation, and oversight work with RSOs from the Synod to the relevant district, while retaining, for the sake of consistency and assurance of standards, final approval authority in the Synod RSO office. (As noted above, for many schools, those governed solely by congregation(s) of the LCMS, there will be no need to apply for RSO status at all. These will simply be recognized by the district, on the basis of an instrument, and reported to the Synod. This can take place under present bylaws and, the task force suggests, should be facilitated and urged as soon as possible.)

For other local or district-centric organizations, district presidents have always had essential input into the application of such an organization, but they and their staff will now gradually come to have a formal administrative role in completing, with the organization applying or renewing, an instrument that explores corporate governance, doctrinal and practical issues, policy, and material instances of cooperation and coordination with local congregations, schools, and agencies of the Synod. The final decision to grant or withdraw status, and the making of the legal agreement involved, remains with the Synod office, but the bulk of the contact is rendered more local, increasing the possible frequency, volume, and value of that contact, and strengthening the ties of a local organization with the district that is “Synod in that place” (proposed Bylaw 6.2.4).

Such an instrument would maintain and build on the present elements of RSO evaluation and be supported by the Synod RSO office as districts and organizations have questions about the process and associated standards, or as new questions arise. The Synod RSO office would have the bulk of its time freed to deal deeply with these challenges, which are of some frequency, and would retain the coordinative role that has been found to be so essential to the proper functioning of the program. Staff time will also be freed to extend and improve upon the opportunities for growth and interaction extended through the program to current and prospective RSOs. One possible component is the creation, at the district level, of “RSO committees,” like the bylaw-required constitutional committees that already exist, to assist district presidents in their work of assisting in the administration of the RSO program for local or district-centric RSOs.

The sharing of the administrative burden (and opportunities for growth and nurture) of the RSO program with the respective districts will take time to develop—and will better develop naturally over time than all at once in untried and overly-specific bylaws. The task force proposes that the LCMS Board of Directors, mission boards, and RSO Office work gradually with the districts to decentralize and enhance the interaction with organizations—the direction being established, but the pace and plan being allowed to develop organically.

e) Ecclesiastical Oversight by Districts and Cross-District RSOs: While RSOs operate with freedom and independence in their mission and governance, they do so as subject, like all members and agencies of the Synod, to the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions, and they do so in proximity to the congregational and other ministries of the church. Those entrusted with ecclesiastical supervision in the districts of the Synod need more explicit encouragement and support in their role of oversight of these organizations’ activities in relation to the church. Proposed bylaw language provides explicitly for ecclesiastical oversight (oversight) is “to monitor; to make inquiry and receive a response thereto; to make suggestions; to bring concerns to the attention of a higher authority” [Bylaw 1.2.1 (o)], in this case the LCMS RSO status-granting office; ecclesiastical oversight is oversight, in particular, of the organization’s relationship to the church) of RSO activities within a district by that district’s president, even if the organization is headquartered elsewhere. This would be in addition to the ecclesiastical supervision (Bylaw 1.2.1 [j]) that president already has over the individual, rostered members of the Synod employed by the RSO within his district. In the
overture, note proposed Bylaws 6.2.1 (b–d). Uniformity of approach across districts is important to cross-district RSOs. The Task Force would commend this as an important topic of discussion for the Council of Presidents.

f) Clarifying Calls by RSOs: With regard to calls extended on behalf of the church (specifically, on behalf of the congregations of the Synod as a whole) by RSOs, there have been many questions over time. The recognition of calls by RSOs as “regular calls,” to be treated as such and accorded active roster status, has long been accepted in the Synod on the general argument that the Synod authorizes the RSOs to act, in this respect, in the name and in the authority of the Synod’s congregations. “The church” is the authority extending these calls “through” the RSOs. Something that has not been addressed explicitly is how those RSOs that are governed by those of different confessions (the pan-Lutheran organizations) extend calls under this theory—the same board extending calls sometimes to workers of one confession, and sometimes, another. The task force, not desiring to short-circuit a necessary and fruitful, thorough investigation of the doctrine of the call as it relates to such organizations (with regard especially to the Office of the Public Ministry but also as it relates to the auxiliary/commissioned offices, which also are subject to the confessional standard of the Synod), determined not to propose restricting the authority to make such calls, but to more explicitly regulate what constitutes a regular call in such a circumstance, and to involve the district president who would assume supervision more explicitly in that determination (proposed Bylaws 6.2.2.2 and 1.10.2).

In the proposal, all RSO calls are conducted in consultation with the district president who will assume supervision of the worker and are also under the stipulation, to be stated in the call documents, that the RSO expects the worker to perform his or her ministry fully and without compromise according to the scriptural and confessional standards of the Synod.

It is noted at the same time that a district can endorse a particular position for which a call is not possible, recognizing that a worker’s ministry is possible to be carried out in that circumstance, although an ordinary call has not been and cannot be extended by the employer. The endorsement of a “specialized ministry” position by the district grants the worker active roster status, even in the absence of a call (Bylaw 2.11.1 [j]). This is often done for chaplains in state prisons, public hospitals, etc., that have employment and the opportunity to carry out Word or Word-and-Sacrament ministry, but not a regular call from an eligible calling body. It could also be used in the situation of an organization unwilling or unable to extend a call under the above rules, or for a worker employed prior to their adoption.

Church workers called by RSOs, unlike those called by congregations or non-RSO schools, are not yet covered by the Synod’s dispute resolution process. There is presently no recourse to that system of Christian reconciliation in the event of issues surrounding the worker’s call. Proposed bylaws would change this, requiring an RSO to agree to submit to the dispute resolution process as a condition of its being able to call a rostered church worker (a condition of participation to be elaborated in the RSO Agreement). As the call extended by an RSO is recognized by virtue of its being on behalf of the church, the church has a proper role in resolving disputes arising out of the call. (Or, put another way, the right to call cannot be conferred by the Synod on an RSO apart from the responsibility to address disputes with the one called in a churchly manner and according to the Synod’s process: “Fitness for ministry and other theological matters must be determined within the church,” Bylaw 1.10.1.1) This would provide protections both for workers and for calling organizations and increase the comparability of an RSO call with one extended by an agency, congregation, or school of the Synod.

g) Triennial RSO Conference in the Non-Convention Year: There could be a significant advantage to the Synod, to the RSOs, and to the programmatic work of both, in holding a regular gathering of Synod offices and agencies with the RSOs. This could be a venue for coordination of programs, sharing of best practices, continuing education on governance and regulatory topics, mutual support and consolation in the face of cultural shifts and ministry challenges, etc. Funding could be through grants and/or through a sliding registration fee based on annual organization budget. In addition to such a conference, or as an alternative format, it was suggested that occasional webinars might serve the purpose of fostering growth in the program and the exchange of ideas among organizations. Such events might prove a key part of a more interactive and influential RSO program. The task force therefore recommends such a conference be attempted, while leaving feasibility and implementation to be developed.

h) Recovery of Program Cost / Optimization of Program Effort: As RSO recognition offers substantial benefits to the organizations recognized, and as the process of recognition itself is a valuable conversation with the Synod as
to a mutually beneficial relationship, it would be reasonable for the cost to the Synod of maintaining and enhancing this process (staffing, travel, technology) to be at least partially recouped. The task force suggests implementing policies that allow for an appropriate fee structure, to be implemented over time by the LCMS RSO Office, to help underwrite the cost of an enhanced interaction between RSOs and the LCMS RSO Office. At the same time, the administrative burden of the program is to be reduced by dealing otherwise with LCMS-only school associations and by (eventually) relying more on districts to conduct the initial assessments of local RSOs. The result will be more, and more meaningful, LCMS RSO interaction and programming for the national RSOs. The development of a detailed fee structure is beyond the scope of this task force. The development of some mechanism, however, seems necessary if the value the program offers is to be substantially increased.

i) Adjustment for Synod Restructuring: The proposal updates the RSO bylaws, as needed, to reflect the 2010 restructuring of the Synod.

j) Opportunity for Closer Coordination: The task force observed that RSOs often have a challenge to find quality staff—from CEO on down—who are also strong in our Christian confession. To find, that is, the sort of staff who will “wrap the church around the community” through the work of the organization. While there isn’t “a bylaw for that,” one strong hope of the task force is that the revitalization of the whole RSO program will encourage church workers to consider fulfilling their ministries with the organizations, and that it will lead to cooperative training programs with Synod’s colleges and universities, designed to provide the staff the organizations need.

k) Opportunities for Enhanced Offerings: The task force noted opportunities for development of better resources explaining to constituents what recognition means, what opportunities and connections are available in the RSO universe, and what services and service opportunities RSOs offer and how to access them. Post-convention, Reporter and Witness features, in print and online, might reintroduce the Synod to its program and lead to an integrated communications plan designed to highlight RSOs and build vital relationships throughout the Synod.

3. Segmentation of the Revitalized RSO Program

This proposal suggests differentiating among, under the existing RSO umbrella, three fundamental types of work for which an organization might be recognized:

3.1 Witness Service Organization (WSOs)

WSOs (proposed Bylaw 6.2.2 [a]) engage in or directly support Gospel proclamation. Examples include organizations engaging in Word- or Word-and-Sacrament ministry (chaplaincy), religious media/programming, mission society activity, support of specific missions, mission-and-ministry training, church-worker professional development, or church-worker care. The Synod has recognized WSOs because of their alignment with and extension of the Synod’s constitutional objectives (Const. Art. III) 1–3 and 6–10, and especially with triennial mission priorities 1–2 and 4–7 (see 2016 Res. 4-02A, Proceedings, 145–6).

Witness organizations, due to the nature of their work, can be recognized only in the “nearer” tier of connection to churchly confession and governance. They must be governed strictly by members of LCMS and partner member congregations and are held to the highest standards, to faithfully, exclusively, and fully advance the doctrine and practice of the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions.

The principal changes recommended for these organizations are evident in the bylaw proposal, and generally relate to the enhanced ecclesiastical oversight of organization activities by the districts in which they are undertaken. In addition to an unconditional expectation of doctrinal and practical faithfulness, it is also expected of WSOs that they intentionally and responsively pursue coordination with the district, national, and international “witness” programs of the Synod.

3.1.1 Existing Types of WSO Activity

Descriptions are based on activities reported by existing RSOs that fall into the WSO domain. Italicized items are the presently available service description codes, devised some time ago by the RSO steering committee. As the relative dearth of italicized entries indicates, these categories are ripe for revision, especially with regard to this category of RSO.

- **Chaplaincy**
- **Religious Media/Programming:** Broadcast Ministry; Publishing / Translation of Religious Materials (print/online); Bible instruction
- **Mission Society** (40 organizations: 15 international, 5 report church planting, 6 report calling/sending workers) / **Ministry Support:** Campus Ministry (8); Deaf Ministry; Inner City/Urban Ministry; Native American Ministry; Youth Ministry; Short-Term Mission Teams; Evangelism; Partner Church Monetary Support; Mission-and-Ministry Granting
- **Mission-and-Ministry Training:** Evangelism Training; Catechetical Training; Discipleship Training; Ethnic Ministry Training; Clinical Pastoral Education (formerly under Life Enrichment); Church Worker Professional Development
3.1.2 The WSO in the Restructured RSO Program

A WSO is governed exclusively by those in doctrinal and practical fellowship with the Synod. It has as its essential purpose the extension and direct support of the Gospel mission and ministry of Synod congregations, and demonstrably functions in support of and on behalf of Synod’s congregations, in terms of the objectives they have laid out for the Synod granting recognition, and in cooperation and coordination with its programs and entities. This implies an unconditional expectation of doctrinal and practical faithfulness, but also that a WSO intentionally and responsibly pursues coordination with the district, national, and international “witness” programs of the Synod.

3.2 Educational Service Organization (ESOs)

ESOs (proposed Bylaw 6.2.2 [b]) are schools (one or more early childhood, primary, or secondary school[s]), camps, and programs ancillary to such. (Professional and/or focused mission- and-ministry training falls under the WMO category above.) ESOs are recognized as service organizations because of their alignment with the Synod’s fifth constitutional objective, that “[t]he Synod, under Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions, shall…[a]id congregations to develop processes of thorough Christian education and nurture…” (Const. Art. III 5) and their direct roles in furthering objectives they have laid out for the Synod granting recognition, and in cooperation and coordination with its programs and entities. Just as with those above, these are under the supervision of the district with which their congregations are associated.

Like WSOs, ESOs must be held to the highest possible standard doctrinally and practically. Unlike WSOs, some of them may operate in a realm where non-member support (increasingly by states) is a significant financial input and constrains their ability to deliver a thorough program of Christian education, nurture, and catechesis throughout the day. In such an instance, the organization attempts as best it can to carry out a thorough program of Christian education and nurture, and catechesis” by way of a wrap-around program or by fostering a close connection with partner congregations that are active in outreach to families served.

3.2.1 Existing Types of ESO Activity

- **Schools**, including Early Childhood, Primary (Elementary), and Secondary (High School) (141)
- **Camp Programs** (14, 2 of which are pan-Lutheran)
- **Other Education** (10), currently including schools of non-traditional models, such as wrap-around charter schools and online schools
- **After School Program**
- **Educational Granting** (1): Scholarships for Children in Developing Countries

3.2.2 ESO Governance and the Revitalized RSO Program

Schools fall under a variety of governance models, which determine their relationship to the present and revitalized RSO programs:

- **Single-congregation, separately incorporated:**
  Schools, even if independently incorporated, that are governed by a single LCMS member congregation (i.e., board members elected by the congregation, appointed by the congregation’s board, etc.) are parish schools and have the ability to call, to provide worker benefits through Concordia Plans, to finance through the Lutheran Church Extension Fund, etc., by virtue of their governance by their congregation. They can request and be granted membership in Synod’s group 501(c)(3) exemption on the same grounds. These do not need RSO status, and will be transitioned out in the future, to be recognized by the districts as congregationally governed schools.

- **Multi-congregation (LCMS only), separately incorporated:**
  Schools, even if independently incorporated, that are governed in the above manner solely by multiple LCMS congregations have the above benefits by the same mechanism. These, known as “association schools,” do not need RSO status, although many currently maintain it. Their ability to call workers and to access benefits from LCEF, CPS, etc., is already provided through district recognition (in a manner analogous to that of existing Bylaw 2.11.1 [k]), as was already noted in 2007 Res. 7-02. These should be transitioned out of RSO status to reduce the administrative burden on them and on the program. Just as with those above, these are under the supervision of the district with which their congregations are associated.

- **Board-governed schools independent of congregational governance:**
  RSO status will continue to be required for schools operated by an independent board (not comprised of board members contributed by an LCMS congregation or congregations).

- **Pan-Lutheran schools:**
  Six of the schools recognized as RSOs in 2018 are pan-Lutheran (involve ELCA partners in governance). Because these are jointly governed by LCMS and non-LCMS congregations, they are not “association schools” in the sense above and would need to remain in the RSO program to maintain access to the benefits accorded to RSOs. In 1998, when there were 34 such schools, the convention directed a review of their RSO status (Res. 2-06A, Proceedings, 107), noting that “[r]ecent ecumenical directions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America [ELCA] may jeopardize the doctrine and practice of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod congregations participating in [such] RSOs (i.e., instruction of the Christian faith, chapel services, and theological supervision).” The resulting Task Force on Recognized Service Organizations (Schools) (2001 Today’s Business 1:22–30, noting the profoundly different understandings of confessional commitments, doctrines, and practices, between the synods, concluded.
that such a school “is called upon to make differing and conflicting commitments.”

In response, the 2001 convention adopted Res. 2-02A, “To Develop a Pastoral Strategic Plan to Address RSO Schools” (Proceedings, 126–8), devising a plan for regular local evaluation of jointly-governed schools on the basis of criteria developed by the LCMS status-granting board (at the time, the Board for Congregational Services, now the Board for and Office of National Mission), with the requirement that issues of noncompliance identified be dealt with in no more than three years, that RSO status not be granted to any new schools affiliated also with the ELCA, and that RSO status be revoked for any organization that newly affiliates also with the ELCA. Anecdotally, this plan was never fully or uniformly implemented by the districts.

Regardless of its governance, a recognized school will “engage 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). The task force recommends that the plan of 2001 Res. 2-02A—intended to ensure that these “grandfathered” jointly governed schools operate according to the highest standards of the Scriptures and Lutheran Confessions—be renewed, with the Board for Congregational Services being replaced with the Office of National Mission, and that compliance be required for continuation of status.

Two additional developments have been noted among RSO-related schools that policies will have to address if all schools are to be related to with maximum usefulness:

- **Subsidiary schools:** Recently, a new governance model has developed by which a social ministry RSO operates one or more schools as part of its portfolio of activities, in some cases “taking up” where a parish has been compelled by circumstances to “leave off.” The school continues as a Lutheran school, operated in close coordination with a parish, but is governed by the RSO. The distinction of types of RSO in this proposal, and the fact that educational facilities would of necessity be evaluated on a per-site basis, suggests that a Mercy Service Organization (MSO) operating an Educational Service Organization (ESO) as a subsidiary would need to seek a separate status “endorsement” for its ESO component, which would be subject to the expectations of any other ESO. Operation of a school is a fundamentally different type of activity, with different concerns, and is handled on a site-by-site basis.

- **Schools with competing commitments:** Finally, the issue has emerged of schools that are in some manner associated with Synod member congregations or recognized organizations, but that are operated as charter or voucher schools, largely funded by the state. Present and potential future regulations, in some cases, do not allow the school to operate generally in the traditional sense of a Lutheran school, providing “processes of thorough Christian education and nurture” or as “agencies of [specifically, pervasively, and uniformly] Christian education.” If instruction in the doctrine and practice of the Scriptures and Lutheran Confessions occurs, it is ancillary to a program of education comparable to that provided by a secular school, and perhaps not obligatory for all students. The arrangement may be described as a charter school with a Lutheran “wraparound” program. The existence of schools operating in the “competing commitments domain” suggests the following use of the “tiered” model. Schools of the second-tier type already exist within the RSO program. The acknowledgement of these tiers “calls a thing what it is” and enables particular criteria and procedures to be developed for each tier, preventing the whole lot from falling into a “least common denominator” mode while acknowledging that good work can be done on an impressive scope, with significant care, in an environment that might otherwise be compromised by other commitments.

### 3.2.3 Tier I ESO in the Restructured RSO

**Program: “Mission/Ministry Performing ‘In’ the Church”**

Governed exclusively by those in doctrinal and practical fellowship with the Synod and striving to provide (in the sense of Const. Art. II) “thorough Christian education and nurture” (Const. Art. III 5). Doctrinal and practical education in the faith is thoroughly and fully Lutheran in “all such things as I [the Lord Jesus] have commanded you” (Matt 28) and pervades the curricular and extracurricular program. The school is strongly connected with a congregation or congregation(s).  

### 3.2.4 Tier II ESO in the Restructured RSO

**Program: “Mission/Ministry Performing ‘Alongside’ the Church”**

A school that may be governed less than entirely by those in doctrinal and practical fellowship with the Synod. Teaches nothing contrary to the doctrine or practice of the Synod but achieves less than the Christian curricular standard expected of a Tier I ESO. May be a charter school, relying on government support to teach a moral but not distinctively or pervasively Lutheran or Christian general curriculum, augmented with Lutheran doctrinal classes or a “wraparound” program. Must on a regular basis demonstrate that it is intentionally and strongly helpful to the mission and ministry of particular LCMS congregation(s).

### 3.3 Mercy Service Organization (MSOs)

MSOs (proposed Bylaw 6.2.2 [c]) further or facilitate the mercy work of the church, serving in a domain where cooperation in externals is possible, and in various settings performing a scale of mercy work that our congregations would struggle to attain on their own. The Synod has recognized such organizations as increasing the capacity of its congregations along the lines of its fourth objective (Const. Art. IV), the provision of opportunities for expression of “Christian concern, love, and compassion in meeting human needs.” They also align with and extend Synod’s third, fourth, and seventh triennial priorities (see 2016 Res. 4-02A, Proceedings, 145–6).

Because cooperation in externals is possible in an MSO’s work, these organizations run the gamut in terms of governance.
The leadership and resources of some arise, for the most part, within the Synod. These organizations are able to conform all their work freely, in every respect, to the doctrine and practice of the Synod, performing works of mercy in intimate connection with unfettered proclamation of Law and Gospel. Other organizations rely heavily on funding from outside our churchly confession (often governmental) or operate in areas regulated by the government and are, therefore, subject to constraints. They may also have leadership aligned in externals but of greater diversity in doctrine—but engage in mercy work (in which cooperation in externals is possible) rather than proclamation.

MSOs have heretofore been lumped with witness (WSO) and educational (ESO) organizations, whose role is to positively advance, in the very essence of their work, the doctrine and practice of the Synod. All have fallen under the same broad rule: an RSO “respects and does not act contrary to the doctrine and practice of the Synod” (Bylaw 6.2.1). But the essence of the MSO’s work is not to advance doctrine but to facilitate works of mercy, as the third triennial mission priority puts it, “in close proximity to word and sacrament ministries” (2016 Proceedings, 254).

MSOs, to the extent they multiply the church’s inputs with public funds and to the extent they operate in publicly regulated fields of mercy work, operate under significant constraints. Child and family services, for example, may be faced with regulations requiring equal consideration of foster or adoption placements into immoral living situations (2007 Res. 6-03A). Housing or aging care efforts, likewise, will have to deal with sexual orientation / gender identity regulations when considering whether they may accommodate same-sex couples or accept overt transgender expression in their facilities, which are in some respect publicly funded or “public accommodations.” (Even an institution governed solely by Synod members and with the purest of motives, but accepting government reimbursements or subject for various other reasons to regulation, may be faced with such issues.) Similar considerations relate broadly to all manner of organizations regarding employment and benefits provided to employees and their dependents.

Organizations may thus find themselves with a hard choice: suffer (to some extent) contrary, perhaps severe, regulations, requiring accommodation of some harm, or suffer the severe loss of capacity to do good in a potentially vast space. An organization faced with such choices might capitulate to the state, without concern for its obligations to conscience and church, or it might withdraw entirely from the spaces in which regulations would compel it to act, in some respects, if not doing evil, at least accommodating it. A more moderate way is for it to do the best it can with what it has, intending in the best sense to “sin boldly” in the hope of God the Lord bringing good out of the evil imposed on it from outside. For organizations in that fight, one valuable benefit of participation in the RSO program is that the churchly character of their work is underscored, improving the argument for First Amendment and other legal protections of their work from outside interference.

The call of rostered workers holding positions with MSOs having pan-Lutheran governance has raised significant questions about the doctrine of the call. How can a body of mixed confession call a rostered worker of the Synod? What are the obligations of a worker to a body of mixed confession? The fact that RSOs have not been an eligible party to the dispute resolution system (Bylaw section 1.10) of the Synod has left such workers relatively unprotected, if their adherence to the confessional standards of the Synod leads to conflict with varied confessional expectations of their employers or ecclesiastical supervisors. The bylaw proposal intends to clarify that when an MSO calls LCMS workers, it must do so with an explicit acknowledgement that the RSO expects them to perform according to LCMS confessional and practical standards.

The most common case where this would be a concern would be with a recognized medical, residential, or aging facility, having mixed governance and on-staff chaplains. Under the proposed standard such an organization could continue to call an LCMS chaplain, provided that the appropriate district president is consulted and provided that the call document clearly stipulates the expectation that the chaplain will serve under LCMS doctrine and practice. (There might also be the possibility of a WSO subsidiary activity recognized alongside an MSO, if the chaplaincy subsidiary meets the requirements of WSO recognition.)

There is yet another option for a chaplain to have active roster status when serving in a position in which a call is not possible, namely, that the district can endorse the position as a specialized pastoral ministry the constitutes active service in the Synod. This mechanism is often used by a district to acknowledge and place on active roster status a chaplain serving a public hospital, state prison, etc., but in the capacity of and according to the standards of an LCMS minister. This option could be used in the case of an MSO that has workers desiring active roster status but does not submit (or has not yet submitted) to the above procedure.

### 3.3.1 Existing Types of MSO Activity

There are at present 114 RSOs that fall into the MSO category, 57 of which are pan-Lutheran, and 57 are LCMS only. They engage in all manner of work: Abuse/Neglect Prevention/Treatment; Adoption; Advocacy & Planning; Aging/Elderly Services; Cancer Care Ministry; Children & Youth Services; Counseling & Mental Health; Developmentally Disabled Services; Disaster Preparedness/Response; Emergency Services and/or Relief; Foster Care; Mercy Granting; Grief Support; Hearing-Visually-Impaired Services; HIV/AIDS Ministry; Hospice; Housing & Community Development; Humanitarian Relief; Immigrant, Asylee, Refugee Resettlement/Support; Information & Referral; Maternity Home; Organizational Consultation & Development (purely administrative); Orphanage Support; Pregnancy Counseling; Substance Abuse & Other Addiction Prevention/Treatment; Trauma Intervention; Veterans Services; Volunteer Service Program

### 3.3.2 Tier I MSO in the Restructured RSO Program: “Mission/Ministry Performing ‘In’ the Church”

Governed exclusively by those in doctrinal and practical fellowship with the Synod and striving to provide (in the sense most fully informed by Const. Art. II) “Christian concern, love, and compassion in meeting human needs” (Const. Art. III 4). The mercy work provided by the MSO aims to deliver spiritual as well as physical mercy, is conducted “in close proximity to Word and Sacrament ministry” (Triennial priority 3, 2016 Proceedings, 254), and is intentionally oriented toward the inclusion of those served into the full life of an LCMS or partner congregation. Intentionally and demonstrably seeks to “multiply the mission” of congregations and schools of the Synod.
3.3.3 Tier II MSO in the Restructured RSO Program: “Mission/Ministry Multiplying ‘Alongside the Church’”

Governed to an acceptable degree (as determined in policy) by members of LCMS congregations. In no respect opposes the doctrinal or practical position of the Synod, although may be unable in every circumstance, due to governmental regulation, to advance that doctrinal or practical position. Faithfully and demonstrably weighs decisions about moral cost of being in a space versus moral cost of allowing the organization to be forced out of it. Faithfully and demonstrably advocates for and maximally uses freedom to carry out mission in fidelity to the Scriptures and Lutheran Confessions. (Here, see the below excursus.) Intentionally and demonstrably seeks to “multiply the mission” of congregations and schools of the Synod.

4. Excursus: What does it mean for a Mercy Service Organization to “respect and not act contrary to the doctrine and practice of the Synod” (present Bylaw 6.2.1)?

The application to mercy work—often involving cooperation in externals with those of different confessions or with governmental commitments—of the requirement that an RSO “respects and does not act contrary to the doctrine of the Synod” (Bylaw 6.2.1) has become increasingly complex. 2007 Res. 6-03A, for example, held in its final resolving clause:

Resolved, That LCMS organizations and LCMS recognized service organizations may not knowingly place adopted or foster children into any intrinsically sinful situations where individuals and families are not living in accordance with the Lord’s natural and revealed law (Bylaw 6.2.1)

Without disagreeing with the convention’s conclusion, the task force notes that there are significant jurisdictions in which organizations have had to choose between recognition by the Synod and the ability to carry on the volume of mercy work they hoped to perform—and where the choice has been to continue the work, the Synod has entirely lost whatever influence it had with its formerly recognized organizations.

Presently, public accommodation laws also challenge organizations providing low-income, elder care, or group housing to deal with client sexual orientation and gender identity and attendant living situations and expressions of identity which the church considers intrinsically sinful. The ability of such organizations to perform works of mercy broadly in the community is increasingly contingent on their suffering some injury at the hands of regulation. Organizations whose work relies on funding or licensing that seems to be contingent on making the occasional such accommodation are questioning what it means, in such a context, to “not act contrary to the position of the Synod.”

Mercy is for sinners. Mercy work will always be messy. There is a scriptural difference between, on the one hand, extending mercy to sinners (in, one would hope, close proximity to and urging toward a forthright preaching of the Law and the Gospel) and, on the other, affirming, and confirming people in, their sin, or giving children over into it. What may be suffered as the “cost of doing mercy”? What must, on the other hand, be condemned as “pinch of incense” to the gods of this debased age? These are not uniformly easy questions, and the Church must not be too hasty to condemn those who are truly wrestling with these matters for not coming up with “easy” or “simple” or “pure” answers.

The mercy work of the church is, and has always been, directed toward sinners—mercy is, after all, extending not what is deserved but what is good, what is salutary. “If your enemy is hungry, feed him” (Rom. 12:20). Increasingly civic mores and law threaten the very existence of mercy by treating many sins as civic goods and demanding that goods be extended—not apart from or despite the sins—but on their account and as their justification. Thus, the government is used, against its God-given purpose, to bestow a sham dignity on acts that dishonor God. And that sham dignity militates against the true and free justification that God has worked in Christ, that He would impute by faith to repentant sinners. Regulation and economics condition the ability to multiply mercy on some degree of, if not deference, at least indifference toward this evil end. With regard to clients, to non-rostered staff, to staff dependents, for these organizations with one foot in the church and one foot in the public social work sphere, this all presents hard questions of conscience and law. Many organizations historically connected with the church are vulnerable to an erosion of identity by the wear and tear of these forces.

It must also be admitted that cooperation in externals—formerly prevalent among sometime member church bodies (and successors) of the Lutheran Council in the United States (LCUSA), including the LCMS and ELCA—is becoming much more challenged, as confessional conflicts have invaded the realm of (revealed and natural) Law and former partners continue and increase social activism opposed to (revealed and natural) Law. If what is good is not agreed upon, it is hard to cooperate in doing good. If what is evil is exalted by “partners” as we together “do the mercy of the church,” what is confessed to them and before the world?

Here, the rephrased expectation that mercy organizations “facilitate the church’s extension of the divine mercy without compromising the church’s scriptural and confessional standards” is intended to clarify, without diminishing, the general requirement that RSOS “respect and not act contrary to the doctrine and practice of the Synod.” Mercy is for sinners, and not every situation is the opportune time for direct confrontation of sinful behavior. Much discernment and careful conversation, scriptural and confessional study, and ethical reflection on the basis of the Scriptures and Confessions, is called for, in an active engagement of those organizations in challenged contexts with the Synod’s RSO Office (under the LCMS Office of National Mission), and with the Synod as a whole. Much more will be said on this topic under the MSO section below.

5. Call, Roster, and Ecclesiastical Supervision of Ordained and Commissioned Ministers

One may understand a given divine call in terms of the calling body, the task to which called, and the worker called to do it. With regard to each of these, the RSO program—which has historically extended the general right to call workers to all recognized organizations, but not apart from serious questions about this practice—has to be re-examined:

• With regard to the workers, the task force considers the divine call to be inextricably tied to a confessional standard. The Synod recognizes, of course, only the calling of workers who are on the roster of the Synod or who are certified as prepared to enter that roster by virtue of
a first call. It is the expectation of the task force that an organization recognized by the Synod, if it calls church workers as such, would call only those on the roster (or candidates for rostering) in the LCMS.

- With regard to the calling bodies, it is also the understanding of the task force that one body cannot properly at the same time extend divine calls to workers of different confessions, as this would be for it to be of contradictory confession. The CTCR noted the following in its 1981 document, "The Ministry: Offices, Procedures, and Nomenclature," pp. 15–17:

In considering the office of the public ministry one must consider the relationship between “parish pastors” and “non-parish pastors.” …

Some would solve problems in this area by asking what a man does during the week. Does he preach from the pulpit every Sunday? Does he celebrate communion once a month or more often? Does he make sick and shut-in calls? On that score only parish pastors—and not even some of them—would qualify as being in the office of the public ministry. The more theologically appropriate questions to ask are the following: Has the church found an individual to be qualified for the office of the public ministry? Has the church called him to exercise an overseeing and shepherding ministry in the church? Has the church formally called him to hold the office of the public ministry and entrusted him with the responsibility of that office, even though it may ask him to specialize in certain functions of this office? And is he, upon installation into the office, pledged to be and remain accountable for the faithful conduct of his office to God, to the church, and to the believers committed to his care? Questions such as these indicate a need for clarity and precision in the issuing of “calls.”

And the same document, from pp. 26–27:

Not only a local congregation but also larger structures of the church may legitimately extend valid calls upon proper delegation. The right of a congregation to call its pastors and teachers is not questioned. Some do question the right of agencies such as Districts or boards and commissions of the Synod or even the whole Synod itself to issue calls. For this reason some take refuge in obtaining a second call as “assistant” in a congregation, feeling that such a call, although it involves few or no duties, is valid, while a call from an agency is not. The legitimacy of such a “second” call is questionable.

The very existence of the Synod indicates that the church must do some of its work jointly. The Synod is not an alien organization. It is the whole confessional fellowship of congregations. In this case, by common agreement, certain offices are filled by the Synod or its commissions through authority delegated from the congregations. Agencies of any kind should first assure themselves that the right to call has been properly delegated to them by the church. In some cases this is done by regulations in the bylaws that are agreed upon in convention. Moreover, agency calls should contain clear descriptions to indicate that the call is of such a nature that the candidate may assure himself that the call is truly within the scope of the office of the public ministry or the appropriate auxiliary office.

Some offices in the church cannot be defined with absolute clarity merely by referring to their titles. The call itself should demonstrate why it is a “call” and not merely an office of employment as a lay worker in the church.

For the church to be extending a call in a proper churchly fashion, the confessional standard in which that call is extended must be clear. And that means that those doing the calling must be agreed upon the meaning of the Scriptures and Confessions under which they are calling the worker to serve, and under which he or she will be supervised. Recognized Service Organizations are granted the ability to extend a regular call by virtue of their recognition. Such a call is to be considered a call to trans-parochial service in the church, extended on behalf of the congregations of the Synod, and under their confessional standards (very much like a call by district or Synod). Where the RSO itself is governed by those of mixed confession, it must consider its right to extend a regular call, recognized by the Synod, as a sacred trust.

Witness organizations may not be of mixed governance; Mercy organizations, in the work of which cooperation in externals is possible, may be of mixed governance, as may be some Educational organizations. It may well be the best solution that in such a circumstance, the organization not extend calls as a monolithic entity (of mixed confession), but that an LCMS subset of the governing board be empowered to call for and on behalf of the organization, or that the district endorse a chaplaincy or similar auxiliary position with the organization as a place of active service without a regular call (a model already in well-established use for chaplains of institutions that have no RSO status: prisons, state hospitals, secular aging or residential facilities, etc.).

The task force feels, however, that a thorough conversation of the doctrine of the call as it relates to recognized service organizations should not be shortchanged, and that the long history of allowing such calls should not be disrupted, but rather improved upon. Hence, the proposal that when an RSO of any type or governance prepares to call, it must consult with the appropriate district president and must obtain his approval that the call documents appropriately safeguard the ability and expectation of the worker to carry out his or her ministry in accordance with the doctrinal and practical standards of the Synod.

- With regard to the work the call entails, it is the task force’s opinion that the work should be substantially the work of the office the worker holds (i.e., the Word- or Word-and-Sacrament work of an ordained minister, or the corresponding work of the various auxiliary/commissioned offices) if a call is to be extended, unless the position is an administrative one substantially involved in the execution of such ministries by others (e.g., a pastor or deaconess might be called as a director of chaplaincy or diaconal ministry, even if an administrative role, but would not properly be called as an accountant or facilities engineer).
6. Ecclesiastical Oversight (District President Role / Multi-District Operations)

The above material has detailed several aspects in which RSO program administration will rely intentionally on the nearer oversight of the relevant district president(s). Conversation with the district presidents has indicated that they seek a better-defined role in such oversight. Supervision and final administration of the program, however, rest with the Synod (see Bylaw definitions of oversight and supervision, Bylaw 1.2.1 [o] and [t]).

District presidents already have ecclesiastical supervision of called RSO workers based in their districts. It is important to distinguish ecclesiastical supervision from employment supervision. The definition of Bylaw 1.2.1 [i] indicates that ecclesiastical supervision is:

The responsibility, primarily of the President of the Synod and district presidents, to supervise on behalf of the Synod the doctrine, life, and administration of its members, officers, and agencies. Such supervision, subject to the provisions of the Synod's Constitution, Bylaws, and resolutions, includes visitation, evangelical encouragement and support, care, protection, counsel, advice, admonition, and, when necessary, appropriate disciplinary measures to assure that the Constitution, Bylaws, and resolutions of the Synod are followed and implemented. Thus, ecclesiastical supervision is also the presenting, interpreting, and applying of the collective will of the Synod's congregations. Ecclesiastical supervision does not include the responsibility to observe, monitor, control, or direct the day-to-day activities of individual members of the Synod, whether in the conduct of their work or in their private lives (cf. Bylaw 2.14.1 [a]). Further, those constitutional articles and bylaws pertaining to ecclesiastical supervision shall determine the full definition of ecclesiastical supervision.

Ecclesiastical supervision, as it applies to the called, rostered workers of an RSO and to the congregations and schools with which it relates, does not include monitoring, control, or direction of day-to-day activities.

This report has coined the term ecclesiastical oversight. As ecclesiastical supervision is to supervision (Bylaws 1.2.1 [t] and [o]; cf. Bylaw 2.14.1), so ecclesiastical oversight is to oversight. Oversight in the bylaws sense is not (employment) supervision, “to have authority over, to direct actions, to control activities.” Oversight is “to monitor; to make inquiry and receive a response thereto; to make suggestions; to bring concerns to the attention of a higher authority” (Bylaw 1.2.1[o]). Ecclesiastical oversight is that concept applied to the ecclesial relations of an RSO, the impact of its operations on doctrine and (churchly) practice, on the witness of the Church, the manifestation of the divine mercy, and on the “life together” of Synod’s congregations and congregants. A district president would exercise ecclesiastical oversight with regard to an RSO’s activities in his district, as they relate to the church’s ministry, by monitoring (though certainly not on a day-to-day level), making inquiries, receiving response thereto, making suggestions, and bringing concerns to the attention of the Synod status-granting office. This is not day-to-day oversight of policies, procedures, or activities in general—and certainly not directive control of or interference in these things—but oversight of the relationship of the organization to the church and its performance and multiplication of the church’s ministry—over sight of its ecclesiastical influence and impact.

One aspect in which local oversight is especially helpful is in more regular interaction with and awareness of the conduct of office and public repute of leadership of RSOs not headed by rostered church workers of the Synod. It goes without saying that the leadership and public face of an organization recognized by the church should be expected—whether rostered or not—to conduct their offices and public lives to a standard similar to that biblically imposed on those who hold a public office in the church. A local district president is the most likely to know of issues with life or public witness that would need to be addressed, and the most appropriate to assist the RSO program administration in urging an organization to godly resolution. It is an expectation of organizations desiring to be recognized by the church that they would make every effort to be led and represented by godly persons of good repute.

RSOs whose work spans multiple districts noted the concern that increased district interaction and oversight would be confusing and perhaps even confounding if there is not a uniformity of approach by district presidents to RSO ecclesiastical oversight and RSO worker ecclesiastical supervision. As the Council of Presidents exists in great part “for the presidents of the districts and the Praesidium of the Synod to counsel with one another on matters regarding the doctrine and administration of the Synod, its regions, and its districts, and to edify and support one another in the work they share” (Bylaw 3.10.1.2), the task force recommends that a discussion of common expectations and policies for ecclesiastical oversight of RSOs be commended to the council as a significant focus for the coming triennium and as a recurring item for training, policy development, and casuistry.

7. History of the Recognized Service Organization Program and Its Predecessors

The history of Synod’s involvement with social ministry organizations began in 1858 with the Lutheran Hospital of St. Louis, and over time recorded the development of orphanages, seniors, physically and mentally disabled, homeless, and urban vocational services. Walther’s Form of a Christian Congregation (1864) expected that congregations would provide for congregants in need and for poor, widows, orphans, aged, those suffering calamities, etc., in general—an expectation and practice that led to the founding of social service entities by congregations and groups of individuals. Aftermath of the U.S. Civil War provided an urgent impetus to relief work. Over succeeding generations, as welfare services expanded, the Synod faced a choice: incorporate these responsibilities into the work of the Synod and its districts or coordinate with societies and associations created by congregations (or congregations and/or individuals acting in concert, but outside of official Synod structures) as they perceived needs and their abilities to address them. Synod perceived its role in motivating and equipping member congregations to face this task, which is “an integral, not optional, function of the Christian and of the Christian congregation.” Synod felt it could encourage congregations to act in concert on these matters, yet outside the synodical administrative structure. (Relationship of Lutheran Health and Welfare Agencies to The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod: A Polity Statement, LCMS Board of Social Ministry, May 1967.)
The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod has always viewed social ministry, or “ministry to the total man” as being important. It has, however, left the doing of the actual work (beyond encouragement and coordination) to organizations formed by the congregations. An 1899 proposal that Synod would form a Department of Charities to assume direct control of and responsibility for the entire welfare ministry was not adopted; in 1901, though, Associated Lutheran Charities, a voluntary group, was formed. This was an annual gathering of heads of social ministry entities that unified and coordinated welfare ministry across the Synod.

Historically there were two minds among social ministries. Some valued freedom to practice their own vision of ministry; others desired to have their ministries widely acknowledged and supported as the “gospel” ministries of the Synod. Over time, more support for relief programs (in general) has been from public funds—even by the 1950s, only approximately 25 percent, and that was mostly benefits paid to individuals. Today, many social ministry entities operate with 80–90 percent of their funding coming from public sources. This shift to public funding has tied social service organizations increasingly to government interests and regulation.

After World War II, the LCMS began officially to engage in social service endeavors. In 1947, President Behnken was authorized to appoint an exploratory committee to retain a full-time Executive Secretary of Social Welfare. The Synod sponsored a post-war European Relief program under an Emergency Planning Council. In 1950, the Synod established a Department of Social Welfare to study and guide social welfare work across the Synod, to aid in recruitment, and to expand chaplaincy service to government facilities. By the 1965 LCMS Convention, agencies, while not under control of the Synod, were looking “to the Synod for practical assistance and counsel in organizing and conducting their work. The Board of Social Welfare has been charged by the Synod with providing such services and endeavors to do this in the fullest possible measure” (1965 Convention Report of Dr. Wind).

In 1967 the Lutheran Council USA was established; in 1977 the Lutheran Social Service System (LS3) brought together social work of the American Lutheran Church (ALC), the Lutheran Church in America (LCA), and the LCMS. This is the beginning of Lutheran Services in America (LSA), which would be formed in 1997 as a formal “umbrella organization” gathering Lutherans in the two major Lutheran church bodies around social ministry.

LCMS Conventions repeatedly addressed social ministry. The 1971 Convention adopted eight social ministry affirmations related to the issues then current, including support for “programs in public and private sectors that seek to eliminate the causes of poverty and hunger, and comprehensive health care for all.” The 1986 and 1998 Conventions addressed themselves to improving Bylaw structures supporting RSOs. In the 1990s and 2000s, in RSOs and SMOs (Social Ministry Organizations), the LCMS and the ELCA struggled to continue together in “cooperation in externals” as LCMS and ELCA increasingly diverged in doctrine and practice. In this period, a 1999 statement of the CTCR, Faith Active in Love, forcefully reiterated the church’s rationale for participating in social ministry.

In 2008, revised RSO procedures were adopted by the Board of Directors and the present five-year renewal system was introduced. In 2010, in connection with Synod restructuring, the Board of Directors revised RSO practice to coordinate RSO granting and renewal only through the policy boards of Synod (BNM and BIM, with exceptions for Synodwide Corporate Entities to grant status) rather than through all the various program boards. A standing committee was also established by the Board of Directors to oversee the RSO program. Since the 2010 restructuring, management of the program has been by the Office of National Mission. RSOs (exclusive of 140 association schools with RSO status) include 114 social ministry organizations (including entities like Doxology and Grace Place), 39 mission entities, 14 camps, 10 educational or university-related programs (including Lutheran Special Education entities, some school-related counseling entities), 7 campus ministry organizations, and 2 communications entities. Approximately 5 percent of applications are either encouraged to be withdrawn or are denied. The majority of the withdrawals or denials are pan-Lutheran; the LCMS-only entities withdrawn or denied have been in relation to government regulation of social work. 128 of all RSOs (other than association school RSOs) are LCMS-only; 57 are pan-Lutheran, with a variety of degrees of LCMS influence.

There are currently 140 association school RSOs. Some are no longer truly association schools, but are independent LCMS-oriented schools. More schools and churches are severing into separate corporations—and not only those in demographic or fiscal crisis.

Rostered workers with RSOs (other than the association schools) include 89 pastors, 16 deaconesses, 11 DCEs, 13 teachers, 3 deacons, and 6 other DCO or other commissioned.

Strengths of RSOs include being the hands and feet of Christ, fostering the ministry of the LCMS, showing compassion and mercy to those in need, and offering servant opportunities. RSO program oversight has a significant impact: 158 RSOs have appropriate language in their governing documents to ensure adequate LCMS representation on their boards; 47 have improved this language since 2008; 28 are in the process of improving it. Challenges include funding (federal and state budget cuts and strings), building Lutheran leaders, religious beliefs vs. state and federal laws, adoption and foster care and civil union laws, non-discrimination language, connections to congregations, and keeping up ratios of LCMS board members (even for RSO association schools).

8. Review and concluding recommendations

An RSO Taskforce Survey was developed to test RSOs reactions to this document’s proposal and was distributed in December 2018 to 21 RSOs, evenly representative of the regions of the Synod (with 5 or 6 surveyed RSOs active in each region) and of the types of work undertaken by RSOs. Responses were received from eleven organizations, with two RSOs giving verbal responses and three requesting additional time due to other circumstances.

Overall the responses to the survey questions were positive. Regarding the district relationship and engagement all the RSOs responded that they already had a close relationship with the district president. The comments indicated organizations felt they had good communication, valued two-way communication, felt supported and appreciated the district president having a visible presence at their annual events. Responses to proposed expansion of the district’s role in the oversight of RSO activities were much more hesitant, with comments including that this would be inappropriate and overreaching, too time consuming for the district president, and that they already have sufficient reporting requirements to state jurisdictions. These responses, however, seemed to understand district presidents as getting involved in day-to-day supervision of general operations and employment supervision, areas not appropriate for district involvement and not contemplated in the proposal. Responses also reflected concern regarding the ecclesias-
tactical supervision of called workers, especially as relates to RSOs interacting with multiple districts where, it was felt, standards for supervision and oversight might vary. Mission-oriented RSOs expressed the most concern in this area.

With regard to the distinction of Tier I (closely held by the church; able to have doctrine and practice at the overt forefront of all activities) and Tier II (governmental inputs or regulated areas of work limit ability to proclaim) mercy and educational organizations, the surveyed mercy organizations by and large viewed themselves as aligning more appropriately with the Tier II level, reflecting their challenges of working under government regulations.

The task force also suggested consideration of an appropriate fee structure to help underwrite the cost of the RSO program. Most RSOs responding expressed a willingness to provide for a reasonable cost recovery. A few responses expressed the concern of already being engaged in other associations and having dropped out of other dues-paying memberships that relate to the services they provide. Overall the response was positive for a modest and reasonable cost recovery fee which could be aligned through a sliding scale.

The final survey question related to an interest in attending a Triennial RSO Conference which would be sponsored by the LCMS and held in St. Louis. Cost was the main consideration as well as what the conference would offer to all the various RSOs. The mercy organizations recommended coordinating with LSA and their annual conference. Another suggestion was to consider holding smaller group conferences especially as it relates to the various categories of RSOs.

Having taken these responses and others in to consideration, the task force has finalized this report and submitted (separately) two overtures for consideration by the appropriate floor committee and then the convention. One provides proposed bylaws and implementation language that form the foundation for the revitalization proposed above, which would be implemented naturally over time as organizations renew (every five years) their status. The other overture builds on the proposed platform, directing Synod and its agencies to begin to explore new directions and enhance services through the program and encouraging Synod members to re-engage with recognized organizations and the organizations to engage the program as it is revitalized. These two overtures contain something of an “executive summary” of the material reported above and are commended for the convention’s careful consideration—in the light of the more extensive material presented here—and adoption.

Kevin Robson, Chairman
John W. Sias, Secretary

VI. 2016 LCMS Convention Res. 7-02B
Final Report

2019 LCMS Convention

Introduction

The 7-02 B Task Force has spent significant time in meetings and conversations with external experts, presidents, professors, pastors, teachers and laity in seeking to carry out its assignment. The complexity and fluid status of higher education in our surrounding culture—especially the fiscal challenges that competitive enrollment, demographics, distance education, tuition discounting, and modest endowments create—have resulted in a context with multiple moving parts that precludes a facile and prompt series of solutions. Rather, the need for a system wide program of collaboration and integration has become apparent.

The presidents of the Concordia University System have excelled in negotiating these turbulent waters on behalf of the church’s mission and in accord with the Lutheran Identity Statement that was adopted at the 2016 convention. Aware of the continued growth of multiple challenges, they have met over the past several years with the Chairman of the CUS Board of Directors, the President of the Concordia University System, and President Harrison to consider and to plan strategically for greater strength through a new model of governance in which mutual initiatives would strengthen each of the institutions while retaining their historic and regional identity. By eliminating costly competition and expanding resources through complementary deployment of assets, greater strength and sustained growth can be achieved.

Quite simply the goal is twofold: theological integrity and fiscal viability. The envisioned structure—to be shared in outline form through a series of white papers—will require extensive work on multiple levels—academic, accrediting, ecclesial, fiscal, and legal. The presidents, the Concordia University System Board, and the LCMS President’s office are committed and already at work on the envisioned structure. These 7-02B Resolutions reflect our experience and solicit Synod’s support in preparing a new and, by God’s grace, enduring system of higher education governance with theological integrity and fiscal viability no matter how high the educational waves become or how far our culture moves from Christian truth concerning God, the world, and man and woman’s place therein.

Recommendations

The 2016 LCMS Convention Resolution 7-02B Task Force presents the following two overtures, included in this Workbook among overtures for Floor Committee 7, to the convention for consideration and action:

7-01 To Amend Bylaws Related to Structure and Governance of the Concordia University System

7-02 To Direct the Concordia University System Advisory Council to Lead a Process to Propose a New Governance Plan

The first overture includes a series of changes to the present bylaws governing the Concordia University System and its institutions. The second overture addresses the need for further study in the next triennium and proposes a plan for the development of a new CUS Governance Plan.

Gerhard H. Mundinger, Chair
Paul A. Philp, Secretary

VII. Final Report of the Blue Ribbon Committee on Lutheran Schools

Addressing RESOLUTION 3-04 (2013) and RESOLUTION 8-03A (2016)

“To Support the Quality and Sustainability of Lutheran Schools through the Work of the Blue Rib-
At the 2013 Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) Convention, Resolution 3-04 passed “To Authorize a Blue Ribbon Committee on Lutheran Schools.” Through this resolution, the Office of National Mission (ONM) was authorized to convene a Blue Ribbon Committee on Lutheran Schools to make a comprehensive analysis of schools offering collaborative and creative options for the future of Lutheran education. Consideration was given to specific issues and topics for the committee to address and who might serve to give the broadest perspectives of the future of Lutheran education in the Synod. A working Task Force was established consisting of individuals from all areas of Lutheran education, and from this larger committee, four task groups were assigned. The Committee was organized by the Rev. Bart Day and chaired by Mr. Jeffrey Beavers with consultation assistance provided by Tara Mulder.

The entire Blue Ribbon Committee met in St. Louis for five, two-day sessions: May 2016, October 2016, February 2017, May 2017 and October 2017. At each of these five meetings, the individual task groups met during the allotted break-out work sessions and collaborated as a whole group.

Subsequently, after the work of the Blue Ribbon Task Force had commenced, the direction and focus of the working group was modified and redefined at the 2016 LCMS Synodical Convention through Resolution 8-03A. Additional direction was given through this new resolution that guided further discussion and group objectives.

**Working Purpose Statement:**

“We want to maximize our ability to catalyze our discipleship through Lutheran education for the 56 million children in the United States.”

**Committee Charges:**

1. Analyze, account for and address the economic needs of Rostered and non-Rostered workers and teachers and how those needs will impact congregations where they serve;
2. Establish a set of collaborative and creative options for the future of Lutheran Schools in the 21st century;
3. Develop and implement pilot projects that may produce creative solutions related to the challenges currently faced by Lutheran schools.

*NOTE: “The Blue Ribbon Committee on Lutheran Schools” and “Blue Ribbon Task Force” are used interchangeably throughout this report.

**Group One: Economic Needs**

**Task:** Analyze, account for and address the economic needs including an assessment of compensation of Rostered and non-Rostered workers and teachers and how those needs will impact congregations where they serve.

**Group Members:**
Dr. Steven Buuck – Chief Executive Officer, Faith Lutheran Middle School & High School, Las Vegas, NV
Rev. Dr. Lee Hagan – President, Missouri District LCMS
Mr. Ronald Henschen – Teacher, Metro East Lutheran High School, Edwardsville, Ill.

Dr. Jon Mielke – Superintendent of Lutheran Schools, Indiana District LCMS

**Background (Scope, Focus and Process):** The committee gathered in fall of 2016 to introduce and make initial presentations; the task force reassembled twice in the spring of 2017 to break into individual groups and further ascertain information through email, survey and research.

Reverend Dr. Lee Hagan conducted a conference call at a meeting that included Val Rhoden-Kimbrough, director of human resources, to determine the progress of the project/study that Concordia Plan Services undertook for Ordained Ministers. A salary modeler was developed as a tool to assist calling congregations in determining a salary reflective of the cost of living in the geographic area of the church, the years of experience and the educational training of the church worker. The project/study enables congregational leaders to obtain a salary scale by entering zip codes and using a county multiplier to receive detailed information.

**Recommendations**

- Encourage all congregations and schools to implement Concordia Plan Services church worker salary modeler when determining teacher and administrator salaries.
- Provide incentives for teachers; rent coverage, a signing bonus, debt reduction, possibly a congregation member that is identified by the pastor to adopt the graduate as a guardian angel (that angel could give a monetary gift monthly for one year, e.g.), tuition breaks for their children who attend their Lutheran school, etc.
- Provide for teachers an increased sense of urgency to recruit and retain qualified young candidates enrolling in the Concordia University System, there is an increased sense of urgency to recruit and retain qualified young people in the Lutheran teaching ministry. The desire to enter the vocation of education is lessening due to several factors including

**Conclusions:**

Lutheran education is a noble calling, yet it is facing significant challenges. Data support a real need for synodical entities to bring resolution to indebtedness for church workers. With the impending retirement of many teachers and administrators coupled with the diminishing numbers of Lutheran Teacher Diploma (LTD) candidates enrolling in the Concordia University System, there is an increased sense of urgency to recruit and retain qualified young people in the Lutheran teaching ministry. The desire to enter the vocation of education is lessening due to several factors including
classroom management issues, public perception of the profession and state regulations. Additionally, many students are coming out of college with significant debt and are paid salaries below recommended levels. The trendline on debt and salary must change or the teacher shortage will likely continue. Teachers and administrators are in a great position to influence current and future students about the joys and rewards of church work and need to be intentional in their efforts to help recruit new students for the Concordia University System.

Lutheran schools have impacted countless children in the United States for over a hundred years. The men and women who have heeded God’s calling and served in Lutheran schools have made significant differences in families, communities and the world. It is imperative that the church takes seriously its responsibility to provide for the wellbeing of Lutheran church workers. We remain confident that, with God’s help, LCMS partners can work together to attract and retain the brightest and best to teach in Lutheran schools. The recommendations above give great hope; more importantly, God’s endless provision and wisdom will provide the hope needed for the future. The words from Philippians 1:3–6 (ESV) conclude our thoughts:

“I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now. And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.”

It is our prayer that these findings and recommendations will be of great benefit to church workers and churches throughout the LCMS.

**Group Two: Options for Lutheran Schools**

**Task:** Establish a set of collaborative and creative options for the future of Lutheran Schools in the 21st century including but not limited to: (1) alternative funding models; (2) examples of schools in mission in their neighborhoods; (3) need for a new generation of Lutheran educators.

**Group Members:**
Mr. Matthew Bergholt – Manager of Online Support and Services, LCMS School Ministry Office
Mr. David Black – Director of Lights Academy and Teacher, Lutheran High School, Parker, Col.
Dr. Michael Uden – Dean of the School of Education, Concordia University Wisconsin

**Background (Scope, Focus and Process):** The process for Group Two consisted of conducting research in five different strands of options for Lutheran schools:

- Funding Models for Lutheran Schools
- Schools in Mission in their Neighborhoods
- New Generation of Lutheran Educators
- Educational Models/Strategies
- Leadership Professional Development

The research process gathered ideas, models and practices from a wide net and was primarily gathered through a purposive sampling technique. The technique is a format of qualitative inquiry which is particularly useful in research with specific time and resource constraints, as well as research inquiry where a single case (or small number of cases) can be decisive in explaining the phenomenon of interest (Patton, 2002).

**Recommendations**

- While Lutheran schools are doing amazing work in spreading the Gospel through educational ministry, encouragement and mentoring is needed from the national and district levels to ensure that they are continuing to identify adaptations which would further their current work.
- Every school ministry (large, small, growing, declining, etc.) is strongly encouraged to intentionally plan for a regular audit of current ministry operations.
- Implement innovative and widespread initiatives for the recruitment, development and retention of school ministry teams as well as succession planning.
- Utilize a variety of media to share the joy of serving in Lutheran education and to show what is already happening in Lutheran schools.
- A deliberate focus on the structured development of new Lutheran schools in areas currently underserved, or not represented, is essential for the continued sustainability of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.
- Infuse a professional development paradigm of lifelong learning throughout the Lutheran education system.

**Conclusions:**

*You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot. You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl, Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.*

Matthew 5:13–16 (ESV)

By God’s grace and goodness and through the power of the Holy Spirit, LCMS schools exist to proclaim the Gospel message of our resurrected Savior Jesus. We are His salt and light, a town on the hill. For these reasons, it is essential that God’s Word is boldly proclaimed and seasons all interactions within and outside of our Christian faith community with His love and compassion. Certainly, the 21st century has brought new challenges to Lutheran school ministries, but we must look through eyes of faith and recognize the new opportunities available to LCMS schools as well. How has God positioned us to share His timeless Gospel? In what ways can we draw upon our Reformation history to bring His Word and truth to those who may not have it otherwise? How do we, as members of Christian congregations, teachers and school administrators stand out to a world reeling from sin and its subsequent pain and loss and daily live in peace and joy in Christ which transcends all human experience and understanding?

As God’s people, we must continually cling to His Word and seek His Will as we consider the daily opportunities presented by the Holy Spirit to proclaim Christ in all we say and do, exploring both existing and potential ministry outlets to be salt and light with-
in our communities made bleak and dark by the devil, the world and our flesh.

Through our various Christian vocations, God has equipped us for this time and place. Within our Lutheran congregations, business people with strategic planning, finance and marketing expertise may assist area Lutheran schools in developing strategic plans which utilize current assets and target and leverage new ones. Educational administrators and teachers may hone their professional practice through continual learning, both formal and informal, and be both intentional and transparent in sharing the joys of serving Christ as a full-time church worker. Veteran church workers and those retired from full-time service may continue to coach and encourage those hungry for their expertise and guidance. All members of a Lutheran church and/or school community can exhort one another to seek out and live one’s Christian calling boldly and intentionally, including the call to serve as a lay or professional teacher.

**Group Three: Pilot Projects**

**Task:** Develop and implement pilot projects that may create productive solutions related to the challenges currently faced by Lutheran Schools including but not limited to: (1) strategies for serving immigrant neighbors; (2) exploration of the role of schools in church planning and revitalization.

**Group Members:**
Mr. H. David Boldt – Teacher, Salem Lutheran School, Tomball, Texas
Mr. Corey Nelson – Teacher, Rochester Central Lutheran School, Rochester, Minn.
Dr. Andrew Neumann – CEO, Open Sky Education
Dr. Rebecca Schmidt – Director of Schools, LCMS School Ministry Office
Dr. James Tallmon – Teacher and Headmaster (ret.), Austin, Texas

**Background (Scope, Focus and Process):** It became clear early on that the most productive approach is to capture the pooled wisdom and experience of the vast network of schools. We therefore focused on designing a vehicle by which we could gather scalable and/or portable ideas, best practices and examples regarding projects and programs that constitute “shining examples,” so other schools could potentially pilot these in their schools.

A grid was generated entitled, “Breakthroughs and Best Practices Grid.” The grid is to be utilized, along with a twelve-question survey accompanying the grid, to provide context for the ideas of pilot projects submitted by Lutheran schools.

Having developed the survey and grid (and anticipating that all the information would be uploaded to an online repository maintained by the LCMS School Ministry office), a video was produced to enhance and motivate the effort to gather and share information by shedding more light on the desired goals.

Finally, in the process of completing the work, the research of Dr. Bernard Bull (former Vice Provost for Curriculum and Academic Innovation, Concordia University Wisconsin) on innovative schools was recognized. Dr. Bull’s research deserves further attention by the Synod when continuing to examine innovative schools.

**Recommendations:**
- LCMS School Ministry establish and support a task force that will launch, lead and manage a “Lutheran Innovation Lab” with the purpose to collect scalable or portable best practices and breakthroughs; connect educators, innovators and funders; and stimulate collaboration and implementation to continuously renew and grow Lutheran education.

**Conclusions:**

We will not hide them from their children, but tell to the coming generation the glorious deeds of the Lord, and his might, and the wonders that he has done. Psalm 78:4 (ESV)

Psalm 78:4 tells of the urgency to equip each generation with the knowledge of the praiseworthy deeds of the Lord in order that the next generation would know them. Imagine the many ways God works through the ministry of schools, sharing the baptismal journey as missionaries and equipping children to be disciples by helping them to grow strong in their faith in the presence of God, nurtured in homes and supported by congregations, equipped as stewards of God’s resources and actively engaged in witness, mercy and life together.

We are blessed with a diverse network of schools focused on fulfilling the charge given us in Ps. 78:4. While this network of schools has collectively been decreasing over the past decade, we are living in a time of opportunity where we can reach unparalleled numbers of children with a Lutheran education across our nation (and world). As we survey the landscape of education today, we see many bright examples thriving and expanding Lutheran education.

To fully leverage the strengths which we see within our network of schools and the unique time in which we are serving as educators, we need to discover the macro trends that are impacting Lutheran education in the 21st century and then surface the breakthroughs that exist within and beyond our existing network of schools.

We know our Heavenly Father has a heart for every one of His children. By trusting in Him for guidance and relying on His blessing, collaborating to discover and share thriving models working in different settings, and establishing a system for replicating and expanding these models, we believe Lutheran education can shift its focus. We can turn our energy towards learning, sharing and expanding on what is working to better serve exponentially more of His children today and in the future.

**Group Four: Reasons for Decline and Recommendations for Growth**

**Task:** Identify reasons for decline in the number of schools and school enrollment and explore opportunities for growth.

**Group Members:**
Mr. Terry Schmidt – Director of Schools (ret.), LCMS School Ministry Office
Rev. Robert V. Roethemeyer – Associate Professor of Pastoral Ministry and Missions, Director of Library, V.P. of Strategic Planning and Mission Execution, Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Ind.
Rev. Dwayne M. Lueck – President, North Wisconsin District LCMS
Dr. Bruce Braun – Superintendent of Schools (ret.), Michigan District LCMS
Mrs. Cheryl Swope, M.Ed. – Author and Homeschool Parent, Sainte Genevieve, Mo.

**Background (Scope, Focus and Process):** The process consisted of determining what information was needed, gathering this information from as wide a variety of sources as possible in the limited time, examining the information most relevant to the task...
and summarizing findings with recommendations. Information gathered includes but is not limited to the items below:

- 2016–2017 LCMS School Ministry Statistics Lutheran school enrollment from early childhood to high school.
- 2016 LCMS Statistics on available incoming LCMS Lutheran school teachers versus teachers retiring with a view to the impact on the strength, vitality, Lutheran ethos and identity of Lutheran schools.
- Survey results from LCMS education executives (5 respondents) on the perceived key reasons for decline in enrollment within Lutheran schools.
- Survey results from LCMS homeschooling families (167 respondents) as to why parents teach their children at home rather than sending them to Lutheran schools.
- 2016 National Home Education Research Institute results with general reasons homeschooling parents choose home education over schools.
- Observations on the reasons for decline in both the number of Lutheran schools and in enrollment from Terry Schmidt, the LCMS School Ministry Director (ret.) and National Lutheran School Accreditation (NLSA) Executive Director (ret.) who visits and oversees Lutheran schools.
- 2016 Demographic Study on the overall numerical decline in the LCMS and a summary of reasons for this decrease.
- 2016 National Center of Education Statistics (NCES) report detailing attendance within private and religious schools.
- Council for American Private Education (CAPE) research on the perceived and actual benefits of private schools, along with other items at capenet.org with a view to marketing under-appreciated benefits of private education to prospective and enrolled families.
- NLSA School Shepherd Award (2016) list of characteristics of supportive Lutheran pastors. The characteristics were noted by schools and congregations of their pastors who provide exceptional support for Lutheran schools, to learn ways to encourage greater clergy support for existing and new schools.
- Presentation of “25 Ways Toward an Interwoven Ministry,” from the 2009 National Lutheran Administrators Conference.

Recommendations:

- Strengthen Lutheran schools in academics and educational philosophy, strong and distinctively Lutheran faith instruction, safety, Christian culture and character formation.
- Emphasize diligent faith instruction and its importance in the congregation and the home.
- Equip and encourage young Lutherans to become strong Lutheran teachers in academics and in the Christian faith.
- Promote the value of Lutheran schools and other forms of Lutheran education using modern media outlets and existing publications.
- Establish and promote cost-effective yet theologically-sound forms of Lutheran education, no matter which format it takes (e.g. traditional day schools, online education, homeschooling, cottage schools, community co-ops or combinations thereof) to seminaries, pastors, congregations, homeschooling families and neighboring communities through radio, television, social media, bulletin inserts, printed Bible classes and regional conferences with information regarding the temporal and eternal value of strong Lutheran education.
- Encourage mutual support and unity among church, school, home and community.
- Share recommendations developed by LCMS School Ministry with pastors, seminarians, deaconesses, congregations and schools of how to best encourage, support and interact with their existing congregations and educational ministries.
- Actively market the benefits of private religious education to the community and congregation.

Conclusions:

You have multiplied, O Lord my God, your wondrous deeds and your thoughts toward us; none can compare with you! I will proclaim and tell of them, yet they are more than can be told. Psalm 40:5 (ESV)

I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now. Philippians 1:3–5 (ESV)

The reasons for decline in Lutheran schools and enrollment are multifaceted. This report discovered and enumerated many. Some are internal; others are external. Internal reasons include aging population, size of family, lack of denominational loyalty (younger families leaving for non-denominational churches), weakened catechesis, ineffective leadership, lack of strategic planning and decreased funding. Additionally, in a drastic decline from historic trends, only one-third of those working in Lutheran education are on the Roster. External reasons include cultural shifts such as increased divorce, breakdown of the family, weakened economy, a substantial increase of educational alternatives during the last two generations of students, secularization of America and increased funding for public education.

The recommendations for growth in Lutheran education explored in this report are as multifaceted as the reasons for decline. We encourage reading and selecting those recommendations appropriate to the reader’s context (rural, suburban, urban). We also commend and encourage all who teach faithfully in our churches, schools and homes and we urge renewed support for Lutheran education in all its forms (Lutheran schools, online education, home...
school, and many blended forms of these) from corporate Synod, the Concordia University System, the seminaries, and the Church body at large. Lutheran education impacts the lives of children with the Gospel of Jesus Christ, connects congregations with their communities and engenders a sense of vocation in church and world. The Lord of the Church is at work in powerful ways in our schools.

The success and growth of our national church body can be closely aligned with the work being conducted in our schools. Christian education is our heritage and our future.

"Only take care, and keep your soul diligently, lest you forget the things that your eyes have seen, and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life. Make them known to your children and your children's children—[T]he Lord said to me, 'Gather the people to me, that I may let them hear my words, so that they may learn to fear me all the days that they live on the earth, and that they may teach their children so.'" Deuteronomy 4:9–10 (ESV)

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VIII. Res. 11-10 Task Force on Synod Nominations / Elections Processes

Charge
The task force was formed by 2016 Res. 11-10 (Proceedings, p. 203) to “review existing nominations bylaw procedures [Bylaw section 3.12] in the interest of combining them into a comprehensive process with appropriate time frames to facilitate convention preparations.”

Membership
The initiating resolution established the membership of the committee as follows: the Secretary and Chief Administrative Officer of the Synod; representatives of Commissions on Handbook (Rev. Dr. Dale Sattgast) and Constitutional Matters (Rev. Dr. George Gude); chairmen of the 2016 Convention Committees for Convention Nominations (Rev. Dr. Ron Garwood) and on Elections (Rev. Gregory Walton); one district secretary (Rev. Luke Zimmerman) and one district president (Rev. John Hill) appointed by the Council of Presidents; and Mrs. Barb Below, Rev. Dr. Raymond Hartwig, and Mrs. Kathy Schulz, appointed by the Board of Directors.

First Meeting Set Direction
The task force met electronically on March 29, 2017, reviewing and discussing:

- An overview by Secretary Sias of the positions, processes, and timelines of the remaining two modes of nomination and election to be implemented for the 2019 convention:
  
  a) For President, First Vice-President, and Regional Vice-Presidents: Candidates are selected numerically from congregational nominating ballots, with no floor nominations possible.

  b) For Secretary and for at-large and regional positions (the latter, newly integrated into this process by the 2016 convention) on the Board of Directors and other boards and committees of the Synod: Nominations are received from agencies, officers, congregational and individual members, and members of member congregations; at least two candidates are selected for each position by the Committee for Convention Nominations (CCN), with floor nominations possible.

- An overview by Secretary Sias of process changes already made or being implemented (within the flexibility of existing bylaws) designed to improve the function and coordination of existing nominations and elections procedures, including:

  Forms, procedures, and planned electronic voter registration (later delayed until after the 2019 convention for technical reasons) for the election of the President

  Revision of communication plans (print publications and calls for nomination, congregational postcards, email and Internet announcements) to coordinate timely reminders of convention processes

  Revision of forms and procedures to incorporate regional positions and "supplemental nominee information" (related to Concordia University System board of directors and board of regents positions) into simplified and consolidated nomination forms

  Design of fillable PDF forms and automation mechanisms, to improve the efficiency of the whole process within existing timetables

The task force noted that the scope of its assignment, as understood from its initiating resolution, was to coordinate existing processes into a suitable and efficient timeline. Having considered the material presented, the task force noted that the 2016 convention had already enacted significant steps toward coordinating and consolidating Synod’s nominations and elections processes, and that it would await updates from the Office of the Secretary on the implementation of indicated process and technology improvements and any perceived need to adjust bylaw timelines.

Updates
Secretary Sias provided formal updates to the task force on June 22, 2018, and on December 10, 2018. The first update included the forms (extensively revised and consolidated) and procedures to be used for the two modes of nomination and election noted above.
The first update noted “that the bylaw changes made by the 2016 convention and the work done since (and a bit yet to do) have resulted in a system that:

- is as ‘comprehensive’ (unified) as practical, while retaining the character of congregational / numerical nominations for President and Vice-Presidents and qualification / committee-based nominations for other offices with their more diverse requirements; and that
- allows, given technological improvements made or in-progress, for ‘appropriate time frames to facilitate convention preparations.’”

The update proposed, and without objection the task force agreed by electronic communication, that “the progress made by the 2016 convention, in unifying the regional board positions with the qualification / committee-based nominations process, and the technical progress made to render the existing nomination timeline more workable [were sufficient to] conclude that no further bylaw work is necessary at this time.” Challenges remaining to be addressed, outside the present task force’s scope of work, were noted:

- Restoration of vigorous participation rates in both numerical and committee-based nominations processes, both in long-term decline.
- Development of an online-interactive nominations system, which could customize questions asked to offices for which nominations are being submitted and provide for retention of records (for example, district president recommendations) across triennia, and possibly serve also on the district level and for other appointment processes.
- 2016 Res. 11-14’s authorization of the “Bylaw 3.2.5 Committee” to act for the Committee for Convention Nominations after the submission of its final report needs incorporation and formalization in the bylaws, a task presently being undertaken by the Commission on Handbook.

The final update to the task force on Dec. 10, 2018 included this draft report as well as the Secretary’s presentation of data on the CCN-preliminary process (Bylaw 3.12.3.4), which was concluding at that time. The use of a newly developed, fillable-form-driven database system enabled an increased number of electable offices to be handled much more efficiently than in the past. The Secretary reported a numerically adequate number of accepted nominations for the various positions to be elected, reporting specially on the regional positions newly assigned to the CCN, and noted that congregational nominations for the Praesidium and registrations for the presidential vote are well underway.

Conclusion

With the adoption of this final report, the task force concluded that changes by the 2016 convention and technological and process improvements since have rendered the two nomination and election processes of the Synod as “comprehensive” as possible, while retaining their individual natures; that their present manner of elaboration in the bylaws allows for helpful innovation; and that, therefore, no further bylaw changes are necessary at this time.

John W. Sias, Secretary

IX. 2016 Resolution 13-01A
Task Force Report
October 2018

 Abbreviations

AC Augsburg Confession
FC SD Formula of Concord Solid Declaration
LC Large Catechism
SA Smalcald Articles
SC Small Catechism
Tr Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope

Report on Priesthood and Office

Introduction

At its 2016 Convention, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) adopted Resolution 13-01A. The resolution (referred to herein as Res. 13-01A) emphasizes several points.

Above all, it reminds us that in our new birth in Baptism all Christians, as children of God in Christ Jesus His Son, possess the keys of heaven and are royal priests! We are, quoting Luther, “true clerics” and this identity must not be “taken away,” but should be “brought out into the open.” Therefore all Christians (“the laity from δικαζόμενον, “the people”) are to be encouraged in the priestly calling of “evangelism and the task of outreach, as well as mercy, education, visitation, and so forth in our increasingly diverse and challenging cultural context.”

Second, while asserting with Luther that “we are all priests,” Res. 13-01A also affirms with Luther that “ministers [are] chosen from among us” to act “in our name.” That is, there is a distinctive Office of Public Ministry charged with the responsibility to act on behalf of the royal priests in the public exercise of the ministry of the Gospel, the preaching and teaching of Christ’s Word and the sharing of His saving gifts in the Sacraments, including public absolution.

Third, the resolution earnestly affirms that these two “offices,” the royal priesthood and the public ministry, though distinct, are complementary to one another and together provide a “blessed partnership” in the proclamation of the Gospel. It is this third af-
The concept of the royal priesthood, if not the term itself, figures prominently. The Office of Public Ministry in a number of ways over the years—Missouri Synod which, for example, has addressed the matter of Ministry have both had a prominent place. The same is true for the Reformation the royal priesthood and the Office of Public Ministry. This is not a new conversation for Luthers. Early in the Reformation, based on his study of Scripture, Luther accented the importance of the royal priesthood against Rome. That is, he emphasized that every baptized Christian is a priest and is called to the importance of the royal priesthood against Rome. That is, he emphasized that every baptized Christian is a priest and is called to the singular purpose of providing the treasures of the Gospel and Sacraments.

At the same time, it is not our intention to exaggerate either the sins of pastors or those of the laity. Not every problem at work in the “blessed partnership” is a result of specific sins (in some tit-for-tat manner). And, most certainly, we may not pretend that only one or the other—either pastors or lay people—is the “guilty party” who has caused every problem alone. We intend only to identify certain particular areas in which sin has undermined or destroyed what God intends to be a blessed partnership between pastor and people.

I. Areas of Conflict, Concern, and Confusion

In the following paragraphs, we briefly address some of the ways that the power of sin is at work in pastors and congregations. It is never hard to find examples of sin at work, for as Luther begins his Ninety-five Theses, we are all poor sinners whose entire lives should be lived in repentance. Every royal priest is simul justus et peccator—both justified and sinner, or a sinner-saint. That includes pastors, who are themselves members of the royal priesthood appointed to the Office of Public Ministry. Sin is no illusion: “we repent throughout our whole life and are displeased with ourselves, unless anyone may be so foolish as to think he must only pretend to pray for the forgiveness of debts. For the debts for which we are commanded to pray are real and not to be treated lightly; and even if they were venial, we could not be saved unless we were remitted.”

At the same time, it is not our intention to exaggerate either the sins of pastors or those of the laity. Not every problem at work in the “blessed partnership” is a result of specific sins (in some tit-for-tat manner). And, most certainly, we may not pretend that only one or the other—either pastors or lay people—is the “guilty party” who has caused every problem alone. We intend only to identify certain particular areas in which sin has undermined or destroyed what God intends to be a blessed partnership between pastor and people.

1. Areas of Conflict: Sin at Work in the Blessed Partnership

a. Pastors “lording it over the laity” and their calling as royal priests

Pastors and other public servants of the Word are called to the public administration of the keys of Christ’s kingdom on behalf of the fellowship—this is the “Office of Public Ministry” (in synodical parlance) or the “Preaching Office” (in the narrow sense, see below). The public ministry is a high calling, worthy to be held in honor. Indeed, it is necessary to say—as our Synod has throughout its history—that it “is the highest office in the Church” because it is established for the singular purpose of providing the treasures of the Gospel and Sacraments. But the Office is not one of privilege and perquisites. The pastor is “a servant of Christ” or “a servant of the Word,” not the lord of the laity. Problems arise quickly when a pastor sees his calling as one of superiority. As undershepherd, he certainly does lead, but he comes in the manner of the Lord Jesus Himself, “not to be served, but to serve” (Matt. 20:28). Walther echoes this, reminding us that, “The preaching office is not a special state in opposition to or holier than that of ordinary Christians, as was the Levitical priesthood; rather, it is an office of service.”

Anchoring this thesis in seven passages (1 Peter 2:9; Rev. 1:6; Gal. 3:28; Matt. 23:8–12; 1 Cor. 3:5; 2 Cor. 4:5; and Col. 1:24–25), Walther rejects any difference in status (or standing) among the New Testament priests. Those who hold the Preaching Office are only “those who minister among a priestly people.”
.Scripture does, however, enjoin the congregation to obey its leaders (Heb. 13:17). Yet, it is an obedience to the Word that the Preaching Office exists to proclaim—an obedience to the Good Shepherd and His Word. So Walther also adds references to the authority of the Office: in Thesis V, he affirms the authority to preach and administer Word and Sacraments and to exercise spiritual judgment.18 In Thesis VII, he affirms that same authority, yet emphasizes that it is not independent, but “conferred by God through the congregation as the possessor of the priesthood and of all churchly authority, to exercise the rights of the spiritual priesthood in public Office.”19

It is quite clear, then, that a pastor who feels he is owed absolute obedience or resents those who question what he says or does, misunderstands his Office. Arrogance, or a sense of superiority—perhaps based on his training in theology and pastoral practice—is contrary to the servanthood and humility of Christ. The apostles’ words lauding our humble Lord and encouraging a “mind” like His apply to all of us, including pastors (Phil. 2:5–8). Therefore, when a candidate for the Office of Public Ministry is ordained or installed, it is appropriate that one of the appointed passages is 1 Peter 5:2–4, which mandates that his exercise of oversight of Christ’s people be done without “domineering over those in your charge.”20

Certain actions by pastors, contrary to the necessary humility required by the Office, have led to divisions and disharmony with members of the royal priesthood and bear mentioning as examples of conduct that create a rift where God intends a common bond between pastor and people. Perhaps the most serious have been pastors who have exercised church discipline in a seemingly arbitrary or indiscriminate manner.21 Some have questioned or even denied that “ordinary lay people” know enough to judge doctrine. In other cases, pastors have urged a member or member family to “find another church” when there is a conflict with a pastor’s actions or decisions. Dislike or animosity has been expressed by pastors toward certain brothers and sisters in Christ. In still other situations, some pastors have substituted their own priorities and policies for the duties of the call documents and chafed at lay leaders who sought to hold them accountable for the duties enjoined by such documents. Pastors have sometimes sought to deflect attention from their own weaknesses, either by blaming their congregation for a variety of problems or neglecting to recognize or encourage the laity to utilize their gifts and abilities in leadership and service. On other occasions a pastor may assume that a congregation’s inability to provide for all his economic needs is intentional and accuse the laity of malicious behavior without cause. In some cases, some pastors have claimed that they alone may fulfill such responsibilities as teaching or visitation or evangelism in the church or deny the importance and validity of the task of royal priests to proclaim the Gospel to others.

The task force wishes to emphasize that the preceding paragraph is not representative of the great majority of LCMS pastors. We are richly blessed as a Synod with thousands of men who humbly preach and serve. The examples above are simply some forms that sin sometimes takes in its threat toward the blessed partnership God intends for pastors and people.

b. Laidly dishonoring or “lording it over” their pastor and his call.

The blessed partnership is also sometimes threatened or broken by attitudes and actions of the laity. Royal priests are called to a life of repentance and praise, with thanksgiving that there is one from the royal priesthood who has been called by God through the congregation to administer His gifts in their midst. The scourge of sin fights against thankful hearts and chafes at honoring the Office of Public Ministry and the exercise of its legitimate authority. “Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you” (Heb. 13:17). The admonition from Hebrews is easily ignored, especially in a culture that views words like “obedient” or “submissive” as examples of servility and demeaning conduct. So it is noteworthy that our worship forms support Scripture and not contemporary attitudes as the order of ordination includes a reading of Hebrews 13:17. The officiant then asks whether the congregation will show “love, honor, and obedience” to their pastor.22 The duty of the pastor to serve in faithfulness to Christ rather than in keeping with changing human opinions is also made evident in the service of ordination when the congregation commits itself to receive the pastor as one who serves Christ “according to the Church’s public confession.”23

Here, too, we mention some examples of behavior and attitudes that are contrary to our calling as members of the Church, Christ’s holy people, His royal priesthood. The most serious temptation facing Christians is to reject the truth of God’s Word. The Office of Public Ministry exists to proclaim that truth, and to make known the whole counsel of God faithfully (Acts 20:27). Too often, congregations assume that attitudes and practices of the secular world are also appropriate for our life together as Christians. Thus, a congregation may view its pastor simply as an employee of the church—theyir employee who works for them to satisfy their wishes and priorities—rather than as a “servant of Christ and steward of the mysteries of God” (1 Cor. 4:1) given to the congregation for their sustenance. It then seems consistent that he should be subject to hiring and firing at will. Moreover, church members may then fail to recognize that the pastor’s central responsibility is spiritual in nature (see Acts 6:1–4) and they may also seek to impose on the pastor practices and responsibilities that are inconsistent with his call.

This same mindset may lead laity to blame their pastor for all their church’s troubles and ills, and especially for its lack of numerical growth. In such cases the royal priests assume that filling the pastoral Office is a mere convenience and not a biblical requirement. When a congregation then believes that a church’s growth (or lack of it) is simply a barometer of pastoral effectiveness, it is ignoring or forgetting several things. Scripture makes plain that while Christ’s servants in the Office of Ministry play an important role, their work is to “plant” and to “water,” while God alone gives the growth (1 Cor. 3:6). Neither should a congregation forget its own identity as a royal priesthood and that they too are called by God to holy lives that share Christ’s love in word and deed. It is flatly contrary to 1 Peter 2:9—to say nothing of countless other passages such as Matthew 28:19 or Acts 1:8—to expect the pastor to fulfill all the responsibilities of evangelism, counsel, catechesis, etc. It is also important to remember the current challenges which the Church faces in western society, such as cultural opposition, demographic shifts, and so forth (see the next section). For such reasons, making pastors scapegoats for congregational decline is wrong. If lay leaders then seek to use financial means, such as lowering or raising the pastor’s salary or his benefit package, to reward or punish him, the conflict only worsens. In extreme instances, financial manipulation like salary cuts are used to coerce a called minister to resign his call or seek one elsewhere.24
The task force wishes to emphasize that the preceding examples are not representative of the great majority of LCMS congregations and laity. They are not. In general, the laity and congregations of Synod hold their pastors and other called workers in high esteem, affirm the authority of the Word, and sacrifice to support those they call. The examples given simply illustrate some of the forms sin has sometimes taken in a fallen world.

2. Areas of Concern: Challenges to the Pastor-Priesthood Relationship

It is a truism to say that we live in a period of rapid change. We face change in every area of life: in marriage, family, education, demographics, technology, values, culture, and on and on. The church is not exempt. We will identify some areas of concern that affect the relationship of the royal priesthood and the Office of Public Ministry, but our listing is by no means exhaustive.

One source of challenges is current American culture and values. This is the subject of whole books. In this context, however, we will briefly examine only changing understandings of the institutions of marriage and the family and religious participation patterns.

With regard to marriage and family, many recent changes are obvious, but underlying them is a perspective that developed slowly over several centuries, namely, that marriage is viewed primarily as a romantic bond between two individuals. That contrasts with the biblical concept of marriage and family with its foundation in Genesis 2:24, “Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.” This view sees marriage as a permanent bond of loving and sacrificial companionship (Eph. 5) that assumes, normally, the birth of children and creation of a new family, and is supplemented, after the Fall, with a realistic appreciation that marriage is a means of restraining sin (1 Cor. 7).

Where intimacy or romantic love becomes the central purpose for marriage, rather than the creation of a new family unit, marriage itself is fatally wounded. For example, intimacy doesn’t need marriage. Child-bearing doesn’t need marriage. Soon, marriage is a mere option. Thus, a same-sex couple is as worthy of the option to marry as an opposite sex one, an increasing percentage of adults are unmarried, many think that marriage is obsolete (39 percent), and increasing percentages of children are born to unmarried mothers (40 percent).

Christian churches have stood in opposition to today’s perspectives in various degrees. Many church members are grateful for this steadfast resistance. Yet, as opinions have shifted, churches like the LCMS are increasingly viewed negatively for that resistance. This make the evangelism of the unchurched more challenging. This is the subject of whole books. In this context, however, we will briefly examine only changing understandings of the institutions of marriage and the family and religious participation patterns.

26 The examples given simply illustrate some of the forms sin has sometimes taken in a fallen world.

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Many of the congregations in numerical decline are also struggling financially. As a result, an increasing number of LCMS churches are unable to provide for a full-time pastor. In some cases, pastors are serving churches that are compelled to reduce salaries and benefits for housing and insurance. Other congregations are vacant but cannot call a pastor because of limited financial resources. Increasing numbers of congregations which had their own pastor in the past are now able to secure pastoral care only part-time, either by participating in a dual-point (or multi-point) parish, by arranging for a long-term vacancy pastor, or by utilizing a district-trained deacon or a layman to lead many or most services.

Compounding such concerns, the LCMS is also facing a growing shortage of well-prepared pastors. Aging is affecting not only the congregations of the Synod, but also its pool of pastors. Many rostered pastors are now retired or nearing retirement age: one-third of all LCMS pastors are retired; 17 percent of active pastors are 65 or older; 34 percent of all active pastors are 10 years or less away from retirement age. Other rostered pastors are serving churches that are compelled to reduce salaries and benefits for housing and insurance. Other congregations are vacant but cannot call a pastor because of limited financial resources. Increasing numbers of congregations which had their own pastor in the past are now able to secure pastoral care only part-time, either by participating in a dual-point (or multi-point) parish, by arranging for a long-term vacancy pastor, or by utilizing a district-trained deacon or a layman to lead many or most services.

The Synod also faces a shortage of pastors who are able to meet the challenge of specialized calls, such as calls to urban settings, to serve ethnic and racial minorities or to serve non-English speaking congregations and mission stations.

The Synod is seeking, through various means, to provide pastors. In addition to its traditional residential seminary training, the Synod also has programs for distance learning such as the Center.
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for Hispanic Studies, the Ethnic Immigrant Institute of Theology, Spanish Language Church Worker Formation, and the Specialized Ministry Pastor (SMP) tracks provided by our seminaries. The Synod also regularly colloquizes individuals who are found to be doctrinally, morally, and educationally fit to serve as pastors (this includes, since 2016, a number of district-taught deacons who have been colloquized as SMP pastors). Nevertheless, our current seminary enrollment and colloquy programs are not adequate to meet the challenges of retirement or the increasing diversity of the U.S.

Such limitations present serious challenges to the LCMS and can cause problems in the relationship of the royal priesthood to the Office of Public Ministry. Struggling congregations seek help from their districts and from the Synod’s national leaders and its seminaries. Yet, the Synod often is unable to provide the hoped-for assistance because pastors are unavailable to serve (often because a congregation cannot offer a viable level of financial support). As congregations and missions struggle and the Synod faces a growing shortage of pastoral candidates, the atmosphere is ripe for districts and congregations to feel isolated from Synod and its seminaries. This further hampers the Synod’s mission to the lost, invites frustration on the part of both royal priests and pastors, and may cause neglect of the Means of Grace as people experience a growing sense of alienation from “the church” which has seemingly failed them. In other cases, especially when the laity takes on pastoral responsibilities in an ongoing manner, the result may be the false conclusion that no one really needs the Office of Public Ministry or that it is a mere luxury, not a necessity for the Church.

3. Areas of Confusion and Uncertainty

It cannot be surprising that there is confusion about the relationship of the royal priesthood and the Office of Public Ministry, given some of the conflicts and challenges considered in the previous two subsections. One way to identify at least part of the confusion is to lay out some questions that are being asked in the LCMS. Some are questions a pastor or an individual royal priest or a congregation might ask. Others are more theoretical in nature. Given that Resolution 13-01A ultimately seeks synodwide study and conversation about Priesthood and Office in light of “the challenges of an increasingly multicultural North America” and in light of a “growing number of congregations and ministries that cannot provide financial support for a pastor,” the task force believes that informed synodwide conversation around the following questions and others—rather than the task force alone addressing these situations—will be the best way to accomplish the goal of the resolution. The questions that follow are purposefully written for discussion with terms and context often not defined.

1) If the Office of Public Ministry is given to the Church with the authority to proclaim the Gospel and administer the Sacraments on behalf of the congregation, are lay members of the royal priesthood then usurping that Office when they share their faith in a public setting?

2) How should a pastor respond when lay members of the royal priesthood treat him as no more than another member of the same priesthood and disrespect his Office and calling?

3) Is it wrong for lay members of the royal priesthood to lead a Bible study in their homes? May they lead adult Bible studies in the church? Is it wrong for female members to lead a study if it includes men?

4) What should the pastor’s response be if he is treated like a mere employee (“a hireling”) with threats to get rid of him or cut his salary if he doesn’t measure up to congregational goals?

5) Is it God-pleasing for a member of the royal priesthood to engage in church planting, gathering a group of believers with the goal of starting a new congregation, if he is not called to the Office of Public Ministry?

6) What should be done if a pastor’s faithful teaching of Scripture and the Confessions is viewed as nothing more than his opinion?

7) How can a pastor use gifts or skills that do not directly pertain to the Office of Public Ministry in order to prevent the perception that he is arrogant or imposing his “agenda” on a congregation?

8) Should our pastors receive regular reviews or evaluations of their work and if so, what sorts of reviews are appropriate?

9) Since the Bible uses a number of different titles for those who preach and teach the Word of God (e.g., elder, evangelist, deacon/minister, overseer [bishop], pastor, prophet, teacher), does the “Office of Public Ministry” include them all?

10) How do the synodical offices referred to as “auxiliary” (e.g., teacher, DCE, deaconess, and other rostered offices) relate to the Office of Public Ministry?

11) What is the possible role of bi-vocational pastors (“worker-priests”) today?

12) How has the church addressed clergy shortages and conflict between laity and clergy in the past?

13) What is the relationship of Licensed Lay Deacons, particularly those who preach and/or administer the Sacraments, to the Office of Public Ministry?

14) What is the importance of ordination since it is not commanded by God, but is an apostolic custom?

15) Is it ever appropriate for a General Pastor (in contrast to a Specialized Ministry Pastor) to oversee and provide spiritual supervision for those who are providing Word and Sacrament ministry but who are not ordained (especially in long-term vacancies where obtaining an ordained man of any kind does not seem possible)?

16) What guidance does the Table of Duties provide for the relationship between the royal priesthood and the Office of Public Ministry?

17) How do AC V, XIV, and XXVIII, together with relevant articles of the LCMS Constitution, relate to one another and to contemporary challenges?

18) Do only pastors have “pastoral” responsibilities? Is it appropriate for lay members of the royal priesthood to visit the sick and share the Word with them? Under what circumstances, if any, might a royal priest who is not called to the Office of Public Ministry exercise such responsibilities as preaching?
19) What about emergencies? How do we define emergency? Does the contemporary challenge of an increasingly non-Christian North America, coupled with the missionary mandate, constitute an emergency? Is this the sort of emergency for having lay leaders help congregations in need or serve in place of a pastor? Is this the kind of setting for circuit-riding pastors? That is, are these the circumstances in which the assumptions and rules of past practice are no longer applicable?

20) How should congregations respond when they face prolonged vacancies and no ordained pastor from our fellowship is available to serve them? When a congregation is being led by a layman, how is the congregation to be assured that they are receiving solid, biblical teaching?

21) In light of the rapidly increasing cultural and ethnic diversity of 21st century America, how should the LCMS and its congregations prioritize mission efforts and how may it utilize both the royal priesthood and the Office of Public Ministry in those efforts?

22) Given the importance of personal relationships in the life of the church and in its mission, what can the LCMS and its congregations do to encourage both royal priests and pastors to be intentional about developing the kinds of relationships that enhance the church’s outreach?

23) Given the opportunities of an increasingly multicultural North America, how can our congregations prepare to serve, support, and welcome people from other cultures into our congregations and community?

24) How should our congregations move from simply being a collection of individuals to a stronger community of faith in Jesus Christ with accountability to one another? This is reflected in the New Testament and among many immigrant communities today. Might it minimize the confusion of roles between the offices of the royal priesthood and the Public Ministry?

25) Mission movements past and present involve both clergy and laity. How can the Synod meaningfully incorporate both, given the sometimes unhealthy tension between the royal priesthood and the Office of Public Ministry? What roles do both laity and clergy play in today’s context?

26) What should a congregation do when it is unable to receive the Lord’s Supper for a prolonged period of time because no ordained pastor is available?

27) How should the LCMS respond to what appears to be a gap between the beliefs of many of our laity and the teachings of Scripture and the Confessions?

28) How should the Synod respond to the declining number of available pastors?

29) How should congregations and Synod respond to the increasing numbers of congregations that will have difficulty supporting a pastor financially?

Change of any kind often leads to misunderstandings or anxiety in relationships. This is true also of the blessed partnership between the royal priesthood and the Office of Public Ministry. The kinds of changes and challenges we have identified frequently undermine trust and foster suspicion and animosity. The Word of God alone has power to forgive and heal where there is sin, misunderstanding, and conflict. In addition, a fresh look and in-depth study of the Word is vital in a time of change, for with change comes an opportunity to reflect once more about our life together in Christ as we share in His mission to the world.

II. The Royal Priesthood in the “Blessed Partnership”

Church of God, elect and glorious, Holy nation, chosen race;
Called as God’s own special people, Royal priests and heirs of grace:
Know the purpose of your calling, Show to all His mighty deeds;
Tell of love that knows no limits, Grace that meets all human needs. (LSB 646, v. 1)

In light of the challenges identified above, this task force has been asked to consider “the Royal Priesthood and the Office of the Public Ministry in the New Testament.” We will take them in turn. On the matter of the royal priesthood, we encourage the reader to supplement the following material with the excellent recent report of the CTCR, The Royal Priesthood: Identity and Mission.

a) The royal priesthood in Scripture

To consider the royal priesthood biblically, we must note that the priestly character of the entire people of God is affirmed first in the Old Testament (OT), even though the OT gives great attention to the particular Levitical priestly office of Aaron and his descendants. Prior to the establishment of the Levitical priesthood the Lord says already in Exodus 19:5–6: “Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. These are the words that you shall speak to the people of Israel.”

The response of the entire children of Israel is then recorded: “All the people answered together and said, ‘All that the Lord has spoken we will do’” (v. 8, emphasis added). This characterization of Israel as “a kingdom of priests” is notwithstanding the establishment of a particular priesthood among them—as one sees, for example, in Exodus 28.

Thus, a “blessed complementarity” between the whole priestly people of God and those from among the people set aside for particular service is not a New Testament (NT) innovation. Despite this OT precedent, however, it is true that in the NT there is “a new and different kind of priesthood,” because the NT speaks only of the priesthood of the whole people of God and connects its entire importance to Christ, the great High Priest. Hebrews 3:1–2 says, “Therefore, holy brothers, you who share in a heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our confession, who was faithful to him who appointed him, just as Moses also was faithful in all God’s house.” In Christ, “the high priest of our confession,” we “share in a heavenly calling” with Him to the priesthood conferred in Baptism.

Note well: although God’s people failed in the priestly duty to obey the Lord’s voice and keep His command (Ex. 19:5), Christ our High Priest perfectly fulfilled the Law on our behalf (Matt. 5:17–20; 2 Cor. 5:21) and gave His own blood at the cross as the sin offering for all and for all time (Heb. 9–10). Therefore, by His sacrificial death and resurrection, we are cleansed for priestly ser-
priestly function. Thus, God’s people “share in a heavenly calling” because our priesthood is derived from Christ, the great High Priest. Our heavenly calling to the royal priesthood is conferred as we are cleansed by faith and Baptism into Christ (Acts 15:8–9; Eph. 5:26).

The central to the work of Christ, our Great High Priest. All depends on this priestly work, the all-availing sacrifice He offered in His earthly ministry the priestly work of sacrifice, prayer, and proclamation. Proclamation is the priestly work directed from God to humanity. Sacrifice and prayer are the priestly work directed toward God from man.

Since the identity of the High Priest is determinative of the whole priesthood, we start with the work of sacrifice. Sacrifice is central to the work of Christ, our Great High Priest. All depends on this priestly work, the all-availing sacrifice He offered in His body on the cross (Eph. 2:16; Eph. 5:2; Heb. 9:26). It is this work that cleanses His disciples so that they can be His priests. Only by faith in Him and in His atoning sacrifice do Christians become priests and “holy brothers” with “a heavenly calling” (Heb. 3:1).

Luther speaks of priestly work as mediation, and notes that it moves in two directions—from God and toward God. He speaks of three areas of priestly work: proclaiming the Word, sacrificing, and praying. Proclamation is the priestly work directed from God to humanity. Sacrifice and prayer are the priestly work directed toward God from man.

The Lord Jesus, our Priest and Mediator (1 Tim. 2:9), directly exercised in His earthly ministry the priestly work of sacrifice, intercession, and teaching (John 17; Rom. 8:34; Heb. 7:25, Luke 5:20; 7:48) and He continues to exercise His priestly office today. He grants the forgiveness of sins won by His atoning sacrifice through mediators, that is, through His priestly people, to whom He grants the Word of absolution—the Gospel of the forgiveness of sins for Christ’s sake.

The Gospel unlocks heaven (Matt. 18:18–20). That the keys of the kingdom (Office of the Keys) have been granted to all the Church is a fundamental aspect of the Church’s identity as a royal priesthood. So also, we rightly hear the command of Christ to go and make disciples of the nations as a command addressed to the whole Church (and not a command that is restricted to the pastoral Office alone). This is the proclamation of the Word—the first priestly function. Simply put, we are all called to tell others about Christ and Him crucified for the forgiveness of sins.

While Christ offered the once-for-all atoning sacrifice that we proclaim (Heb. 9:26), the royal priesthood also freely offers sacrifices—a second priestly work (Gal. 3:13–14). Ours are sacrifices of praise (Heb. 13:15), living sacrifices of bodies and lives devoted to the transforming work of the Spirit (Rom. 12:1–2), and also sacrificial gifts that meet temporal needs and are pleasing to God (Phil. 4:18).

The third priestly function is that the people of God are a people of intercession (1 Thess. 5:25; 1 Tim. 2:1; Heb. 13:18). It cannot be otherwise for our High Priest intercedes for us (John 17:9, Rom. 8:34; Heb. 7:25; 1 John 2:1). Moreover, He abundantly supplies us with His intercessory Spirit (Rom. 8:26–27). The lives of Christ’s royal priests are intercessory in the mediatorial work of the priesthood. For, “a priest is a mediator between God and men.”

Cyprian’s dictum that no one knows God as his Father without the Church as his mother is proven not by the work of the Church’s ministers alone, but by the life and words of the whole Church.

Luther sees this foretold by David in Psalm 110.

We are to be sure and certain that this Christ, born, according to the Scriptures, of the lineage of David, is truly the King and Priest promised in the Scriptures. We alone, who believe in Him, have the true faith, worship, and priesthood. We are the true church, or people of God.

The primary NT texts for the royal priesthood are 1 Peter 2:4–10, Revelation 1:4–6, Revelation 5:10, and Revelation 20:6. Peter’s apostolic instruction is the richest NT source for the royal priesthood (ἱεράτευμα):

As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For it stands in Scripture: “Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious, and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.” So the honor is for you who believe, but for those who do not believe, “The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone,” and “A stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense.” They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do. But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God’s people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

First Peter begins with two images, a spiritual house and a priesthood, to refer to God’s people (1 Peter 2:10)—to all who have been “born again to a living hope … being guarded through faith,” (1 Peter 1:3, 4). He goes on to speak of the people of God as “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for [God’s] own possession” (1 Peter 2:9). The people of God find their identity in each instance in Jesus Christ, the precious cornerstone, the One who is Prophet, Priest, and King. Luther says: “Thus only those are the holy and spiritual priesthood who are true Christians and are built on the Stone.” Again: “We have only one single priest, Christ, who has sacrificed himself for us and all of us with him.” That Christ is the unique High Priest through whom Christians become priests bears two vital implications. First, that He alone offers the sacrifice by which His priests are sanctified: “Christians do not
exercise their priestly sacrifice, for the purpose of obtaining forgiveness of sins, either for themselves or for others.” Second, that as priests with their Brother, the Great High Priest, we, too, share in the three-fold priestly work of proclamation, sacrifice, and prayer.

On its face, then, 1 Peter 2:4–10 reinforces what we have seen while considering Psalm 110: Our priestly identity comes from “God through Jesus Christ” the High Priest. All Christians, as Christ’s royal priests, enact their priestly life by proclaiming the wonderful, saving deeds of God in Christ (His “excellencies”) and by their “spiritual sacrifices” (which include everything from a holy life in one’s vocation to praise, prayer, and intercession).

Peter first refers to “spiritual sacrifices” (1 Peter 2:6) and then to proclamation of “the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light” (1 Peter 2:9). The adjective spiritual, referring to the sacrifices of the NT priesthood, is important. It sets the sacrifices offered by this priesthood apart from the Levitical priesthood’s animal sacrifices. This is not to draw a Platonic distinction between body and spirit, however, for Paul in Romans 12:1 parallels Peter’s exhortation to priestly sacrifice: “I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.” As “living sacrifices,” the spiritual sacrifices of the royal priests certainly also include conduct. Christ offers the sacrifice of His body in death, while we offer the grateful sacrifice of redeemed lives, graciously made new and eternal in Him. Thus, the whole life of the royal priests is to be one of sacrifice within their daily vocations.

The priestly life of prayer is not mentioned in 1 Peter 2, but it appears in 1 Peter 3 where the relationship of husbands to wives is framed as one of gentle understanding, with husbands honoring wives as joint heirs of eternal life, with the result “that your prayers are accepted” (1 Peter 3:7). Prayer, of course, is not for husbands alone. All the royal priests, baptized as God’s adopted sons and daughters through the work of Jesus our High Priest, are called to a life of prayer. “Our High Priest, Jesus, teaches us in His words and by His example.”60 Christ Jesus invites us to join in prayer, saying to all His people: “When you pray, say, ‘Father, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come…’” (Luke 11:2–4; see also Matt. 6:9–13). Anchored in the work of the High Priest, the royal priesthood prays confidently. As the CTCR states:

> Therefore it is only “by the blood of Jesus,” by “the new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body,” that we are privileged and invited to “draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith” (Heb. 10:19–22). Only by virtue of our adoption as God’s children through our baptism into Christ’s death and Resurrection are we enabled to cry out “Abba, Father!” (Rom. 8:15). Only through the reconciling work of our high priest, Jesus, the Son of God, can we “approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need” (Heb. 4:16).61

The royal priesthood therefore prays constantly (1 Thess. 5:17; 1 Tim. 2:1–5) for all people and under any and all circumstances (Is. 55:6; Matt. 5:44; Luke 6:28; Phil. 4:6) in simple obedience to God’s command and joyful response to His promises that He will hear us.62 And we pray, most especially, for the work of the Gospel so that God’s name is hallowed and many come to faith (First and Second Petitions of the Lord’s Prayer; Luke 10:2; Acts 2:39; Col. 4:2–4).

Prayer for the hallowing of God’s name as the Gospel is declared reminds us that the parallel to the call to offer spiritual sacrifices and prayer is Peter’s exhortation to proclaim the wonders of God, who has brought us from darkness to light. The Greek verb evangello (ἐγγαγγέλλω) in 1 Peter 2:9 appears only here.63 It is translated as “proclaim” in the ESV and NKJV, as “declare” in the NIV, and as “show forth” in KJV.64 The verb therefore is a straightforward reference to making something known to others. Here, of course, it is the “excellencies” of God who, in Christ, calls people from darkness into His marvelous light.

Luther calls this the “chief function” and “first and foremost duty” of the royal priesthood.

A priest must be God’s messenger and must have a command from God to proclaim His Word. You must, says Peter, exercise the chief function of a priest, that is, to proclaim the wonderful deed God has performed for you to bring you out of darkness into the light. For you must bend every effort to realize what God has done for you. Then let it be your chief work to proclaim this publicly and to call everyone into the light into which you have been called. Where you find people who do not know this, you should instruct and also teach them as you have learned, namely, how one must be saved through the power and strength of God and come out of darkness into the light.65

Furthermore, “Thus we see that the first and foremost duty we Christians should perform is to proclaim the wonderful deeds of God.”66 As we will emphasize below, this proclamation by the royal priesthood is distinct from, but not contradictory to the proclamation by the Office of Public Ministry. Nevertheless, every royal priest also has both the joy and responsibility to share the Gospel wherever God has placed him.

Every believer is called to confess “before men” the faith we hold in Christ Jesus (Matt. 10:32–33). As Lewis Spitz put it, Peter’s exhortation in verse 9 is straightforward: “In other words, believers as priests must also be missionaries. What else could these words mean: ‘That ye should show forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvelous light’ [KJV]?”67

The validity of this simple conclusion is illustrated in Scripture. Three examples may be cited. First, consider Anna. Luke tells of Anna in the temple, who, after hearing Simeon’s prophecy and seeing the infant Savior, immediately begins to speak of Him to others. Luther sees Anna as an example of living faith, breaking out in loving testimony: “Faith and knowledge of Christ cannot remain silent. Faith breaks forth and testifies in order to help others and to share its light, as Psalm 116:10 says: ‘I have believed, and so I also speak.’ Faith is much too kind and good to keep such treasure for itself alone.”68

In another example from the Acts of the Apostles it is the proclamation of the royal priesthood—“preaching the Lord Jesus” and “speaking the word”—that resulted in the church being planted in Samaria and Antioch (Acts 8:1–4; Acts 11:19–21, ESV).69 Such a declaration of the Word by the royal priests is exactly what was promised when Peter preached at Pentecost, declaring the fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy (Joel 2:28–29):

> And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh, and your sons
and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams; even on my male servants and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit, and they shall prophesy. (Acts 2:17–18)

Third, the Revelation to John echoes such themes in its three references to the royal priesthood (Rev. 1:4–6; Rev. 5:9–10; Rev. 20:6). There we are reminded again that the priestly people of God are all the redeemed, given our priesthood by the gracious action of Him who “loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father” (Rev. 1:5–6). John adds an emphasis on the catholicity of the priesthood, for the royal priesthood is nothing less than the whole people of God in Christ Jesus, including believers “from every tribe and language and people and nation,” together with the lyrics for our eternal song of praise (Rev. 5:9–10):

Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth.

b) The royal priesthood in the Confessions

The Confessions make only one explicit reference to the royal priesthood, in the Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope. During his discussion of The Power and Jurisdiction of Bishops, Melanchthon affirms that the church can and must appoint and ordain pastors when bishops refuse to do so, and it does so because it is the royal priesthood. Such a direct connection between royal priesthood and the Office of Public Ministry attests to the complemenarity of priesthood and Office. Although the German Reformers were more than willing to accede to the humanly established polity of regional bishops appointing and ordaining ministers for the churches, the Roman church had forbidden the continuation of ordinations in German territories. Under such circumstances, argues Melanchthon, the churches in that territory could and should ordain on their own:

Finally this is also confirmed by Peter’s declaration [1 Peter 2:9]: “You are a ... royal priesthood.” These words apply to the true church, which, since it alone possesses the priesthood, certainly has the right of choosing and ordaining ministers.50

Beside this explicit reference, however, we note a few of many additional places where the identity and activity of the royal priesthood is expressed in the Book of Concord. We may note, first, that the Apostles’ Creed confesses the Church, not in institutional terms, but as holy persons, “the communion of saints.”51 As Luther notes, the holiness of Christ’s people, the Church, comes only through His Word. “For the Word of God is the true holy object above all holy objects.” Therefore, the Church is made holy “when we make use of God’s Word and exercise ourselves in it.”52 The Confessions understand communion of saints to refer to the true Church, the whole people of God who have received the Holy Spirit and share the same faith in Christ.53 Luther suggests that “community” of saints or “holy Christian people” would communicate this understanding better than communion does.54 Though priestly language is not here, priestly identity certainly is. As the priests of the OT were holy, so also is the Church, the NT priesthood of believers.55 For as Christ is, so also are His priests (1 Cor. 12; Rom. 12).

The Smalcald Articles III [4:] Concerning the Gospel reads:

We shall now return to the Gospel, which offers counsel and help against sin in more than one way, for God is surpassingly rich in his grace: First, through the spoken word, by which the forgiveness of sins (the peculiar function of the Gospel) is preached to the whole world; second, through Baptism; third, through the holy Sacrament of the Altar; fourth, through the power of the keys; and finally, through the mutual conversation and consolation of brethren.56 Matthew 18:20, “Where two or three are gathered, etc.”57

The words we have italicized remind us that even while emphasizing the Gospel’s proclamation by ministers, Luther also speaks of an everyday way that God’s extravagant grace is made known. The Gospel is heard day by day as believers talk to one another and as they console one another. This is the work of all the royal priests and not only those called to public ministry.

In Luther’s Small Catechism the fifth chief part includes both an emphasis on the royal priesthood and the Office of Public Ministry. It includes the confession that “The Office of the Keys is that special authority which Christ has given to His church on earth ...” and then adds that according to the words of Christ in John 20:22–23, “I believe that when the called ministers of Christ deal with us by His divine command ... this is just as valid and certain, even in heaven, as if Christ our dear Lord dealt with us Himself.”58

The Small Catechism also provides a simple, profound example of the royal priesthood proclaiming the excellencies of God, who by His Spirit has made us His own in the High Priest. Each of the chief parts begins with this word: “As the head of the family should teach it in a simple way to his household.”59 Here the teaching responsibility of the royal priesthood is once again emphasized, together with a direct reminder that part of every Christian’s calling is sharing the Gospel in ways appropriate to his vocation. Thus, a father or mother has not only the general responsibilities of Christian life in word and deed, but also a specific responsibility toward a household—the children God has given in particular—so that they grow up in their baptismal identity, in the fear and knowledge of the Lord (Eph. 6:4). Luther then addresses how priesthood and vocation connect as part of his reminder that all Christians have the Gospel, are in the heritage of Christ, and are thereby as much clergymen as any monk.60 This call to confess Christ daily is enacted not only in the home, but within every sphere of Christian vocation such as conversation with neighbors or co-workers, and in the fellowship of the church:

But after we have become Christians through this Priest and His priestly office, incorporated in Him by Baptism through faith, then each one, according to his calling and position, obtains the right and the power of teaching and confessing before others this Word which we have obtained from Him. Even though not everybody has the public office and calling, every Christian has the right and the duty to teach, instruct, admonish, comfort, and rebuke his neighbor with the Word of God at every opportunity and whenever necessary. For example, father and mother should do this for their children
and household; a brother, neighbor, citizen, or peasant for the other. Certainly one Christian may instruct and admonish another ignorant or weak Christian concerning the Ten Commandments, the Creed, or the Lord’s Prayer. And he who receives such instruction is also under obligation to accept it as God’s Word and publicly to confess it.81

Lastly, this priestly calling to proclaim Christ is most important where He is not known. So, Luther says that if a Christian is “where there are no Christians he needs no other call than to be a Christian, called and anointed by God from within.”82 He does so out of “brotherly love at the need of the poor and perishing souls” without waiting for any formal obligation. “For need breaks all laws and has none.”83

Similarly, as noted above in several references, the catechisms of Luther make evident the priestly responsibilities of holy living in sacrifice and prayer. We add only one important confessional reference, namely, the Small Catechism’s closing sections on Daily Prayer and the Table of Duties.84 As he did in the chief parts, Luther offers a section on prayer with the subheading, “How the head of the family should teach his household to pray morning and evening.” Each Christian—each royal priest—is to come to God, marked by the baptismal name, confessing the Creed, praying the Lord’s Prayer, giving thanks, and asking for God’s protection. Added to such prayer, all the priesthood is also instructed in their sacrificial duties, according to their respective vocations in the Table of Duties. It is worthwhile to add that Luther, in conclusion, reminds “everyone” of the duty to love the neighbor and pray “for everyone.”85

Throughout the foregoing discussion of the royal priesthood we have regularly referred to a few of many Luther references. He is rightly credited with having recovered the biblical teaching of the royal priesthood in his reforming efforts.86 Moreover, his particular calling as a doctor of biblical theology makes it appropriate to reference him liberally in our discussion of the biblical foundation for the doctrine of the royal priesthood.

c) The view from the LCMS—the royal priesthood in Walther and official teaching

A thoroughgoing historical review of the royal priesthood in Lutheran theology and even for the Missouri Synod in particular is beyond the scope of this report. We will instead focus on C. F. W. Walther as we conclude our discussion of the royal priesthood. And, in looking at Walther’s work, we will largely confine ourselves to a brief consideration of his Church and Office [Ministry] (C&O). Originally published in 1852 as Die Stimme unserer Kirche in der Frage von Kirche und Amt,87 C&O is so foundational for the LCMS that the Missouri Synod has twice affirmed Walther’s work as the right understanding of our church body’s teaching.88 It is fully appropriate, therefore, to give him pride of place. However, one should note that referring to C&O as “Walther’s work” would probably elicit a “Nein,” from Walther himself. As Roland Ziegler has noted: “Walther’s claim is not to give his opinion, but as the German title says, to present ‘The Voice of our Church on the Question of Church and Ministry/Office.’ This is the reason why the book consists mostly of quotations, because Walther wants to give what the Lutheran Church historically has taught.”89

Walther’s work contains two sets of theses, one on the Church, another on the Office of Public Ministry. The structure itself testifies to balance—that Missouri’s doctrine intentionally affirms a complementary relationship between the whole people of God (the Church, royal priesthood) and the Office in which individuals serve in the ministry of Word and Sacrament. However, the order of his two sets of theses is significant. He lays out the doctrine of the Church before that of its ministry, as a reminder that—as the Treatise affirms—the Church, established by God, as bearer of the Keys, has both the authority and obligation from God to call its ministers.

Walther affirms the royal priesthood in C&O both explicitly and implicitly. Beginning with Thesis I on the Church, that “The Church in the proper sense of the word is the congregation of saints,” he defines “Church” as those whom the Spirit calls out from humanity, those who “truly believe,” excluding hypocrites (Thesis II). Thesis IV asserts that the Keys belong to the whole Church and cites 1 Peter 2:9 as “Proof from God’s Word.”90 When he turns to the Office, his Thesis I—“The holy preaching office or pastoral office is an office distinct from the office of priest, which all believers have.”—lists 1 Peter 2:9 as its first proof text. We note again the way Walther balances Church and Office—or, as he puts it here, office (the royal priesthood) and Office (the pastoral Office). While “all believing Christians are priests” there is also “an office to teach, feed, and rule” that is distinct from the royal priesthood.91

Then, in Thesis IV on the Office, he again cites 1 Peter 2 as proof that the Office “is not a special state in opposition to or holier than that of ordinary Christians.”92

On five occasions Walther cites the Treatise (69–72), with its reference to 1 Peter 2,93 twice in part one on the Church and three times in part two. In addition, Walther includes 1 Peter 2 thirteen more times in quotations from the Fathers. Indeed, 1 Peter 2:9 is the most frequently cited Scripture verse in the entire work. The majority of those citations are in the section on Office rather than in the first part on the Church. Thereby, Walther denies that the Office of Public Ministry may be given higher status than the priestly office and, secondly, he affirms that the Office of the Keys—the office of ministry—belongs to the whole priestly people of God and is then exercised publicly—on their behalf—as one from among them is called to act for them.94 From this perspective, Walther asserts that the preaching office confessed in AC V is “in abstracto,” that is, in reference to the Gospel by which alone faith is obtained, and not in concreto, “in view of the persons who hold the office,” as it is used in AC XIV (a matter we will return to in greater detail below).95

This perspective prevents any understanding of the Office that undermines the royal priesthood in practice by suggesting that the Gospel’s effect is dependent on it being spoken or administered sacramentally by one in the public Office and that it is ineffective or without authority when spoken by a lay person (member of the royal priesthood). Rather, one cannot uphold the Office of Public Ministry without upholding the priesthood’s continuing responsibility to teach the Word. Luther makes the case for Walther:

No one can deny that every Christian has God’s Word and is taught and anointed of God to be a priest, as Christ says in John 6:45: “They will all be taught by God”; and Psalm 45:7: “God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your companions.” These companions are the Christians, Christ’s brothers, who have been anointed with Him to be priests, as also Peter says in 1 Peter 2:9. ...

Luther continues after quoting 1 Peter 2:9; 2 Corinthians 4:13; Psalm 116:10; and Psalm 51:15:
Here, then, we are again assured that a Christian does not only have the right and power to teach the Word of God but also that he is in duty bound to do so at the peril of losing his soul and God's grace. You may say: 'But how? If he has not been called to do so, as yourself have often taught, he dare not preach.' To this I reply: Here you must place a Christian in two places. First he is in a place where there are no Christians, he needs no other call than that he is a Christian, inwardly called by God and anointed. There he owes it to the erring heathen or non-Christians to preach and teach them the Gospel, out of obligation of Christian love, even though no Christian has called him to do so.

But this does not make the Office of Public Ministry optional:

In the second place, if he [the Christian] is where there are other Christians who have the same power and right as he, he should not put himself forward but should let others call and put him forth so that he might preach and teach in the place and at the mandate of the others.96

After all, adds Luther in this quotation: “It is true: All Christians are priests, but they are not all parish pastors.” Pastors are “entrusted with an office and a parish” and “the call and mandate that makes parish pastors and preachers.”97

Although Walther does not add it, Luther goes on in That a Christian Assembly Has the Right to Judge All Teaching to say:

Indeed, a Christian has so much power that he may and even should make an appearance and teach among Christians—without a call from men—when he becomes aware that there is a lack of teachers, provided he does it in a decent and becoming manner. This was clearly described by St. Paul in 1 Corinthians 14[:30], when he says, “If something is revealed to someone else sitting by, let the first be silent.” Do you see what St. Paul does here? He tells the teacher to be silent and withdraw from the midst of the Christians; and he lets the listener appear, even without a call. All this is done because need knows no command.98

In C&O Walther then adds additional Luther material about the Sacrament of the Altar. Luther distinguishes between the responsibility of fathers to teach the Word to their family and the administration of the Lord’s Supper. The father should teach his family the Word—in obedience to God’s command. “But the Sacrament is a public confession and should have public ministers.” So, it is not to be shared in private settings by private individuals. “Hence the two [the public office and the father’s priestly responsibility] must neither be mingled into each other nor separated from each other.”99

Luther’s thought progresses distinctively. First, every Christian possesses the Word and is an anointed priest, so it is the Christian’s duty to spread the Word. If he is the only Christian around, he is called to preach out of brotherly love by God Himself. And, even if he is not called by others to preach, if there is a lack of teachers “among Christians,” he should teach them “provided he does it in a decent and becoming manner.” This also requires that all believers have the duty to learn the Word so that they share it in truth.

The complementary nature of priesthood and Office is unfolded throughout C&O, but with particular clarity in Thesis VII on the Office. After asserting that the public Office exercises “the rights of the spiritual priesthood” “on behalf of the congregation,”100 Walther reviews the previous theses and their scriptural foundation at that point before adding:

Here I may only remind the reader that Holy Scripture presents the Church—that is, the believers—as the Bride of the Lord and as the mistress of the household to whom the keys have been entrusted and with them the right of and access to all rooms, sacred things, and treasures of the house of God as well as the authority to appoint stewards [Haushalter] over these. According to Holy Scripture every true Christian is a spiritual priest and therefore is entitled and called not only to use the Means of Grace for himself but also to impart them to those who as yet do not have them and therefore also do not yet possess with him the rights of the priesthood. However, in the place where all possess these rights, no one may exalt himself over the others or exercise them over against the others. But in all places where Christians live together, the rights of the priesthood are to be administered publicly on behalf of the fellowship only by those who have been called by the fellowship in the manner prescribed by God.101

And finally, in the catalog of quotations from church teachers supporting Thesis VII, Walther provides a noteworthy quotation from Johann Gerhard:

Wherever the same relation exists [as it does in that all members of the church are equally royal priests], the same right also exists. But absolution, which any layman may announce to a dying person from the Gospel, and Baptism, which a layman may administer in an emergency, namely, when no ordered minister of the Church can be obtained, stand in the same relation. Hence there exists here also the same right. Laymen act properly when they instruct or comfort a congregation that is without a regular shepherd or sick people or those who in any way are afflicted, as in times of a siege, pestilence, persecution, etc.102

Gerhard assumes that a called member of the Office of Public Ministry normally provides the Means of Grace for a congregation. Emergency is defined as “when no ordered minister of the Church can be obtained.” He defends as proper not only the absolution and Baptism provided by laymen in an emergency, but also their teaching in “a congregation that is without a regular shepherd.”103

Before leaving Walther, Roland Ziegler, in a study of the royal priesthood, reminds us that Walther emphasizes in his sermons the responsibility of the priesthood of all Christians. It is not so much a question of rights, rather it is a question of duty. The Christian cannot escape the spiritual responsibility he has for his neighbor:

My dear ones, if we meet a person lying helpless in physical misery, wounded and beaten, we consider it our duty to get to work and not first to wait for the regular physician. We bind up his wounds and take...
him to a place where he can be cared for. We consider ourselves called to this task through the call of Christian love. So if a Christian finds a person wounded in his soul, and if he can do something to help, then he should also not think, “What does that concern me? The spiritual physician, the preacher, can come and help him.” No, O Christians, here you have the call of love, which you have also received. Yes, even if the priest and Levite pass the needy person by, you should prove yourself, as a merciful Samaritan, all the more zealous.104

Thus, royal priests share the Word in love for the wounded in soul, bind their wounds, then take them to the church to be cared for by pastors as they administer the healing Means of Grace.

This duty makes it incumbent on all of us as members of the royal priesthood to study and grow in the Word of God. It is an act of love to be well-prepared to make known the wonders of Christ. As Lutheran Christians, we may rejoice that we have a simple tool—the Catechism—to shape our lives as members of the royal priesthood.105

The unambiguous perspective of Walther on the royal priesthood led the Missouri Synod to include a strong affirmation of the individual Christian’s “gifts and rights.” Although the terminology of the royal priesthood is not present, article 30 from the Brief Statement is very much pertinent to our discussion:

30. The Original and True Possessors of All Christian Rights and Privileges—Since the Christians are the Church, it is self-evident that they alone originally possess the spiritual gifts and rights which Christ has gained for, and given to, His Church. Thus, St. Paul reminds all believers: “All things are yours,” 1 Cor. 3:21, 22, and Christ Himself commits to all believers the keys of the kingdom of heaven, Matt. 16:13–19, 18:17–20, John 20:22, 23, and commissions all believers to preach the Gospel and to administer the Sacraments, Matt. 28:19–20; 1 Cor. 11:23–25. Accordingly, we reject all doctrines by which this spiritual power or any part thereof is adjudged as originally vested in certain individuals or bodies, such as the Pope, or the bishops, or the order of the ministry, or the secular lords, or councils, or synods, etc. The officers of the Church publicly administer their offices only by virtue of delegated powers, and such administration remains under the supervision of the latter, Col. 4:17. Naturally all Christians have also the right and the duty to judge and decide matters of doctrine, not according to their own notions, of course, but according to the Word of God, 1 John 4:1; 1 Peter 4:11.106

The article on the public ministry follows in the Brief Statement. It provides the rationale for the public ministry while also encouraging the daily application of the Means of Grace by every believer: “the Christians of a certain locality must apply the Means of Grace not only privately and within the circle of their families nor merely in their common intercourse with fellow-Christians, John 5:39; Eph. 6:4; Col. 3:16, but they are also required, by the divine order, to make provision that the Word of God be publicly preached in their midst, and the Sacraments administered according to the institution of Christ, by persons qualified for such work.”107

The important role of the royal priesthood in the Church’s Gospel outreach is also addressed by a CTCR report from 1974: “We affirm also that every Christian is a missionary through Holy Baptism. By water and the Word we have not only been baptized into Christ’s death and His resurrection but also into His body, which is the church, and into His mission.”108 Once again, in 1991, the heading of section V. of A Theological Statement of Mission asserts that, “God’s Mission Is My Mission.” The report adds: “The mission God gives to the whole church he also gives to each individual member of the church. In Holy Baptism God adopted each of us by name into his family, and called us to be involved personally in the task of reaching out to all people with his saving Gospel.”109

The CTCR has also completed a full report on the royal priesthood as noted at the beginning of this section. After tracing this teaching from its scriptural roots through the Reformation, The Royal Priesthood: Identity and Mission offers seven helpful concluding statements:

1. The royal priesthood is a biblical way to identify, teach and confess the “one, holy, catholic (Christian), and apostolic Church.” That is to say, the royal priesthood is all believers, “from every tribe and language and people and nation” whom God has made a kingdom and priests (Rev. 5:9–10) by working in them faith in Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit.

2. Individuals become priests of the royal priesthood, the Church, by the saving promises of Baptism into Christ where we receive the washing of rebirth, the forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit (John 3:5; Acts 2:38–39; Titus 3:5).

3. The royal priesthood finds its identity only in Christ, the Great High Priest and only mediator between God and man. Royal priests are in turn called to lives of priestly mediation between God and the world. They offer living sacrifices of thanksgiving—not sacrifices of merit or atonement. In prayer they intercede on behalf of all people. They make known the excellencies of God in Christ—sharing His Word, gifts, and blessings with all nations. (See 1 Tim. 2:5; Rom. 12:1; Phil. 4:6; 1 Peter 2:9.)

4. As the people of God, both corporately and individually, we mediate God’s truth of salvation and life to the world around us. Every individual believer is called to confess the faith to others since the mission of the whole church, that is, the entire royal priesthood, is to make disciples of all nations (Matt. 28:19–20). Members of the royal priesthood share in that calling as they “give a defense for the hope that is within” them in their daily lives (1 Peter 3:15).

5. Each royal priest is to exercise the functions of the royal priesthood—sacrifice, prayer, proclamation—in a way that accords with his or her vocation within the three estates of home, church and society. (See Eph. 5–6; Col. 3; 1 Tim. 2.)

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6. The Holy Spirit is at work wherever the saving work of God in Christ is made known, whether that message is delivered by a layman or a pastor. The Gospel alone is the power of salvation (Rom. 1:16). This means that the proclamation of the Gospel by members of the royal priesthood as they speak of Christ to others, at home, with fellow believers, and in society, is an effective Means of Grace by which the Holy Spirit creates and nurtures saving faith (Acts 11:19–24).

7. The royal priesthood does not undermine or negate the Office of the Public Ministry which Christ gives to the church. Members of the royal priesthood, in various ways, choose individuals from among them who are equipped to teach and called in an orderly manner to hold the Office of Public Ministry and to perform its distinctive functions. (See 1 Cor. 4:1; 1 Cor. 12:28–29; Eph. 4:11; James 3:1; Titus 1:5.)

III. The Office of Public Ministry within the “Blessed Partnership”

Send, O Lord, Your Holy Spirit On Your servant now, we pray;
Let him prove a faithful shepherd That no lamb be led astray.
Your pure teaching to proclaim, To extol Your holy name,
And to feed Your lambs, dear Savior, Make his aim and sole endeavor. (LSB, 681, v. 1)

The foregoing discussion of the royal priesthood makes plain that any Lutheran consideration of the priesthood leads one inevitably to the topic of public ministry and to the “Office of Public Ministry.” (We remind the reader of some of the Synod’s previous statements on the public ministry that are noted above on page 2 of this report [p. 354].) It is quite clear that Lutheran teaching, from the Confessions through Luther and other fathers, affirms both the priesthood of all believers and the Office of Public Preaching and teaching that is held only by some believers. So, the Treatise (67–70) asserts the royal priesthood in order to preserve the right of the Reformation churches to appoint men to the Office of Public Ministry. Luther in his comments on Psalm 110 distinguishes Office and priesthood without divorcing them, saying, “Even though not everybody has the public office and calling, every Christian has the right and the duty to teach, instruct, admonish, comfort, and rebuke his neighbor with the Word of God at every opportunity and whenever necessary.”

Walther merely echoed Luther with: “But in all places where Christians live together, the rights of the priesthood are to be administered publicly on behalf of the fellowship only by those who have been called by the fellowship in the manner prescribed by God.”

In all of this we see a central Lutheran contention: “A Priest is not identical with Presbyter or Minister—for one is born to be priest, one becomes a minister.” Moreover, the church’s ministers are appointed not merely because it is helpful or traditional or orderly, but because it is required by God. They are given as a gift to the royal priesthood.

a. The Office of Public Ministry in Scripture

The Lord Himself, who is the very Shepherd (that is, Pastor) of Israel (Ps. 23; Ps. 80:1; Ezek. 34:11–16), promised shepherds for His people who would feed the sheep “with knowledge and understanding” (Jer. 3:15), caring for them and seeking the lost (Jer. 23:4). So it is that the incarnation and sacrificial death of the Good Shepherd (John 10) then leads directly to the Holy Spirit’s provision of shepherds to oversee and care for the precious flocks—the gathered assemblies, the “church of God”—of the NT (Acts 20:28–30). As the royal priesthood connects directly to our Great High Priest, so shepherd connects directly to our Good Shepherd. The Ministry of preaching, teaching, and sacramental administration is from the Lord Himself.

The Office of Public Ministry is a term we employ for this gift of Spirit–given shepherds who serve the Good Shepherd and His one flock in its many folds (John 10:16). Those who hold this Office rightly do so as servants, and only as servants (1 Cor. 4:1–2):

“So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory” (1 Peter 5:1–4).

There should be no doubt that it is Christ Himself who has established this Office. Like all the apostles, Peter, “a witness of the sufferings of Christ,” was commissioned directly by the Lord to shepherd Christ’s flock (John 21:15–17; see also Matt. 4:18–19 and 1 Cor. 15:1–8). Peter and the apostles were called to this “Office of Public Ministry” to serve under Christ’s very own authority (Matt. 10:1; Luke 9:1–10). The risen Lord then sent them forth to make disciples of the nations, assuring them of His presence, His Spirit, and His authority to declare the forgiveness of sins (Matt. 28:19–20; John 20:19–23). These words of Christ in Matthew 28 and John 20 apply not only to them, but also to all their successors who enter the public Office of Preaching by the call of Christ through the Church and its congregations (Acts 14:23).

1 Peter 5 is a beautiful reminder that the work of public ministry does not end with the apostles and their direct call, their eyewitness testimony, and Christ’s direct command to them to baptize and teach. Our Lord Himself makes this clear when He sends out not only the 12 but the 72 with the words, “whoever hears you hears me” (Luke 10:16). And in 1 Peter 5, although he was called directly by Christ, Peter identifies himself with “elders” who are called through the Church as he exhorts them to shepherd their flocks even as Peter himself did. These shepherds or elders or overseers were not directly called by the Lord Jesus, but their calling is as sure as that of the apostles. “Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood” (Acts 20:28, emphasis added). “And He,” that is, “Christ Himself,” “gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers” (Eph. 4:11). “And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, helping, administrating, and various kinds of tongues” (1 Cor. 12:28). Notice that in 1 Peter 5:1–4, elder is interwoven with pastor (“shepherd the flock”) as well as bishop (“exercising oversight”). Each term speaks of the individuals within the Office of Ministry and the work they are called to do. As the Lord promised through Jeremiah (3:15), the work of shepherds—elders—overseers share a ministry of the Word—teaching and proclaiming and so feeding the sheep “with knowledge and understanding.” It is this minis-
try of the Word that, similarly, ties together the offices mentioned in Ephesians 4:11: “the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers.”

The epistles of Paul to Timothy and Titus are rightly referred to as “pastoral.” Like the aforementioned references, they too affirm the Office of Public Ministry that God establishes and, in addition, emphasize the chief work of that Office—teaching the Word. In all three of these epistles, Paul is exhorting Timothy and Titus to carry out the ministry of the Word just as he has as a preacher, apostle, and teacher (1 Tim. 2:7; 2 Tim. 1:11). He never gives either Titus or Timothy a title other than to call them his true children (1 Tim. 1:2; 2 Tim. 1:2; Titus 1:4). Nevertheless, it is evident that both men are also preachers and teachers of the Word themselves (1 Tim. 4:6–16; 2 Tim. 2:14–15; 2 Tim. 22–24; 2 Tim. 4:1–5; Titus 2:1–8, 15; Titus 3:1–11) and are charged with oversight of the teaching of others (1 Tim. 1:3–7; 2 Tim. 2:1–2, 14). Moreover, they were not only to do this themselves as teachers, but they were to see that others were also appointed to this same ministry (1 Tim. 1:3–7; Titus 3:1–7; 2 Tim. 1:3–5, 14; Titus 1:5).

Only members of the royal priesthood are called to the Office of Public Ministry. Thus, the Office implies no superiority of persons. The Gospel is the call to repent, be baptized, and trust in Christ alone for our salvation. Such truth is irreconcilable with arrogance of Office, for the preacher is also a hearer of the Word that kills and makes alive. Yet, even as the officeholder remains a royal priest and individual member of Christ, the Office he holds is distinct from the priesthood. Not all are called to shepherd, teach, feed, oversee, and serve Christ’s flock in the public ministry of the Word, although all are called to share the Word of God, yes, to proclaim it, in their daily lives at home, at work, and in society. All are not prophets, apostles, teachers (1 Corinthians 12:29). Not all are sent to preach and teach in this office (Rom. 10:15). Indeed, although to aspire “to the office of overseer” is to desire “a noble task,” Scripture actually discourages the majority of Christians from such aspiration and desire: “Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness” (James 3:1).

b. **The Office of Public Ministry in the Confessions**

Article V of the Augsburg Confession flows directly from the fourth article, on justification:

**[IV. Concerning Justification]**

Furthermore, it is taught that we cannot obtain forgiveness of sin and righteousness before God through our merit, work, or satisfactions, but that we receive forgiveness of sin and become righteous before God out of grace for Christ’s sake through faith when we believe that Christ has suffered for us and that for his sake our sin is forgiven and righteousness and eternal life are given to us. For God will regard and reckon this faith as righteousness in his sight, as St. Paul says in Romans 3:[21–26] and 4:[5].

**[V. Concerning the Office of Preaching]**

To obtain such faith God instituted the office of preaching, giving the gospel and the sacraments. Through these, as through means, he gives the Holy Spirit who produces faith, where and when he wills, in those who hear the gospel. It teaches that we have a gracious God, not through our merit but through Christ’s merit, when we so believe. Condemned are the Anabaptists and others who teach that we obtain the Holy Spirit without the external word of the gospel through our own preparation, thoughts, and works.

That faith which justifies—belief in the promise of forgiveness for Christ’s sake—depends on the promise being given. The promise comes first—it is the power of salvation (Rom. 1:16) and the only ground for faith. God reveals His grace and mercy in Christ Jesus in the promises of forgiveness—and faith is no more than believing Him as He makes these promises. Thus, God gives the Gospel and Sacraments, that is, the Gospel promise spoken and also the promise as it is given in Baptism and the Lord’s Supper. He deigns to make these promises externally! That is, He uses real words that people hear as they flow from living persons (either laity or pastors); words that accompany a washing with real water, and words declaring real bread and wine to be Christ’s real body and blood for the forgiveness of sins—really! So graciously does God make His promises in ways we lowly ones can believe—by the Spirit’s mysterious power.

This, says Melanchthon, is the Office of Preaching. The condemnation at the end of Article V suggests that the central concern was to emphasize that the Holy Spirit is at work bringing faith through such an “external word” and not by human initiative and action of any sort. A certain process or priority is clear. God’s Spirit alone works faith by providing an external Word of promise—the Gospel and Sacraments—and to that end God provides the Office of Preaching.

Luther’s Schwabach Articles was the direct predecessor to the AC. There also he moves from justification to proclamation: “In order to obtain such faith, or to give it to us people, God has instituted the preaching office or oral Word, namely the Gospel, through which he has such faith and its power, benefit, and fruit proclaimed.” The terms “preaching office,” “oral Word, and “Gospel” are all equivalents. The understanding of preaching office here on is proclamation itself—God’s work through external means—and not on the man doing the proclaiming.

To speak technically regarding AC V, then, this is the office of preaching considered abstractly (in abstracto), the message which can alone enable faith and salvation, as it is made known or delivered. It is, as Luther noted in the Schwabach Articles, synonymous with “the oral Word, the Gospel” itself (das Predigat oder mundlich Wort, naemlich das Evangelion). This is the Office concretely conceived as we see it in the person of a pastor in public worship (in concreto). Walther adds that the Formula also speaks abstractly condemning the false teaching of the Schwenkfelders who held, “That the church’s ministry—the Word as it is proclaimed and heard—is not a means through which God the Holy Spirit teaches human beings the saving knowledge of Christ and effects conversion, repentance, faith, and new obedience in them.” This distinction is potentially confusing since it compels us to negotiate between three languages—Latin, German, and English. Nevertheless, it is of great practical importance because it distinguishes the Gospel from the public minister of the Gospel. Christ Himself calls public ministers of the Gospel for the sake of the Gospel. The public ministry of the Gospel is required because the Gos-
pel must be proclaimed! But it is not proclaimed only by its public ministers. Therefore Walther says in one of his convention essays:

Mark well in this connection that when we speak about the office of the Gospel we thereby do not mean the ‘Herr Pastor’ or parson or a holy man (Geistlichen), as one is accustomed to say, but really nothing else than the divine order according to which a person is brought to God’s grace through the verbalizing of the Gospel, whether he reads it or hears it or merely thinks of it. It doesn’t make any difference whether he hears it from a preacher or from any other person, even if the latter is a mere boy or a little girl or a little old grandmother. When these speak the Word of God, that is the preaching office [or office of proclamation]. One needs to distinguish very strictly between the preaching office (Predigtamt) and the office of the ministry (Pfarramt). The office of the ministry [i.e., the pastor himself] is not absolutely necessary to bring people into heaven; the preaching office [the Gospel verbalized] is absolutely necessary.\textsuperscript{129}

In other words, salvation always requires the Gospel to be spoken, but it will not always be a pastor who speaks it.

Does this make pastors unimportant? By no means! As St. Paul (and Walther) would note, the highest privilege and a most noble calling (1 Tim. 3:1) is given to the pastor. He is to serve the church as its public minister and boldly share the Means of Grace for the Church. His responsibility and work are certain and sure. No one else should preach, teach, or administer “publicly.”

We also must clarify that references to “public” ministry in the Confessions’ view of the Office in its “concrete” dimension in AC XIV: “Concerning church government it is taught that no one should publicly teach, preach, or administer the sacraments without a proper [public] call.”\textsuperscript{130}

Note well: here the focus is clearly on the person who should teach, preach, and administer “publicly.” That man should have a proper, orderly call. He must be appointed in such a manner that his responsibility and work are certain and sure. No one else should preach, teach, or administer publicly for the Church.

We also must clarify that references to “public” ministry indicate a distinctive sense of “public.” Ordinarily, something done “in public” implies an open setting and a wide audience. But in the context of the Office of Public Ministry “public” refers to a publicly recognized Office and responsibility. A pastor’s sick call in a private home is still an act of “public ministry.” But when a lay person speaks of Christ “in public” to a group of people, it is surely a witness to Christ, but it is not an act of public ministry in the sense of AC XIV.

The nature of the proper call became the point of debate with Rome, which approved AC XIV with the proviso that Rome would determine who is or is not properly called by means of “canonical ordination.”\textsuperscript{131} The Reformers desired a circumstance in which they could comply, but were unable to do so in good conscience because Roman bishops would provide ordination only at the cost of the Gospel.\textsuperscript{132} Moreover, the Reformers could confidently assert that the denial of canonical ordination could not prevent the existence of the Church in their midst: “We know that the church exists among those who rightly teach the Word of God and rightly administer the sacraments. ...”\textsuperscript{133} Later, Melanchthon would articulate the conclusion implied in this train of thought: “Therefore, where the true church is, there must also be the right of choosing and ordaining ministers, just as in an emergency even a layperson grants absolution and becomes the minister or pastor of another.”\textsuperscript{134}

Finally, AC XXVIII again discusses the Office, distinguishing ecclesiastical and secular power.

Our people teach as follows. According to the gospel the power of the keys or of the bishops is a power and command of God to preach the gospel, to forgive or retain sin, and to administer and distribute the sacraments. For Christ sent out the apostles with this command (John 20[21–23]): “As the Father has sent me, so I send you. … Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.”

The same power of the keys or of the bishops is used and exercised only by teaching and preaching God’s Word and by administering the sacraments to many persons or to individuals, depending on one’s calling. Not bodily but eternal things and benefits are given in this way, such as eternal righteousness, the Holy Spirit, and eternal life.\textsuperscript{135}

Note that in AC XXVIII Melanchthon defines the power of the bishops as the power of the keys, not “secular power, sword, and authority” (§ 4). He then speaks, furthermore, of that power as it is exercised (see Latin text of § 8), showing that only in this way are eternal benefits given.

In Article XIII the Apology also develops a narrow sense of the Office of Ministry or preaching.\textsuperscript{136} Melanchthon objects to the Roman view of sacrificial priesthood which does “not consider the priesthood as a ministry of the Word and of the sacraments administered to others” (§ 7). Arguing that “priests are called to preach the gospel and to administer the sacraments,” Melanchthon declares that the confessors would not object if ordination into this public office of preaching and administering the sacraments were called a sacrament because “the ministry of the Word” has God’s command and “magnificent promises.”\textsuperscript{137} Even as AC V refers to the ministry of the Word, or preaching office, in a wide sense (Walther’s in abstrato), Melanchthon can then elsewhere refer to the ministry of the Word or office of preaching in the narrow sense (in concreto) of the ordained preacher of the Word. (Therefore, both a wide/abstract and narrow/concrete sense of ministry [preaching office] usage is evident within the Confessions themselves. It is not a later development of Lutheran Orthodoxy, much less Walther.)\textsuperscript{138}

Turning to the catechisms, we first note the manner in which the Small Catechism Table of Duties assumes and affirms the public office in quoting 1 Timothy 3 and, in later texts of the Catechism, What Hearers Owe Their Pastors, quoting 1 Corinthians 9:14; Galatians 6:6; 1 Timothy 5:17–18; and Hebrews 13:17.\textsuperscript{139} In addition, Luther’s reference to the office holders as “spiritual fathers”\textsuperscript{140} in the Large Catechism should be considered—a title belonging “only to those who govern and guide us by the Word of God” (citing 1 Cor. 4:15). He chides those who fail to provide for these men and encourages the preachers to be faithful despite their want. “We ought to be willing to run to the ends of the earth to obtain them [faithful spiritual fathers]” (§166)—so highly does Luther commend the Office of Public Ministry.

c. The Office of Public Ministry in fathers of the church (Luther, Walther, et al.)

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Many quotations could be provided here—indeed, the whole of the ministry/Office portion of Walther provides extensive material from Luther and other orthodox theologians. Rather than reproduce what we, as a Synod, have endorsed, we will provide only a few quotations here.

First, in light of Psalm 110 and Ephesians 4:11–12, Luther comments:

This is the way it is in Christendom, too. Before anyone becomes a preacher or a bishop, he must first be a Christian, a born priest. No pope or any other man can make him a priest. But having been born a priest through Baptism, a man thereupon receives the office; and this is what makes a difference between him and other Christians. Out of the multitude of Christians some must be selected who shall lead the others by virtue of the special gifts and aptitude which God gives them for the office. Thus St. Paul writes (Eph. 4:11, 12): “And His gifts were that some should be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, for the equipment of the saints” (this means those who are already Christians and baptized priests), “for the work of the ministry, for the building up of the body of Christ” (that is, the Christian congregation or church).

For although we are all priests, this does not mean that all of us can preach, teach, and rule. Certain ones of the multitude must be selected and separated for such an office. And he who has such an office is not a priest because of his office but a servant of all the others, who are priests. When he is no longer able to preach and serve, or if he no longer wants to do so, he once more becomes a part of the common multitude of Christians. His office is conveyed to someone else, and he becomes a Christian like any other.

Luther here simply distinguishes the royal priesthood and the Office of Public Ministry. The royal priesthood requires the public ministry. Priests require “some” from among them who, “by virtue of the special gifts and aptitude which God gives them,” serve in the public Office.

With regard to the importance of maintaining both a vigorous, active proclamation of the Word by the laity and a distinctive responsibility for the public ministry, Walther quotes Luther:

“The first Christians, mentioned in Acts, did not administer the Sacrament individually [insonderheit] in the houses, but they came together. And though they might have done it, such an example is no longer to be followed today, just as today it is not reasonable that we let all goods be shared communally as they used to do. For now the Gospel is spread throughout the world [öffentlich], with the Sacraments. But if a father wishes to teach the Word of God to his family, that is right and should be done, for it is God’s mandate that we should teach and bring up our children and household; that is commanded to everyone. But the Sacrament is a public confession and should have public ministers, because, as Christ says, we should do it in remembrance of Him; that is, as St. Paul explains it, we should show forth or preach the Lord’s death till He comes [cf. 1 Corinthians 11:26]. And here [Paul] also says that we should come together, and he severely rebukes those who, each in his own way, use the Lord’s Supper individually. On the other hand, it is not forbidden but rather commanded that everyone individually should instruct his household in God’s Word, as well as himself, though no one should baptize himself, etc. For there is a great difference between a public office in the church and [the office of] a father in his household. Hence the two must neither be mingled into each other nor be separated from each other. Since there is neither an emergency nor a call here, we must do nothing out of our own devotion without God’s definite mandate, for no good will come from it.”

Priesthood and Office “must neither be mingled into each other nor be separated from each other”—thus Luther distinguishes priesthood and Office without divorcing them. The father (and mother) is most certainly to teach. But there is a difference between father and shepherd. Both are needed. Both proclaim Christ. Both provide an external Word—the Gospel. Each does so in a manner befitting his vocation. Only in an emergency may it be otherwise.

We earlier noted a technical distinction that Walther employs, namely, a critical and helpful distinction between an abstract and a concrete understanding of the Church’s office of preaching. In AC XXVIII one sees the office both in its abstract dimension (since it references the Church’s power of the keys) and its concrete dimension (since it speaks of the exercise of this power by the bishops). Regarding AC XXVIII Walther says:

Here the authority of the Keys, which the Church [Kirche] possesses and by which it administers the Means of Grace, is identified with the authority of the bishops, and to it the obtaining of the eternal gifts is bound. But this is not because the eternal gifts of Christ’s kingdom could in no wise be obtained without the administration of the Means of Grace by persons in the office, but because God desires ordinarily to impart these gifts to men only in this way.

Considering FC SD XII 30 and XI 29, where the Formula speaks abstractly of the ministry as “the preached and heard Word” (“proclaimed and heard” in KW 659), Walther says:

It is important to understand this because of those who desire to make the pastoral office a Means of Grace and coordinate it with the Word and Sacraments, as they assert that it is absolutely necessary for anyone to obtain salvation, so that no one without the ministry of an ordained parish pastor can either come to faith or obtain absolution of his sins. But our church teaches this only of the oral or enfleshed [leiblichen] Word in opposition to the alleged inner word and every [other] form of enthusiasm [Enthusiasteri].

LCMS theology has consistently emphasized this with a distinction between the ministry in a wide and a narrow sense. In Franz
Pieper’s classic systematic theology, he begins his locus on Public Ministry with: “The term ‘ministry’ is used both in Scripture and by the Church in a general, or wider, and in a special, or narrower, sense. In the wider sense it embraces every form of preaching the Gospel or administering the Means of Grace, whether by Christians in general as originally entrusted with the Means of Grace and commissioned to apply them, or by chosen public servants (ministri ecclesiae) in the name and at the command of Christians.”

Eugene F. Klug employs the same distinction: “The Church owes its existence to the Word, not vice versa, and ‘wherever the Church is, there is the authority to administer the Gospel’ ... ” Christ thereby establishes a “single ministry” that “has both a wide and a narrow sense.” Every Christian shares in the ministry in the wide sense, proclaiming the Word in daily life. But a “proper and pointed sense” of the term ministry refers to the Office of Public Ministry where a man is called by gathered believers (a church) to “administer the Means of Grace, Word and Sacraments, for themselves publicly.”

So also the newest dogmatics text in use in the LCMS refers to the Ministry of the Word in both a wide and narrow sense. With respect to the relationship of the royal priesthood and the Office of Public Ministry, it states: “A God-given, wholesome, and blessed relationship exists between ministry in the wide sense on the part of the royal priests and ministry in the narrow sense by the called servant of the Word.” Moreover, “The fact that the work of the pastor is essentially the same as the ministry entrusted to all the ‘priests’ proclaiming the word is not intended by God to create an adversarial tension. On the contrary, these two lofty offices or stations, both instituted by God, must be understood as two poles of a sphere, around which the ministry of the Word turns, so that the gospel may be smoothly and effectively promulgated in the world.

In its 1981 report The Ministry: Offices, Procedures, and Nomenclature, the CTCR quotes the aforementioned portion of Franz Pieper’s work. It then adds: “There are those who would prefer to use the term ‘ministry’ only in the narrower sense. They feel that this avoids confusion. Others feel that to speak of ‘the ministry of the laity’ is not only permissible but even essential, so that the individual witnessing and teaching of Christians in general may be properly stressed and dignified.” This well-captures the potential for confusion and also indicates one of the ways in which the relationship of the royal priesthood and the Office of Public Ministry has sometimes been marked by tension rather than by harmony. Our task force cannot resolve the difference of opinion indicated by this quotation. But we can urge the Synod to recognize two facts. First, our Synod’s theological tradition has chosen to use the word “ministry” in a dual sense. Second, its dual use is intended to stress the very focus of this task—the complementarity of the royal priesthood and the Office of Public Ministry. Both exist by God’s intent and design for His purposes, and do so not as adversaries, but in complementary harmony. Both are instituted by Christ. Furthermore, as a non-believer hears and responds to God’s Word as proclaimed by the royal priest, the next step will be to connect the unchurched individual to a congregation and its pastor, to be joined in the communion of saints and to receive the Means of Grace.

Therefore, as the Confessions show, the public office is not mere convenience or a matter of human orderly arrangement. It is God’s gift. Walther quotes Gerhard: “The principal effective cause of the church office is the one and only true God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.”

Walther asserts that the Office is conferred mediately through the congregation (assembly of believers) who have “the priesthood immediately.” The result is that both priesthood and Office are given by God. Such points are enacted liturgically in the Synod as we carry on the apostolic custom and ordain and install men into the Office of Public Ministry. As ordination begins, the presider says:

Beloved in the Lord, full name of candidate has been called by the Lord of the Church into the Office of the Holy Ministry of the Word and Sacraments. He has been prepared for this ministry by careful study and prayer. He has been examined and declared ready and prepared to undertake this sacred responsibility, and, by the guidance of God the Holy Spirit, he has in the Church’s usual order been called to be type of ministry of/at name and place. According to apostolic practice, he is now presented to be ordained and consecrated to this office established by God.

After the candidate hears the reading of a number of passages describing the institution of the Office, its responsibilities, and its strength and promise, the presider continues:

God gathers His Church by and around His Holy Gospel and thereby also grants it growth and increase according to His good pleasure. That this may be done, He has established the Office of the Holy Ministry into which you have been called by the Church and are now to be ordained and consecrated by prayer and the laying on of hands.

The presider then asks the assembly: “Will you, the faithful, according to the Church’s public confession, and speaking for the whole Church, receive name as a servant of Christ and minister of Word and Sacrament?” In so doing, the office is filled in that place as God requires.

As the Synod’s liturgy reveals our theology, so also does our catechesis. The 2017 edition of Luther’s Small Catechism with Explanation includes the following question and answer:

214. What is the mission of the Church on earth?

The Church’s mission is to confess and proclaim the forgiveness of sins for Jesus’ sake (1) by preaching the Word, administering the sacraments, sending missionaries, establishing new congregations, and (2) by the daily witness of the baptized children of God, His royal priesthood.

719 Matthew 28:19 “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”

720 Acts 2:42 And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

721 1 Peter 2:9 But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.
Read Acts 8:26–35 where Philip witnessed to the eunuch; Acts 4:23–30 where Christians prayed for the Gospel to be proclaimed; see also Acts 8:1, 4; 13:2; 1 Peter 3:15. Within his or her vocations in life every Christian has the privilege and the duty to speak the Gospel to others.153

We also note again the final concluding item from the 2018 CTCR report, The Royal Priesthood: Identity and Mission: “7. The royal priesthood does not undermine or negate the Office of the Public Ministry which Christ gives to the Church. Members of the royal priesthood, in various ways, choose individuals from among them who are equipped to teach and called in an orderly manner to hold the Office of Public Ministry and to perform its distinctive functions. (See 1 Cor. 4:1; 12:28–29; Eph. 4:11; James 3:1; Titus 1:5.)”

What God joins together—in this case the royal priesthood and the Office of Public Ministry—we must not put asunder.

IV. Summary Considerations on a Complementary Relationship: the Royal Priesthood and Office of Public Ministry

The relationship between the royal priesthood and the Office of Public Ministry is, as the foregoing makes clear, complementary and not competitive. We can summarize it in the following theses:

1. Fallen humanity has no capacity to know God in truth, to please Him, or to trust in Him, but He graciously makes Himself known in His Word—spoken, written in the Scriptures and, above all, made flesh in His Son.154

2. In the person of His Son, God has revealed His grace and truth (prophet), offered the atoning sacrifice for the sins of the world (priest), restored His reign and inaugurated the new creation (king). By faith—believing—in Christ Jesus and His promises, sinful people are forgiven and made one with Him.155

3. Faith exists only where the Shepherd’s voice is heard, either directly, as during His earthly ministry, or indirectly, when by His Spirit the Gospel is made known. The Gospel is made known in the words and signs that God has given—His Word and Sacraments.156

4. The one, holy, catholic (Christian), and apostolic Church is all believers, “from every tribe and language and people and nation” (Rev. 5:9), who trust the promise of forgiveness on account of the atoning sacrificial death and resurrection of Christ Jesus.157 By Baptism into Christ, the Church is His Body, the communion of saints, the people of God, His flock, the royal priesthood.158

5. The calling of royal priests reflects the work of the Great High Priest. The royal priesthood offers sacrifices of thanksgiving—not atonement—to God. It intercedes in prayer on behalf of all others. And it makes known the excellencies of God in Christ—sharing His Word, gifts, and blessings with others.159

6. Having heard Christ’s voice, every royal priest echoes it, sharing the Gospel in daily life.

7. By His Spirit the Good Shepherd also provides under-shepherds to feed and nurture His royal priestly flock, establishing the Office of Public Ministry on behalf of and for the well-being of the flock. One royal priest is called apart from the rest—appointed in an orderly way—to preach, teach, and administer Christ’s gifts on behalf of all.

8. Lutherans speak of the ministry both in wider, general terms and in a more narrow, formal, pointed, and specific manner.160 In this way, the complementarity of the royal priesthood and the Office of Public Ministry is made evident. Romans 1:16 substantiates the wide sense of the Gospel ministry while Ephesians 4:11–12 underlies the narrow sense, substantiating God’s provision of specific office holders who speak with His authority on behalf of and for the benefit of the Church.161

9. In its wide sense (abstract dimension) the office of preaching is the work of making the Gospel known (verbally and sacramentally), so that Christ, the High Priest and Great Shepherd, is heard and, by God’s Spirit, believed.

   a. In this sense the preaching office (Predigtamt) is simply the ministry or proclamation of the Word and is the responsibility of every believer.

   b. The Office of the Keys therefore belongs to the whole Church and the Gospel is efficacious for salvation as it is rightly proclaimed by every Christian, that is, by every royal priest.162

10. As the original possessors of the Office of the Keys, believers use the keys of the kingdom of heaven both directly and indirectly.

   a. Members of the Church teach the Word to their family, tell others of Christ and His saving work, forgive one another, encourage one another in faith and good works, and—when called upon by fellow believers in extraordinary circumstances—teach the Word and lead in prayer in the congregation.

   b. Indirectly, the members of the royal priesthood make provision for the public ministry to be exercised in an orderly way in their congregations by calling a competent man or men to the Office of Public Ministry.

11. In its narrow sense (concrete dimension) God established the office of preaching (Predigtamt or Pfarramt used synonymously) for the Church and fills it by men from the royal priesthood who are well-prepared to teach, whose lives adorn the Gospel, and who are rightly called by God through the Church.

   a. God establishes a church Office with the responsibility of publicly preaching and teaching the Gospel and publicly administering the Sacraments in Christ’s stead, called by and on behalf of the entire royal priesthood in a given place or context.
b. In this narrow sense the authority of the Preaching Office—that is, the rightly ordered divine call to act on behalf of both Christ and His Church—is demonstrated and emphasized (AC XIV).

12. Vocation is of critical importance in considering the relationship of royal priesthood and the Office of Public Ministry. It prompts every believer to ask the question, “Whom do I serve as a priest within the ‘three estates’ (home, church, society)?”\textsuperscript{163} A royal priest ordained to the Office of Ministry asks the same question and his divine call assigns him to shepherd a particular flock and/or to teach and oversee in particular places among particular people, in a particular community or in a particular context of ministry.\textsuperscript{164}

V. Facilitating Further Conversation

The Task Force has sought “to facilitate an ongoing conversation and communication among laity, districts, and the Synod in order to foster the blessed complementary relationship between the royal priesthood and the Office of the Public Ministry.”\textsuperscript{165} We offer a two-part report concerning the matter of facilitating conversation: first, identifying steps we have taken and, second, offering ideas for an ongoing process of discussion in congregations, districts, and Synod. Prior to those two parts, however, we want to offer a plea to the Synod to make the great blessings of the royal priesthood and the Office of Public Ministry and their relationship to one another a matter of ongoing, regular, fervent prayer. The conversations we have with one another, as important as they are, cannot rival the importance of the conversations with God that He invites and commands for “nothing is so necessary as to call upon God incessantly.”\textsuperscript{166} And, as we pray, may we ask our Father to remind us that we speak with brothers and sisters, not enemies.

1. Steps Taken Prior to This Report’s Release

Because of some debate over and disagreement with parts of two 2016 Convention resolutions (13-01A and 13-02A), our task force proposed that conversation about such controverted matters begin under the auspices of the Office of the President and the Council of Presidents. We saw a need for face-to-face conversations within a setting that (1) allowed for different perspectives to receive a full hearing; (2) afforded a measure of privacy to the conversations in order to minimize mischaracterizations and rumors; (3) prevented a delay in considering matters that were causing some measure of turmoil; and (4) could be carried out without incurring unreasonable costs to the Synod. The chairman of the task force was invited to present to the COP (November 2017) the initial results of the task force’s theological perspective on the relationship of the royal priesthood and Office of Public Ministry (Parts I, II, and III above). The discussion that followed that presentation was a helpful element in the process of drafting this report and offered an initial opportunity for conversation between the Presidium and the presidents of our districts. The chairman of the Task Force was again invited to the September 2018 meeting of the COP with ample time to report on and lead a discussion regarding the Task Force’s work. Then, at its November 2018 meeting, the COP scheduled a full day of study on the topic of priesthood and Office, including not only the Council, but also some additional individuals.

2. Ideas for Future Conversations in Congregations, Districts, and Synod

Profitable ongoing and future discussion of the relationship between the royal priesthood and the Office of Public Ministry in the LCMS ought to be encouraged on several levels. We recommend consideration of the following ideas.

a. For congregations:

i. The local church is where the relationship between the Office of Public Ministry and the royal priesthood is lived out. Pastors should be encouraged to teach about that relationship. In so doing, they are preparing royal priests in their sacrificial, intercessory, and teaching/witnessing responsibilities and also providing a greater understanding of the Lutheran teaching of the Office they hold.

ii. The CTCR study on the royal priesthood can be of great benefit for use in congregations. A discussion guide and Bible study materials are being prepared by the CTCR.

iii. CPH may wish to consider developing materials (a book, briefer studies, curricular materials) on this topic.

iv. Laity, together with their pastors, are encouraged to study again the Small Catechism—we particularly commend the use of the 2017 edition of Luther’s Small Catechism with Explanation.

b. For educational institutions and events:

i. Both seminaries and our university system can be asked to examine their respective curricula to determine whether they are adequately addressing the doctrine of the royal priesthood. Candidates for the ministry ought to have a solid understanding of the Priesthood and its responsibilities and its importance in the mission of the Church. This is also the case for those who are studying for commissioned ministries as well as all other students.

ii. Materials on this topic can be prepared for use in LCMS campus ministries also for LCMS students who are pursuing secular careers.

iii. Each seminary may also consider inclusion of these topics at an annual symposium or other events. For example, Concordia Seminary may consider including it at a Hispanic ministry training event sponsored by the Center for Hispanic Studies or at its annual Multi-Ethnic Symposium. Similarly, events sponsored by CTSFW, such as its biennial Urban Ministry conference or Luther Hostel, could also feature this topic.

iv. In addition to conversations and discussion within the Synod’s educational institutions, we also encourage participating in Best Practices Conference(s), Doxology, and other such gatherings as avenues for expanding attention to this topic.

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c. District-level discussions:

i. We encourage consideration of the topic and appeal for attention to it at future district conventions, district pastor/church worker conferences, and other continuing education events sponsored by districts or taking place under district auspices.

ii. It would be beneficial for district and regional mission training centers to offer an instructional track on the complementary relationship between the royal priesthood and the Office of Public Ministry.

d. Synod-level discussions:

i. We hope that discussion within the COP, as has already begun, will continue.

ii. A future convention of the Synod might feature priesthood and Office as a theme, or include essays exploring the relationship of the Office and the royal priesthood.

iii. It would be helpful to explore ways that Synod’s “Every One His Witness” program can foster discussion of this relationship and be included among educational resources for districts and congregations.

e. Discussion via various media, technology, and events:

i. It would be worthwhile to explore the use of Facebook groups, chat programs, opt-in email lists, and so forth (while exercising caution in order to discourage anonymous chatter and divisive blogging).

ii. It may also be beneficial to break down the report into briefer, topical segments with a goal of fostering wider discussion through the use of podcasts, “town halls,” or KFUO segments. Subject matter experts and other presenters could be identified for such presentations.

iii. Encourage articles and studies in publications like The Lutheran Witness, Reporter, seminary or other journals (e.g., the Ziegler essay referenced herein; or perhaps a book published by CPH).

iv. Commemorate the 500th anniversary of Luther’s first emphasis on the royal priesthood in 1519.

f. It is important to recognize that both lay members of the royal priesthood and members of the Office of Public Ministry sometimes feel uncomfortable when talking about these things with each other. Discussions need to be aware of this reality and those who lead discussions may attempt to forestall or prevent the sense of threat by

i. entering all discussions with a spirit of humility and a desire to learn.

ii. careful teaching of the proper, biblical, and confessional understanding of both the Priesthood and the Office.

iii. listening to concerns that are expressed without argument, recognizing that actual offenses often are the reason people feel threatened.

iv. acknowledgment of the kinds of behavior that contributes to confusion or offense.

v. encouraging confession and absolution.

vi. clarifying on the basis of Scripture and the Confessions problems of confusion.

We want to reiterate a point from the very beginning of our report. Resolution 13-01A earnestly affirms both the royal priesthood and the Office of Public Ministry. It reminds us that, though they are distinct, they are nonetheless complementary to one another and together provide a “blessed partnership” in the proclamation of the Gospel. God grant that our discussion and conversation would encourage that blessed endeavor.

APPENDIX A

To Extol and Equip the Blessed Partnership between the Royal Priesthood and the Office of the Public Ministry

RESOLUTION 13-01A

Overtures 13–22, 13–28 (CW, pp. 452, 455)

WHEREAS, The apostle Peter affirms the royal priesthood, that all are called to “proclaim the excellencies of Him who called you out of darkness” (1 Peter 2:9); and

WHEREAS, There exists a blessed partnership in the ministry of the Gospel between the royal priesthood and those called to the Office of the Public Ministry; and

WHEREAS, The Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope quotes from the words of Jesus in Matt. 18:19–20, where He says, “If two of you agree on earth,” to affirm that Jesus “grants the power of the keys principally and without mediation to the church”; and

WHEREAS, Martin Luther wrote:

We have been born of this bridegroom and bride through holy baptism and thus have become true clerics in Christendom in a hereditary manner, sanctified by his blood and consecrated by his Holy Spirit, as St. Peter calls us in 1 Peter 2:9: “But you are ... a royal priesthood” for offering spiritual sacrifices. St. Paul also extols us as priests in the Epistle to the Romans, chapter 12:1, for he calls upon us “to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God ... .” Now to make sacrifices to God is solely the office of the priests, as the pope himself and all the world must admit. Moreover, we are not only his children, but also his brothers, as he says in [Ps. 22:22], “I will tell of thy name to my brethren,” and in the Gospel of Matthew: “Whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother, and my sister, and my moth-
er” Matt. 12:50. So we are not only true clerics and priests according to our right as children but also according to our right as brothers. This, our hereditary priesthood with which we are born, we do not want to have taken away, impeded and obscured; rather, we want to have it brought out into the open, proclaimed and extolled with all its honors in order that it should beam and shine like the precious sun and blind the eyes of the devil and his hypocrisies and abominations, … . (AE 38:187–88)

and also

If they were forced to grant that all of us that have been baptized are equally priests, as indeed we are, and that only the ministry was committed to them, yet with our common consent, they would then know that they have no right to rule over us except insofar as we freely concede it. For thus it is written in 1 Peter 2:9, “You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, and a priestly royalty.” Therefore we are all priests, as many of us as are Christians. But the priests, as we call them, are ministers chosen from among us. All that they do is done in our name; the priesthood is nothing but a ministry” (AE 44:127);

and

Whereas, The holy ministry, or the pastoral office is an office distinct from the priestly office, which belongs to all believers; and

Whereas, God has blessed the Church with a talented laity, whom He has blessed with spiritual gifts; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod give thanks for district, university, and college-based lay training programs and the many willing lay servants who have sought to further their theological education and desire to serve in the work and mission of the Lord’s Church; and be it further

Resolved, That such lay training programs continue their work and include a major emphasis on evangelism and the task of outreach, as well as mercy, education, visitation, and so forth in our increasingly diverse and challenging cultural context; and be it further

Resolved, That congregations and districts be encouraged to identify individuals for special training in and attention to evangelism and outreach; and be it further

Resolved, That congregations and districts be encouraged to facilitate lay training on both local and district levels and to establish new opportunities for lay people to make use of their gifts in evangelism and service to the church; and be it further

Resolved, That districts be encouraged to provide assistance and support for lay training; and be it further

Resolved, That the President of the Synod convene a task force of lay leaders, representatives from districts both with and without licensed lay deacons, and representatives from the Council of Presidents, both seminaries, and the CTCR to consider how best to facilitate an ongoing conversation and communication among laity, districts, and the Synod in order to foster the blessed complementary relationship between the royal priesthood and the Office of the Public Ministry, and also to consider

(1) the royal priesthood and the Office of the Public Ministry in the New Testament (in light of the many offices that are mentioned, e.g., deacon, elder, overseer);

(2) the challenges of an increasingly multicultural North America and a country that has become the third largest mission field in the world; and

(3) the growing number of congregations and ministries that cannot provide financial support for a pastor;

And be it finally

Resolved, That the task force complete its work and present its recommendation to the Synod in 2018 for consideration at the 2019 convention.

APPENDIX B

Walther’s Theses on Church and Office
(From The Church & The Office of The Ministry [2012 edition, pages 3–6])

Theses Concerning the Church

THESIS I: The Church in the proper sense of the word is the congregation of saints, that is, the entirety of all those who, called out of the lost and condemned human race by the Holy Spirit through the Word, truly believe in Christ and by faith are sanctified and incorporated in Christ.

THESIS II: To the Church in the proper sense of the word belongs no wicked person, no hypocrite, no unregenerate person, no heretic.

THESIS III: The Church in the proper sense of the word is invisible.

THESIS IV: It is to this true Church of believers and saints that Christ gave the Keys of the kingdom of heaven, and it is the proper and only possessor and bearer of the spiritual, divine, and heavenly gifts, rights, authority, offices, and the like that Christ has procured and are found in His church.

THESIS V: Although the true Church in the proper sense of the word is in its essence invisible, nevertheless its existence can be (definitely) recognizable, namely, by the marks of the pure preaching of God’s Word and the administration of the Sacraments according to Christ’s institution.

THESIS VI: In an improper sense Scripture also calls the visible entirety of all the called—that is, of all who confess and adhere to the proclaimed Word and use the holy Sacraments—which consists of good and evil [persons], “Church” (the universal [catholic] church); so also it calls several divisions, that is, the congregations that are found here and there in which the Word of God is preached and the holy Sacraments are administered, “churches” (particular or individual churches). This it does especially because in this visible assembly is hidden the invisible, true, and properly so-called church of believers, saints, and children of God; outside this assembly of the called no elect are to be sought.

THESIS VII: As visible fellowships that still have the Word and the Sacraments essentially according to God’s Word bear the name “church” because of the true invisible Church of genuine believers that is found in them, so also they possess the authority that Christ has given to His whole Church on account of the true invisible Church hidden in them, even if there were only two or three [believers].

THESIS VIII: Although God gathers for Himself a holy church of elect at a place where His Word is not taught in its complete purity and the Sacraments are not administered altogether according to the institution of Jesus Christ, if only God’s Word and the Sacraments are not denied entirely but both essentially remain,
nevertheless every believer is bound, at the peril of losing his salvation, to flee all false teachers, avoid all heterodox congregations or sects, and confess and adhere to orthodox congregations and their orthodox preachers wherever such may be found.

A. Also in heterodox and heretical churches there are children of God, and also there the true Church is made manifest by the pure Word and the Sacraments that still remain.

B. Every believer for the sake of his salvation must flee all false teachers, and avoid fellowship with heterodox congregations or sects.

C. Every Christian for the sake of his salvation is in duty bound to acknowledge and adhere to orthodox congregations and orthodox preachers, wherever he can find such.

THESIS IX: To obtain salvation, only fellowship in the invisible Church, to which alone all the glorious promises regarding the Church were originally given, is absolutely necessary.

Concerning the Holy Preaching Office or the Pastoral Office

THESIS I: The holy preaching office or pastoral office is an office distinct from the office of priest, which all believers have.

THESIS II: The preaching office or the pastoral office is not a human institution but an office that God Himself has established.

THESIS III: The preaching office is not an optional office but one whose establishment has been commanded to the Church and to which the Church is properly bound till the end of time.

THESIS IV: The preaching office is not a special state in opposition to or holier than that of ordinary Christians, as was the Levitical priesthood; rather, it is an office of service.

THESIS V: The preaching office has the authority to preach the Gospel and administer the holy Sacraments, as well as the authority of spiritual judgment.

THESIS VI: The preaching office is conferred by God through the congregation as the possessor of all ecclesiastical authority, or the Keys, and through the call that is prescribed by God. The ordination of those who are called with the laying on of hands is not a divine institution but an apostolic, churchly order and only a solemn public confirmation of the call.

THESIS VII: The holy preaching office is the authority, conferred by God through the congregation as the possessor of the priesthood and of all churchly authority, to exercise the rights of the spiritual priesthood in public office on behalf of the congregation.

THESIS VIII: The preaching office is the highest office in the Church, from which flow all other offices in the Church.

THESIS IX: To the preaching office there is due respect as well as unconditional obedience when the preacher uses God’s Word. Yet the preacher has no dominion in the church. Therefore, he has no right to introduce new laws or arbitrarily to establish adiaphora or ceremonies in the church. The preacher has no right to inflict and carry out excommunication alone, without the preceding knowledge of the whole congregation.

THESIS X: To the preaching office, according to divine right, belongs also the office to judge doctrine, but laymen also possess this right. Therefore, in the ecclesiastical courts and councils they are accorded both a seat and vote together with the preachers.
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18 Thesis V (Office), C&O 203.

19 Thesis VII (Office), C&O 262. Throughout C&O Walther unfolds his argument using the same four-part template: (1) a thesis, (2) “Proof from God’s Word” (with biblical quotes), (3) “Witnesses of the Church in Its Private Confessions” and (4) “Witnesses of the Church in the Private Writings of Its Teachers.” It is noteworthy that Thesis VII’s section, “Proof from God’s Word,” is one of the longest examples of that section in the work, but it includes only a single Bible reference. Walther offers this final point, in effect, as a logical conclusion to the previous six theses on the Office of Public Ministry.

20 LSB Agenda (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2006), 164.


22 LSB, 169; see also the order of installation on page 180, where the same promise is made.

23 LSB Agenda, 167.

24 This does not imply that all salary changes, including salary reductions, are manipulative or sinful. In a congregation with limited or declining resources, a previous level of financial support may no longer be possible.


26 According to a 2013 Pew Research Center poll, Love and Marriage, only 49 percent of adults believe that having children is an important purpose of marriage, http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2013/02/13/love-and-marriage/.

27 As of 2016, the Census Bureau reports that over 50 percent of American adults are unmarried (53.5 percent of women and 46.8 percent of men), https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/newsroom/facts-for-features/2017/ch17-ff16.pdf.


30 Pew Research Center’s Religious Landscape Study (2015) indicated that 62 percent of U.S. adults are accepting of homosexuality and 53 percent accept same-sex marriage. Pew’s data for the LCMS indicates that 56 percent are accepting of homosexuality and 46 percent of same-sex marriage. (46 percent of LCMS members think that abortion should be legal in all or most cases as compared to 53 percent of all adults.) The data is available at http://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/religious-denomination/lutheran-church-missouri-synod/#social-and-political-views.

31 Ibid., http://www.pewforum.org/2015/03/12/americas-changing-religious-landscape/#.


33 This chart illustrates by percentage the aging of the LCMS in comparison to other groups:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ADULT POPULATIONS BY AGE</th>
<th>18–29</th>
<th>30–49</th>
<th>50–64</th>
<th>65+</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>U.S. non-Latino whites</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roman Catholic</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Protestants</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>20</td>
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<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LCMS</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The data about non-Latino whites in the U.S. is important for comparison, because about 95 percent of the LCMS population falls into that ethnic-racial category.

34 That effect is multiplied as family structures change. Single or divorced parents often feel somewhat out of place in churches, especially as the gift of marriage is (rightly) celebrated. The result is that while the percentage of single adults is rising, participation in the church for the unmarried and divorced is much lower than for those who are married. See Pew Research Center, http://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/marital-status/.


38 See Forty Years of LCMS District Statistics. Over the past 10 years, LCMS districts have declined 5–29 percent.

39 The data, provided to the task force by Concordia Plan Services, is from August 2017.

40 For example, a pastor may be gifted with a visionary sort of leadership that enables him to recognize patterns and priorities that undermine a congregation’s outreach and evangelism.

41 2016 Res. 13-01A, sixth resolve.

42 The report provides a fuller exegetical and historical treatment of this vital topic, www.lcms.org/ctcr.

43 Sermon on Psalm 110 (1535), AE 13:306. Luther’s extended “sermon” on this psalm was preached over eight weeks. Throughout his comments, he sees the psalm in its proper, messianic light.

44 Moreover, we note that Hebrews 3:1–2 speaks of the heavenly calling of apostle and priest, but makes the comparison with Moses not with Aaron. In so doing, the priestly work of the whole people of God is emphasized, and not just the priestly work of Aaron and his line.


46 Winger notes that Luther himself does not use the expression, “priesthood of believers,” though he affirms the presence of the idea. Some have suggested a preference for one of these terms over others (and in some cases, have suggested that certain of these terms may denigrate the Office of Public Ministry). We will tend to use “royal priesthood” herein, but without prejudice against the other terms.

47 See his Sermon on Psalm 110 (1535), AE 13.
The verb εὐαγγέλιζω (evangelizo) here, indicates the publication of an announcement or passing on a report. It is not one of the terms typically used for public preaching, which are κηρύσσω (kerussō) or εὐαγγελίζομαι (euangelleizō).

64 This is its only NT usage, although the verb also appears in the shorter of two poorly attested variant endings of Mark’s Gospel. Neither variant ending appears in the oldest biblical manuscripts. In the verse immediately after Mark 16:8 in the shorter of the two variants, εὐαγγέλιζω is used and is typically translated simply as announced or reported. “But they [the fearful women who witnessed the empty tomb] announced/report to Peter and those around him all they had been told/commanded” (Mark 16:9 variant).

65 AE 30:64–65.
66 AE 30:65.
68 AE 52:143.
69 Note that there is no evidence that the dispersed Christians who preached and spoke the Word held any public Office of Preaching. Indeed, Acts 8:1 states that the apostles remained in Jerusalem and were not dispersed.
70 Tr, KW 341.69.

71 Although both linguistically and historically one may argue for a translation of communio sanctorum as sharing in holy things rather than communion of saints, this is not, finally, the way the other confessions take the expression.

72 LC I, 91, KW 399; LC I, 88, KW 398.
73 Ap VII & VIII, 8–11, KW 175.
74 LC II, 47–48, KW 436–437.
75 In Exodus 28:36 the OT priests are marked as holy to the Lord on their foreheads. So also, in Baptism we are marked on our foreheads with the holy cross.
76 KW here has “of brothers and sisters.” KW 319.45.
77 SA III 4, Tappert 310; emphasis added. On this, Ziegler notes that although the mutual conversation and consolation is not mentioned in Tr, 69–72, “this is, historically and systematically the background of Luther’s remark.” Ziegler, “Priesthood and Office,” 10.
78 Luther’s Small Catechism with Explanation (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2017), 27. Emphasis added.
79 Translation from Luther’s Small Catechism (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1986), 11.

80 “Das Evangelium aber ist ja nicht allein den Geistlichen gegeben, sondern allgemein, darum stehen all Christen im Erbe Christi und sind geistlich.” Quoted in Hellmut Lieberg, Amt und Ordination bei Luther und Melanchthon (Goettingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1962), 44. The term geistlich is literally “spiritual” in English but occurs here in its derived sense as a member of the spiritual or clerical estate. See AE 44:127: “It is pure invention that pope, bishop, priests, and monks are called the spiritual estate while princes, lords, artisans, and farmers are called the temporal estate. … for baptism, gospel, and faith alone make us spiritual and a Christian people.” See also: Thomas Winger, “The Priesthood of the Baptised: The Testimony of Luther, Peter, Humpty Dumpty, and a Goat,” in You, My People, Shall Be Holy (St. Catharines, Ontario: Concordia Lutheran Theological Seminary, 2013), 326–329.

81 AE 13:333.
82 AE 39:310.
83 Ibid.

85 In this sermon of 1528 Luther accents the responsibility of parents in partnering with pastors to catechize the young. “Every father of a family is a bishop in his house and the wife a bishopess. Therefore remember
that you in your homes are to help us carry on the ministry as we do in the church” (AE 51:137).

86 One should not ignore the attention given to this theme by other reformers, including Philip Melancthon.

87 Debates among German Lutherans about the right understanding of the church and its ministry raged in the 1800s, especially in North America where Lutherans were planting churches and preparing pastors to care for them. These churches and programs of training were not associated with the state churches of Germany and some questioned the very status of the newly planted churches as true churches and denied that the ministers were rightly called and ordained. Many felt that Lutheran theology on church and office was inadequate and required further development in light of such challenging circumstances. Walther believed that the Word of God, the confessions and orthodox theological tradition were unambiguous about church and office. His goal in C&O is to state clearly and succinctly (in theses what has been believed and taught (thus providing extensive references and quotations with minimal commentary) so that we continue to do so. See his Preface to the First Edition (1852), especially page xvi, in C&O.

88 The Synod first declared Walther’s Theses on Church and Ministry to be its doctrine in 1851. In 2001 Walther’s Kirche und Amt was reaffirmed “as the definitive statement under Holy Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions of the Synod’s understanding on the subject of church and ministry” Resolution 7-17A, Convention Proceedings (LCMS, 2001), 172.

89 “Priesthood and Office,” 10.

90 Each thesis is followed by a section titled “Proof from God’s Word,” followed by a section with Confessional references and lastly other orthodox witnesses. Walther cites 1 Peter 2 as a “proof text” only for Thesis IV on the Church (C&O 38).

91 Thesis I (Office), C&O 152.

92 Thesis IV (Office), C&O 188.

93 Theses IV and VII (Church), C&O 40, 79; Theses VI and VII (Office), C&O 215, 243, 265.

94 Thesis VII (Office) is most emphatic on this point. C&O 262–283.


96 The translation with all bold emphases is from Thesis I (Office), C&O 155; italics added. The original source is That a Christian Assembly Has the Right to Judge All Teaching (1523), Halle 10:1801–2 (AE 39:309–310).

97 Thesis I (Office), C&O 156; bold emphasis in the original.

98 Martin Luther, That a Christian Assembly Has the Right and Power to Judge All Teaching and to Call, Appoint, and Dismiss Teachers, Established and Proven by Scripture, AE 39:309–310. See also from Luther: “Whoever maintains this distinction between office and person can also properly distinguish between false preachers and true preachers, sects and teachers of the truth. And this judgment must rest with you. You must be certain of when your pastor and teacher is remaining in his office and exercising his calling. Luther then says about a pastor who fails to teach faithfully according to the Catechism: “Therefore, I am not obligated to be obedient in this matter but should much rather flee and avoid you.” AE 69:357–358.

99 Thesis I (Office), C&O 163–164. Bold emphasis in the original.

100 Thesis VII (Office), C&O 262. Thesis VII says: “The holy preaching office is the authority, conferred by God through the congregation as the possessor of the priesthood and of all churchly authority, to exercise the rights of the spiritual priesthood in public office on behalf of the congregation.”

101 Ibid., 264.

102 From Gerhard’s Loci Theologici, De baptismo, 36, in C&O, 280.

103 Note: He does not include the Sacrament of the Altar.

104 Ziegler, 11. The quotation is from C. F. W. Walther, Gnadenjahr (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1891), 440, translated by John Martin Drickamer (The Doctrine of the Church in the Writings of Dr. C. F. W. Walther, Th.D. Thesis, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, 1978), 250–51. Ziegler includes this additional quote: “No one should say, ‘But I am no pastor, no teacher, no preacher. Let him teach, admonish, comfort, convert and bring to Christ. But I will stay in my vocation. No, my Christian. You have been baptized and through holy baptism you have already been called and anointed a priest of God. Through holy baptism every Christian is consecrated, ordained and installed in the office of teaching, admonishing, comforting and rebuking his neighbour. Through holy baptism every Christian has received not only the power, the full authority, and the right, but also the obligation, under penalty of losing divine grace, himself to watch, care, and help that other may also be enlightened and brought to Christ, the Bishop of their souls’” (C. F. W. Walther, Gnadenjahr, 438, Drickamer, trans. ibid., 256–257).


107 Brief Statement § 31, 8–9.


109 Ibid., 16.

110 AE 13:333, emphasis added.

111 C&O 264, emphasis added.

112 Martin Luther, AE 40:18; emphasis in the original.

113 The English word pastor is derived from the Latin word for shepherd. The term shepherd, although generally unused as a reference to the Office of Public Ministry in English, is valuable. Its use as both a noun and a verb—“A shepherd will shepherd a flock”—(which is also the case in Greek, ποιμαίνω [poimain] and ποιμήν [poimen]), associates the shepherd’s title with his work.

114 Walther quotes Johann Gerhard on this in C&O, 175: “The principal effective cause of the church office is the one and only true God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.” The quotation continues from 175–178 (bold in original).

115 The Confessions do not derive the Office from the royal priesthood, but from the Lord’s apostolic mandate. See the following Scripture references in the BOC: John 20:21–23 (AC XXVIII:6–7; Tr 9, 23, 31); Luke 10:16 (AC XXVIII:22; AC VII/VIII:28, 47); Matthew 16:18–19 (Tr 22, 25); Matthew 28:19–20 (Tr 31); John 21:17 (Tr 30).

116 So Walther: “The holy apostles place themselves on an equal footing with the servants of the church who were called mediately as their co-laborers in the office” (C&O 168).

117 With regard to this passage, Gregory Lockwood notes that in this list Paul “turns from the three kinds of persons who held specific offices to which they were called [that is, apostle, prophet, and teacher], to list five gifts which could be exercised by various members of the church. These gifts did not necessarily involve a call to a continuing role or office.” In Concordia Commentary: 1 Corinthians, (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2000), 453.

118 Πρεσβύτερος [presbyteros] is the most common of several NT titles for leaders in Judaism and within the church.

119 The Greek term for “overseer” is ἐκκλησιάστης [episkopos], also translated as bishop.

120 Elders are aligned with the chief priests (e.g., Matt. 21:23 and Matt. 26:3) and are identified as church leaders in Acts 11:30; Acts 15:1–29; Acts 16:4; Acts 20:17; Acts 21:18; 1 Timothy 4:14; 5:17–19; Titus 1:5; James 5:14; 2 John 1:1; 3 John 1:1).

121 Paul employs titles for the ministry of the Word in the pastorals such as “overseer” (1 Tim. 3:1–7; Titus 1:7) and “elder” (1 Tim 4:14;


124 See Ap IV 48, KW 128: “But the faith that justifies is not only a knowledge of history; it is to assent to the promise of God, in which forgiveness of sins and justification are bestowed freely on account of Christ.” For a penetrating discussion of the necessity of “this promise being given” through the proclamation of the Word, see Oswald Bayer, “Preaching the Word” in Justification Is for Preaching, ed. Virgil Thompson (Eugene, Oregon: Pickwick Publications, 2012), 196–216.

125 That is, “the ministry of teaching the gospel and administering the sacraments,” Latin, KW 41.

126 “Solchen Glauben zu Erlangen oder uns Menschen zu geben, hat Gott eingesetzt das Predigamt oder mundlich Wort, namentlich das Evangelium, durch welches er solchen Glauben und seine Macht, Nutz und Frucht verkündigen laßt” BSLK 59.

127 C&O 169, in defense of Thesis II on the Office as established by God. Walther also here refers back to Luther’s Schwabach Articles. Walther summarizes the distinction between the abstract and concrete concepts of the Preaching Office by a reference to J. H. Hoffmann (a reference in which Kurt Marquart suggests that Walther “over-interpreted” Hartmann, although Matthew C. Harrison expresses a reservation about Marquart’s view [see footnote 4 in C&O, 169]). Walther reads as follows (brackets and italics in the original):

This statement, of course, does not speak of the preaching office in concreto or of the pastoral Office but of the office in abstracto, of which [Johann] Ludwig Hartmann, among others, rightly reminds us in his pastoral theology: “The ministry [ministerium] [of the Word] may be treated in two ways: (1) in an abstract way inasmuch as the state [Stand] itself and the office itself is subject to Christian consideration, as Article V of the Augsburg Confession treats it; (2) in a concrete way, or in view of the persons who are found in this holy office, as Article XIV of the Augsburg Confession treats it” (Pastorale evangelicum [Nürnberg, 1697], 4:25).

On Walther’s view of AC V one may also see the article by Roland Ziegler, “Walther and AC V,” Concordia Theological Quarterly 76 (July/October 2012): 313–334.

128 FC SD XII 30, KW 659; italics added. See below for additional material from Walther on the abstract and concrete dimensions.


130 KW 46. The quote is from the first printing of KW. A later printing omits the term in brackets, “[public.]” The German original is ordentlichen Beruf and the Latin version is rite vocatus (BSLK 69).

131 Canonical ordination refers to ordination according to the canons (rules) of the Roman church, so that the ordination would be by a bishop appointed by the pope. This is not a rejection of ordination itself, which AC XIV indicates that the Lutherans affirmed. See Arthur Carl Piepkorn’s summary of the Book of Concord understanding of ordination: “The Sacred Ministry and Holy Ordination in the Symbolic Books of the Lutheran Church” in The Church Selected Writings of Arthur Carl Piepkorn, ed. M. Pleken and W. Wiecher (Delhi: NY: ALPB Books, 1993), 53–76.

132 See Ap XIV 1 and 3: “We have clear consciences on this matter since we know that our confession is true, godly, and catholic. For this reason, we dare not approve the cruelty of those who persecute this doctrine” (KW 222–223).

133 Ap XIV 4, KW 223.

134 Tr 67, KW 341. The logic is clear. If, in emergency, a layperson may absolve (one of the most distinctive acts of public ministry), then church must retain the right to choose and ordain someone for the public Office.

135 XXVIII 5–8, KW 92 (from the German).

136 On the matter of a wide and narrow sense of ministry, see below.

137 KW 220. KW translates from the Latin octavo edition. Justus Jonas’ German translation of Ap (found in BSLK, not KW or Tappert), which follows the octavo fairly closely (see note in KW 109), translates the Latin ministerium verbi with das Predigamt. : Denn das Predigamt hat Gott eingesetzt und geboten, und hat herrliche Zusage Gottes, Röm. 1.. (“For God has established and commanded the preaching office, and [it] has God’s wonderful promise” Ap XIII 10). This same narrow sense of Predigamt appears in Luther’s original translation of Colossians 1:25 into German which reads: “... deren Diener ich geworden bin nach dem göttlichen Predigamt, das mir gegeben ist unter euch, daß ich das Wort Gottes reichlich predige soll” (“... of which I became a servant according to the divine preaching office which is given to me, that I should richly preach the Word of God”).

138 We should add that both in the Confessions and in Walther, the narrow—or as it may also be termed—proper sense of ministry (ministeri or Predigamt) is the sense that appears in the overwhelming majority of cases. Thus, in our everyday speech still today, when the term “minister” is used, most people think of a pastor.

139 See KW 365 for the first, and the Synod’s Luther’s Small Catechism with Explanation for the second.

140 See LC I 158–166, KW 408–409.

141 AE 13:332, italics added. See similar comments in To the Christian Nobility of the German Nation, AE 44:129.


143 From Thesis III on the Office, that the office is not optional, C&O 183; italics and bold in the original. Walther also refers to AC XXVIII in C&O, Thesis IV on the Church, 38–40 as he defends the truth that the Church. “... is the proper and only possessor and bearer of the spiritual, divine, and heavenly gifts, rights, authority, offices ... .” There Walther again illustrates the consistent linkage of church and Office (C&O 40): “... wherever there is a small group of believing Christians or wherever a true Church is found, there also this church has the mandate to preach the Gospel. But if it has this mandate, then thereby it naturally also has the power, even the duty, to ordain preachers [Prediger] of the Gospel.”

144 C&O 170, italics, bold and brackets in the original.


146 Eugene Klug, Church and Ministry: The Role of Church, Pastor, and People from Luther to Walther (St. Louis: Concordia Pub. House, 1993), 135–136.


148 Ibid., 989.


150 C&O 175.

151 C&O 213, italics added. By “immediately” he means directly from Christ and by “mediately” he means from Christ through the Church.

152 LSB Agenda, 161, 165. These quotations are from the rite of ordination. The rite of installation is nearly the same.
153 Luther’s Small Catechism with Explanation (2017), 215–216 (bold emphases in the original).

154 Ex. 3; 2 Tim. 3:16; John 1:18; John 14:6.

155 John 1; John 3:16–18; Mark 16:16; Rom. 3:21–26; Eph. 2:8.

156 John 10; see also John 21; Matt. 9:36; Acts 20:28–30; Rom. 10:17; 1 Peter 2:25; 1 Peter 5:1–2; Heb. 13:20–21.


159 1 Cor. 5:7; Eph. 5:2; Heb. 9:26; Rom. 12:1; Phil. 2:17; Phil. 4:18; Heb. 13:15–16; Rom. 12:12; 15:30; 2 Cor. 1:11; Eph. 6:18; Phil. 4:6; Col. 4:2; James 5:13–15; Rev. 8:3–4; Eph. 6:4; Col. 3:16; 1 Thess. 5:11–22; Heb. 10:24–25; 1 Peter 2:9.

160 In the Confessions ministry is referred to as “office of preaching” (Predigtamt) or “ministry of teaching the Gospel and administering the Sacraments” (ministerium docendi evangelii et porrigendi sacramenta). Lutheran dogmatic theology has distinguished the wide and narrow sense of ministry using the terms “abstractly” (in abstracto) and “concretely,” (in concreto). The dogmatic distinction should not be misunderstood to say that ordinary members of the royal priesthood do not declare the wonders of Christ in specific, concrete circumstances and ways.

161 The reflexive pronoun αὐτός underlines the importance that Christ Himself gives these offices. These offices are not merely for the Church’s convenience. The offices are filled by specific men in distinct circumstances. At the same time, the offices certainly differ—apostles occurred only by the immediate appointment of Christ while pastors and teachers are continually provided immediately as, at least arguably, are prophets and evangelists. There is no indication that the offices are mere aptitudes. See Timothy M. Winger, Concordia Commentary: Ephesians (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2015), 449–450.

162 This sense emphasizes the Gospel as the power of salvation and the only power of the preaching office (AC V).

163 Birth places us in a family where we serve sacrificially as sons and daughters, sisters and brothers, praying for one another and mutually ad monishing and encouraging one another with the Word of God. Marriage calls us to a sacrificial life with a wife or husband, praying with and for our children (and grandchildren) and teaching them the Word. Occupation, location, and citizenship call us to serve co-worker, neighbor, or community and country, making Christ known in appropriate forms of personal evangelism and in priestly intercession before the Father’s throne of grace for those in authority. Church membership calls us to serve a congregation and a wider fellowship in sacrificial gifts for the support of the church, outreach to our community, preparing workers, sending missionaries into the harvest, supporting and encouraging the pastor in his work, and also sharing the Gospel with one another as we utilize gifts and abilities and aptitudes for the well-being of all.

164 The Office of Public Ministry is not indiscriminate—it does not call a particular pastor to serve any and everywhere, but only where he has been assigned. Beyond the specific responsibilities mentioned here, the call to a pastor may also include other responsibilities or expectations: for example, “visionary” leadership, outreach, administration. Moreover, the LCMS recognizes that for some, a call to public ministry may assign them the task of serving the church beyond an individual congregation, giving responsibilities for teaching or oversight, or utilizing gifts and abilities in such areas as administration, counseling, evangelism and so forth (e.g., professors, synodical or district officers and staff members, administrators, counselors, etc.).

165 2016 Res. 13-01A, sixth resolve.

166 LC III 2. See also Luther’s reminder of prayer in obedience to God’s command (LC III 5–18) and in response to His promise (LC III 19–21).

167 The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 2016 Convention Proceedings, 235–236. The resolution was adopted by a vote of 911 to 159.

X. Report and Recommendations: 13-03 Task Force

December 2018

The 66th Regular Convention of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod adopted 2016 Res. 13-03, which resolved:

That the Synod in convention establish a task force to be convened by the Council of Presidents (COP) to include five members of the COP who are representative of the geographic diversity of the Synod, two persons appointed by each seminary, two non-ordained individuals appointed by the Concordia University System (CUS) board, and four lay persons appointed by the Synod Board of Directors:

- To help the Synod address the needs of small, rural, urban, ethnic, immigrant, financially challenged, and geographically isolated congregations
- To recommend ways to identify candidates to address future needs in the LCMS
- To provide strategies for reaching the increasingly diverse population of the U.S. and Canada
- To establish minimal standards for pastors (while keeping the optimum in view)
- To explore alternative methods for ministerial preparation in light of changing needs
- To recommend avenues to finance preparation of pastors
- To explore the possibility of providing free seminary education
- To consider relevant recommendations in the 4-06A and 5-14A task force reports
- To consider other matters relevant to their task as may be identified
- That the task force provide a report to the next regular convention of the Synod; and that in its work the task force encourage the ongoing work of the district lay training programs and the CUS programs for evangelism and outreach in order to identify, equip, encourage, and empower men and women for mission, witness, and service to Christ and His Church.

As instructed by this resolution, the following members of the task force were appointed by the various entities identified in the above resolution:

- Justin Benson, appointed by the LCMS Board of Directors
- Rev. Dr. Lee Hagan, appointed by the Council of Presidents
- Rev. Dr. Jamison Hardy, appointed by the Council of Presidents
- David Hawk, appointed by the LCMS Board of Directors
- Rev. Shawn Kumm, appointed by the Board of Regents, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis
- Dr. Leo Mackay Jr., appointed by the LCMS Board of Directors
- Rev. Dr. Scott Murray, appointed by the Board of Regents, Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne
- Rev. Dr. Robert Newton, appointed by the Council of Presidents
- Rev. Todd Peperkorn, appointed by the Board of Regents, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis
- Christian Preus, appointed by the LCMS Board of Directors
I. The Biblical Witness for Pastoral Formation

The biblical requirements for the candidate for the Office of the Ministry should be well known to us all.

“The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task. Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God’s church? He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil” (1 Tim. 3:1–7).

“You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus, and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also. Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus” (2 Tim. 2:1–3).

“So flee youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart. Have nothing to do with foolish, ignorant controversies; you know that they breed quarrels. And the Lord’s servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, after being captured by him to do his will” (2 Tim. 2:22–26).

St. Paul’s underscoring of the qualifications of the pastoral office—especially his injunction that pastors be “able to teach”—provided the basic rationale for pastoral formation and, ultimately, the establishment of theological seminaries as what we now consider the “traditional” mode of pastoral formation in the Lutheran tradition. Scripture is clear on the requirements for pastoral candidates—the question has been, how is formation for Christ’s service best accomplished?

II. The Biblical Case for Residential Pastoral Formation

Does the Bible mandate residential pastoral formation? No. The Bible does not mandate a great number of things that might be entirely good for us.

Are there intimations in Scripture about what might be the best way to train clergy? Yes. Jesus appears to have had a more-than-three-year training period during which the apostles were intensively educated in the delivery of the Word by the Word made flesh. It certainly was residential in the sense that the disciples lived with Jesus and Jesus lived with His disciples. In fact, the replacement for Judas was required to have gone “in and out among us” (Acts 1:21) during the earthly messianic ministry. The same could be said of the apostolic seminary in which Paul prepared future clergy, such as Titus and Timothy, for their future pastorates leading congregations founded by Paul or others. Certainly, both Jesus and the apostles used practical methods, sometimes sending out students by twos, as Jesus did, or using the practical day-to-day work of traveling from town to town proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of heaven having come near (Matt. 10:1) as Paul did with a wide array of protégés in tow, such as Mark, Barnabas, Silas, and others.

The school of the prophets to which the Old Testament (2 Kings 2:3; 4:1; etc.) testifies might also serve to commend residential education to us. These schools seem to be tied to specific locations such as Gilgal, Bethel, Ramah, and Jericho, although we have no idea if they had permanent structures in which learning took place. The buildings are not of the essence of residential education. In the schools of the prophets, such education may have been purely peripatetic, while at the same time requiring the leadership of an instructor or instructors for a cadre of committed students.

There were times when this model could not be followed, either because of the pressures put on the church by persecution or in unique mission situations where the need ruled out any possibility of anything more than “on-the-fly” instruction. However, such liminal circumstances, as important as they are, should not define normal practice for the church. They are by definition exceptions.

The Bible encourages high-quality education for clergy in the qualifications for ministry in both Timothy (1 Tim. 3:1–13) and Titus (Titus 1:5–9). And again, while this does not demand a specific kind of residential educational program, it certainly commends to those who are educating and those who are educated the quality that is consistently achieved only in a residential program.

Normally, the church seeks to educate within the larger confessional context mandated by Scripture. It should never reduce education to what is presently usable or feasible in a single location or community. The church’s existence is a testimony to the great consensus. A community of learners gathered together in one place enables those learners to be intensively trained into that single faith (1 Cor. 1:10; Rom. 12:1–2; 6; fides qua!) and to support one another in the mutual consolation and conversation of the brothers (SA III IV). That consolation and conversation is much harder to attain outside of the face-to-face experience (see Basil the Great, Letter to Amphiloctius, 176).

Residential seminary education, while not biblically mandated to prepare men for the Office of the Holy Ministry of the church, is certainly a commended model and the one which, all things consid-
erected, most adeptly reaches the requirements set forth in Scripture for those to whom oversight of the flocks is given. For the most part, our modern world requires more education and training for a wide variety of vocations, not less. As our society becomes post-Christian, our pastors will also need an even more solid grounding of theological study in the Bible (including its original languages) and the Confessions to meet the challenges of an anti-Christian spirit of the times and to minister to their flocks who are buffeted by them. All this calls for in-depth study to form our pastors for future generations, not a quicker but less detailed route.

We also observe that our society is witnessing the breakdown of person-to-person relationships. We are distracted by our digital devices, ignoring conversation and daily human interactions. As the digital world also enables anonymized communication, it is far easier to attack, denigrate, and divide, losing focus on the Eighth Commandment direction to put the best construction on everything. Face-to-face residential pastoral formation creates pastors in a community of faith—not lone rangers. They learn to interact, discuss, and debate theological issues fraternally, and they work with one another respectfully as real individuals, not as faceless names behind a computer screen. Such interaction, experienced on a daily basis on the seminary campus, can only help them with future churchmanship.

III. A Brief History of Theological Education and Pastoral Formation

The mode of pastoral formation has varied widely, both in philosophy and practice, over the course of the church’s history. One way that the Early Church reflected Roman culture was in the establishment of theological schools. Here, of course, we also have the example of the Early Church in its establishment of early schools in Alexandria, Rome, and Antioch. Although we know little specifically about the curricula of these institutions, we do know that they tended to emphasize catechetics, apologetics, and homiletics.

However, both before and after the fall of Rome, another form of pastoral formation existed. “In various centers, under the supervision of bishops, candidates for the pastoral office gave themselves to meditation and prayer and appropriate study … . A primary emphasis … was upon learning how to explicate Scripture and parallel to this how to discharge the practical duties of the pastoral office.” In Gaul, Spain, and the Anglo-Saxon areas, “pastors were urged to take ‘candidates’ into their homes and help them by precept and example to become competent co-workers and their eventual successors.”

As time moved on, the monastery schools became important centers of pastoral formation. During the reign of Charlemagne, the Synod of Aachen (802) required candidates to know the Creed, the Lord’s Prayer, and other ordinary parts of the Mass by heart. Familiarity with the church year played a central role in candidacy for the ministry. The Aachen Synod made mandatory the memorization of many psalms, the pericopes, and the church calendar, and stipulated that priests sing the liturgy in the style of the church at Rome. Later Carolingian additions included an emphasis on Latin theological literature, especially literature that dealt with liturgical matters. “If a priest could acceptably conduct the services, ceremonies, and ministerial acts that belonged to his office, it was considered sufficient preparation,” states Foelsch. In other words, there was no examination required for the assumption of the ministry, rather if one was competent in the matter of “running” or “doing” the service, with some facility in understanding the shape of the church year, then one was considered qualified for the ministerial office. One wonders whether this satisfactorily fulfilled the requirement to be “able to teach.”

Scholasticism and the rise of the universities also impacted the shape of pastoral formation. If Aachen demonstrates an emphasis on the simple “practice” of ministry with the context of the liturgy, scholasticism went too far in the other direction. The Trivium (grammar, rhetoric, logic) and quadrivium (arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, music), plus specialized theological study, placed a higher premium on the philosophical or purely rational side of pastoral formation. The 12th and 13th centuries saw the rise of the universities—which we might call the earliest forms of the divinity school. Curricula stressed the Scriptures, doctrine, ethics, and canon law. In a way, the universities allowed for an emerging division in the clergy. The practical result was that parish priests knew little of the faith and “theologians” had little interest in the life of the church and its mission. Armin Siedlecki summarizes: “While the 12th century movement of scholasticism and the rise of universities as centers of learning witnessed the development of theology as a distinct academic discipline, there remained a clear distinction between a sacerdos simplex (a priest who is ordained for celebrating the Mass and little else) and a theologos (theologian).” One was either a pastor or a theologian—one could not be both.

The Reformation’s emphasis on the centrality of the Scriptures—sola Scriptura—drove its program of pastoral formation, though not without some challenges.

At the opening of the Reformation, Luther and Melanchthon believed the church was in emergency conditions. The problem? A lack of adequately trained clergy who were “able to teach.” Already in the 1520s, both the Great Reformer and his foremost colleague noted the deplorable character of the education of many of those holding the pastoral office. Yet because of the pressing need for clergy in the evangelical churches, they took the exceptional step of allowing those with only the most rudimentary pastoral formation to be ordained into the Office of the Ministry.

One of the early challenges facing the Lutheran tradition—and one that Wittenberg struggled to meet—was of numbers. In 1521, when Luther was excommunicated, the student population of Wittenberg declined precipitously. It took years to rebuild the student body. In the midst of the rebuilding of the student population, Luther and Melanchthon revised the curriculum. Taken together, these two points—the need (1) to attract and (2) to form a sufficient number of students—meant that there simply were not enough pastors early on to move the work of Reformation forward, which placed the future of the Reformation at risk. And this, then, drove the question (which we touched on earlier): When is a man sufficiently formed to be “able to teach”?

The result was that there were a number of Notprediger—emergency preachers—ordained in early Lutheranism before they had received the ideal education. A study of the Wittenberger Ordeniertenbuch reveals that when ordinations began in earnest in Wittenberg in 1537, initially a large percentage of the ordinands were Notprediger. From a modest eight ordinations in 1537, to 22 in 1538, by 1539 the number had climbed to 110. Of those 110 ordinations in 1539, fully a third were men who lacked full classical training.

This, however, they saw as a temporary matter. Charles Foelsch writes: “In theory the reformers insisted on proper pre-theological and theological training and demanded that each minister submit to an examination to prove that he was qualified. As early as 1527 rules to this effect were issued.” In 1545 this examination was
assigned to the theological faculties, and in 1580 authority passed
to the spiritual heads of the church. Already by 1544, the University
of Leipzig insisted that no one be ordained in the ministry who had
not studied at a recognized university. Indeed, by the early 1530s
Melanchthon had revised the Wittenberg curriculum to ensure that
students would be properly formed for Christ’s service.

Thus, the assumption of the Lutheran Reformation was a well-
trained pastor who was “able to teach.” Able to teach meant that one
was not a simple liturgical practitioner or a detached philosopher.
Rather, as Dr. John Kleinig has pointed out, for Luther a theolo-
gian is created by God and his preparation for the ministerial office
involves “the ongoing reception of the Holy Spirit,” who enables
His pastor to divide Law and Gospel properly in preaching and to
deliver the grace of God to His people through the Sacraments.4 A
servant must be formed first in Christ through the Holy Spirit work-
ing through Word and Sacrament in order to be formed for Christ’s
service to the church and the world. As a result, argues Siedlecki:

For Luther, public education was both a civil and a
religious responsibility, and as such was directly
connected to theological education. Pastors had
a preaching, but also a teaching function, as the
publication of Luther’s catechisms in 1529 and the
proliferation of catechetical literature in Lutheran
regions well attests. It is in this regard that Luther
and his fellow reformers differ most significantly
from Erasmus and other humanists. While Erasmus
believed that education was essentially human-
centered, and functioning in harmony with faith
and Scripture, for Luther it was uncompromisingly
God-centered and subordinated to faith.5

Melanchthon built in a means for assessing whether candi-
dates for the ministry were sufficiently formed in and for Christ at
the end of their studies. His *Examin Eorum* provided a long list of
questions, roughly following the outline of the Augsburg Confes-
sion, for candidates to answer.6 But these were not simply academic
exercises; they also had application in preaching and teaching the
people. As Melanchthon outlined the purpose of the questions: “Let
us consider that the candidates for ordination be diligently exam-
ined in all these articles, the review of which shall provide good
instruction for the people.”

**On Doctrine**

- On the difference between Christian doctrine and pagan
  religion, as well as other sects.
- On the eternal nature of God.
- On the three persons within God.
- On the purification of both natures in Christ, born of a
  virgin.
- On the difference between Christian prayer and pagan
  prayer.
- On the creation of all human creatures.
- On the fall of the first humans.
- On sin, original sin, and true saints.
- On God’s eternal law, the difference between the 10
  Commandments and other Mosaic laws, the Levitical
  ceremonies and civil laws.
- On the forgiveness of sins, the justification of humans
  before God through faith by the will of our Lord Christ.
- Whether the teaching that we are justified by faith alone
  is correct.
- On the difference between the doctrine of our churches
  on the matter and the false Catholic teaching.
- Whether the Catholic teaching is correct that a man shall
  continually have doubts whether he has been forgiven
  and is pleasing to God.

**On Good Works**

- Which works should one observe?
- How do these [works] please God?
- Does sin remain in the saints and repentant while they
  are still alive?
- Which sin repels the Holy Spirit, so that a man falls
  again under God’s wrath and condemnation, unless he
  repents?

**On the Sacraments**

- On Baptism.
- Whether young children should be baptized.
- On the Lord’s Supper, what elements should be adminis-
  tered, and why one should receive them.
- On the difference between proper use and misuse.
- Why the Catholic sacrificial mass, intended to earn the
  forgiveness of sins, is wrong and to be avoided.
- On penance.
- On absolution and faith.
- On the most significant false Catholic teachings on this
  article of penance.
- What the Christian church is, and by what signs it is
  recognized.
- Why the Christian church has been placed under the
  cross, and on the consolation of disheartened Christians.
- On prayer.
- On calling on departed saints.
- On ceremonies in the church, which are of human order.
- On Christian freedom.
- On the law of Moses, and the differences between the
  three parts of the law.
- On marriage.
- On marriage vows.
- On secular authority.

Again, this exam was used to underscore the necessary ap-
lication of doctrine first to the candidate’s own spiritual state, in
order that they might teach and encourage others in the cultivation
and nurture of the faith given the people in their Baptisms.
These are the essential questions which one shall ask the candidates for ordination, which one shall teach them and of which one shall remind them. So that they shall make proper use of these questions in their sermons. Thus they may have a clear and thorough summary of Christian doctrine, which they can themselves consider and remember, and which is necessary for their penance, their faith, their proper prayer, their consolation in sadness, and their own salvation. These questions are also to be repeated during visitations of pastors and people.7

In the spirit of Luther and Melanchthon, Lutheran orthodoxy sought to institutionalize these concerns through the so-called “evangelical cloister schools.” Foelsch describes them as follows: “Boys 14–15 years of age were students in the ordinary subjects of Latin schools and in addition, Greek, Bible, and music; after several years they advanced to a higher cloister school where they studied the Old Testament, logic, and other subjects; after that they entered the Tübingen Shift where they lived together while studying liberal arts at the university; finally when they had received the BA degree they studied theology proper, for an additional year.”8 For Lutheran orthodoxy, theological inquiry and its practical application in preaching and teaching are intimately linked. While many in the 17th century criticized the orthodox Lutharians for abstracting theology from its application to the lives of their hearers (calling them “dead orthodox”), Craig Westendorf has challenged this caricature by showing that postille (books of sermons) of the orthodox Luthers intended to bring the fruits of careful theological inquiry to practical application through proclaimed Word in which the Holy Spirit gives God’s gifts to His people and points them to the Sacraments where they receive the very body and blood of their Lord.9 Pursuing a careful, demanding and robust theological education, therefore, was an act of worship on the part of the candidate as that candidate learned more fully the full extent of God’s mercy in Christ for the sake of proclaiming and teaching it to a world burdened by sin and crushed under God’s Law. The Luthers were convinced that through a thorough theological education, God would form men for the ministry of Word and Sacraments, through which God would grant His gifts to His people. God formed pastors in the careful study of dogmatics linked with the formative experiences of worship in the community gathered around Word and Sacraments.

The devastating impact of the Thirty Years’ War (1618–1648), however, led many to downplay the centrality of doctrine. Pietism brought new emphases to theological education, which continue to impact the way that we frame theological education down to the present. Pietism brought at least three unique elements to the preparation of pastors. First, it stressed the centrality of the biblical disciplines. Johann Albrecht Bengel sought a faithful biblical text, which, once found, would frame the ministerial life and practice of the pastors of the church. Second, Gottfried Arnold brought a new reading of history, especially church history. Arguing for a kinder and gentler reading of tradition, Arnold expanded the boundaries of legitimate theological expression beyond those of the historic, orthodox confession of the faith. There was less of an emphasis on the explication of true doctrine, and more of an emphasis on the “diversity” of Christian confession. Finally, Pietism demanded that candidates for the ministry be “truly converted.” Pietism rightfully stressed the centrality of the Scriptures, but unfortunately tended to overemphasize the experience of the individual; personal awakening and conversion took precedence over God’s formation through Word and Sacraments.10

By the end of the 17th century and through the 18th century, Rationalism had also made inroads into the church and the way it prepared its pastors. Its emphasis on philosophy and linguistics—to use the language of Edward Farley—helped transform theology from a habitus (attitude, aptitude) to a “science.” Combining orthodoxy’s emphasis on systematic/dogmatic theology with Pietism’s stress on Bible, history, and conversion, Rationalism helped bring about the emergence of “the fourfold pattern” of theological education.

In his groundbreaking book Theologia, Edward Farley advances the following thesis: “The fourfold scheme of theological education was not itself the outcome of rigorous theological scrutiny, but of an appropriation of the past having the nature of a compromise.”11 Prior to the Thirty Years’ War, theology was considered the pinnacle of education—all other education was preparatory to the study of divinity. Rationalism helped shape theological education by forcing it to compete for legitimacy as a “science.” The key shift in theological education at this point, argues Farley, was the demand that theology be able to justify its existence—and the way that it accomplished this was to divide theological education into a series of independent disciplines. Where previously theological education was seen as a “way of life” or a habitus, which sought to create pastoral theologians or theological pastors, now the theological disciplines took on a life independent of one another and, in a way, independent of their organic relationship to the life of the church as the justification of their existence and the very source of their life.

This development is best exemplified in the development of the “Encyclopedia.” Here the disciplines of exegetical, historical, and systematic theology were largely severed from their practice. For example, in the work of Gundling we find a distinction between classifications according to literature and method, as well as a distinction of “theory” and “practice.” Also, Mosheim defined the task of theological education as the science of the education of church leaders.

The fourfold pattern has its roots in these philosophical commitments. Summarizing Farley’s arguments, the fourfold pattern is an organization of theological disciplines and their literatures for pedagogical purposes, which makes a distinction between disciplines of theory and disciplines of practice and results in two kinds of teaching: (1) belief and (2) action and life. The critical shift, argues Farley, is an altered meaning of practical theology from a moral category, which defines the life of the church as a whole, to a distinctively clergy category, which is not common to the Christian life. The result, believes Farley, has been disastrous. “Practical theology” becomes a term for ministry or clergy disciplines—simple skills, we might say—and these are equal to practical application. Adjusting Farley’s terminology somewhat for a Lutheran setting, theological inquiry is no longer a shared habitus, in which God graciously calls people into His Kingdom and enables them to live in their God-given vocations. “Practical theology” became a set of skills and functions learned by ministerial students for application in the congregation. The result is a mixing of the older view and way of implementing authority with the newer historical criticism: “This shift is from theology viewed as a habitus, … to theology used as a generic term for a cluster of disciplines.” Having generally adopted this model, the final result is a problem that many
of us have faced. The problem, basically stated, is this: Where is disciplinary unity found? How do we integrate the theological disciplines? In what ways do we encourage a synthesis of doctrine and practice? Two answers have generally been given, argues Farley: (1) The so-called “essence” of the Christian religion, what we might call a rigid systematic approach that fails to appreciate the historical and liturgical life of the church; and (2) requirements of training the clergy, what we might call a purely functionalist approach.

In 1811, F. C. D. Schleiermacher published *A Brief Outline of Theological Study.* In contrast to the fourfold pattern and the supremacy of the encyclopedia, Schleiermacher proposed a threefold organization for theological study: (1) practical theology, (2) historical theology, and (3) philosophical theology.

First, Schleiermacher defined practical theology as a normative discipline that apprehends the rules for carrying out the tasks of ministry. It is theory directly related to practice—assessment of ministry—and includes the origins, history, and present situation of the church. Historical theology is that which yields the knowledge of Christianity. It embraces exegesis, church history, and dogmatics as the organic expression of the church’s life in time and in specific places. Finally, philosophical theology is described as a synthesis of the details provided by historical theology. That which, in truth, corresponds to the human spirit, for example, apologetics and polemics.

There are several strengths in Schleiermacher’s proposal. On the one hand, all three disciplines communicate the essence of Christianity. That is to say, no one discipline is independent of the others. To paraphrase Ben Franklin, they all hang together, or they all hang separately. For example, practical theology is not merely a “technology of skills,” but it includes an informed theological assessment of one’s culture and history as a necessary element of one’s pastoral ministrations. Again, historical theology is not merely a collection of details, but a fusion of exegesis, history, and confession.

On the other hand, the proposal does have weaknesses. The most important one, and it is one from which there is no recovery, is that for Schleiermacher there is no normative doctrinal content to be gleaned from the study of history, Scripture, and dogma.

What of theological education in the Lutheran tradition more recently? Generally speaking, three models have been employed in the training of indigenous clergy in the United States: (1) apprenticeship, (2) the “preachers’ seminary,” and (3) the “classical” model.

When Lutheranism was first established in North America in the 17th century, and even stretching through the 18th, most pastors were trained in Europe—notably at Halle and other Pietist centers—and then came to the British Colonies in North America to serve as missionary pastors. Muhlenberg and his colleagues formed the Pennsylvania Ministerium in 1748 with the intent of establishing a theological seminary that would train pastors for the church. Such a seminary did not come into existence until 1815 (Hartwick), which consistently struggled for existence. Only with the founding of Gettysburg in 1826 was there a well-functioning stand-alone seminary in the United States.

Until the development of the seminaries in the second quarter of the 19th century, most North American Lutheran clergy trained by apprenticeship. They studied theology under the direction of an ordained pastor, often living with the supervising pastor. After a time of preparation, the Ministerium examined the candidate and, if he successfully passed his exam, he was subsequently ordained. Apprenticeship, however, was extremely tasking on the supervising pastor and uneven in the education that the candidate received. Beyond that, it had an inherently individualistic character in that, while examination was administered by the Ministerium, the student’s perspective of Lutheranism was largely shaped by the supervising pastor. This did not encourage formation in the context of the wider church, as later seminary education did.

But where would the Lutherans turn? Where earlier traditions had attached a course in divinity to their regular curricula in the university (Harvard and Yale, for example, among the Puritans and their ancestors), Lutherans began to institutionalize theological education at the time of the rise of the dedicated seminary. Later Lutheran seminaries included Gettysburg (1826); Canton, Ohio (later Columbus, 1830); Southern (Lexington, Columbia, et al., 1831); Altenburg, Mo. (later St. Louis, 1839); Springfield, Ohio (1845); Fort Wayne, Ind. (1846); Wartburg (1854); Augsburg (1860); and Philadelphia (1864); Augsburg in Minneapolis (1869); Luther in St. Paul, Minn. (1890); Chicago (1891); and many others into the 20th century. Among American Lutherans, two forms of seminary education existed. First, there was the “classical” model; based primarily on the German model and the fourfold pattern, the “classical seminary” demanded the highest level of academic preparation for candidates for the ministry. The “preachers’ seminary,” or “practical seminary,” featured a minimal theological education prior to ordination. The idea was to prepare men for the mission field as quickly as possible. Most of the seminaries in the Muhlenberg tradition mixed the two kinds of education here mentioned, and then over the course of the 19th century became increasingly committed to the “classical” model. In the case of the Missouri Synod, however, there were two distinct seminaries. The St. Louis seminary was more classically oriented, while the Fort Wayne seminary leaned more to the practical model. Not surprisingly, it was the latter that provided the majority of candidates for the Synod for its first 25 years.

Ultimately, in the years 1861 to 1875, the two—the “practical” and the “theoretical”—seminaries lived together in St. Louis. In 1873–74, the curricula of the respective institutions were as follows:

**The Practical Seminary**

1. Dogmatics according to Conrad Dietrich
2. The Symbolical Books and comparative symbolics
3. Practical exegesis of the Old and New Testaments, and an introduction to biblical history
4. Church history
5. Homiletics with special reference to Luther’s church postille
6. Pastoral theology
7. Catechetical and homiletic practice
8. Overview of the Latin texts of the Apology and Chemnitzi’s *Examen*
9. English grammar and translation
10. Various readings, especially in Luther

**The Theoretical Seminary**

1. Encyclopedia and methodology

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the increasing cost of delivering residential seminary education, is delivered through the residential seminary model. Recognizing and best education we can provide, which the task force believes possible, the Synod should seek to equip these men with the highest Gospel rightly divided and administer His Sacraments. Insofar as Word and of all of us as they proclaim God's Word with Law and to which Christ calls His shepherds, who are the servants of the community. The implications of these findings for distance education need to be addressed in our current context.

IV. Recommendations of the Task Force

With this biblical, confessional, and historical context as background, the 13-03 Task Force addresses the Synod's assignment and offers the following recommendations:

1. To help the Synod address the needs of small, rural, urban, ethnic, immigrant, financially challenged, and geographically isolated congregations

Recommendation: There is one Office of the Holy Ministry to which Christ calls His shepherds, who are the servants of the Word and of all of us as they proclaim God's Word with Law and Gospel rightly divided and administer His Sacraments. Insofar as possible, the Synod should seek to equip these men with the highest and best education we can provide, which the task force believes is delivered through the residential seminary model. Recognizing the increasing cost of delivering residential seminary education, the task force commends Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, and Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, for their bold efforts to fund the cost of tuition for residential M.Div. students. These initiatives will require continuing faithful support of our seminaries by the Synod, districts, congregations, and laity. Where, however, congregations are unable to support a full-time pastor, the task force makes the following recommendations, as appropriate for the particular context:

a. To encourage the formation of multi-point parishes, bearing in mind that our Synod began with many “circuit riders” and studying examples from rural areas where such arrangements have been in place for many years;

b. To encourage the merger of congregations that are not self-sustaining on their own but could be when combined, recognizing that the ultimate end is not the preservation of a congregation or building, but the proclamation of the Gospel and the faithful administration of the Sacraments, the provision of fraternal care to our brothers and sisters in Christ, and outreach of the Gospel to a lost world;

c. To encourage the adoption of sister congregations on a peer-to-peer basis, as partnerships already exist between some suburban and urban congregations, those to whom much is given may support others, with due regard for the adopted congregation as an equal and not as a “branch location”;

d. To use the SMP program to supply pastors in contexts where a pastor trained via the residential Master of Divinity program is not available and where other options such as multi-point and merger are not practical or desirable; and

e. To encourage a collaborative effort between the seminaries and the LCMS Office of National Mission to develop resources to assist in implementing the foregoing strategies for rural and urban pastoral service, which include ethnic ministry, multiple-point parishes and worker-priest arrangements.

2. To recommend ways to identify candidates to address future needs in the LCMS

Recommendation: The identification of possible candidates for the Office of the Holy Ministry most often begins with the candidate’s own pastor and congregation. All pastors should be encouraged to identify boys and men of all ages who are suited for the office, especially campus pastors who are in contact with college-age young men, to encourage them to consider a pastoral vocation. The LCMS Office of Pastoral Education should provide additional educational resources, including coordination with existing seminary and Concordia University System programs, retreats, and publications for those interested in church work. Each district should designate a church-work vocation coordinator who can meet regularly to a lost world; and outreach of the Gospel to a lost world; and

3. To provide strategies for reaching the increasingly diverse population of the U.S. and Canada
**Recommendation:** Outreach begins with existing congregations. The task force commends the Office of National Mission for developing resources, such as the *Every One His Witness* Lutheran evangelism program, to help Christians reach their neighbors with the Gospel. The Office of National Mission should develop and disseminate resources to help congregations reach their neighbors as well. In line with recommendations set forth in #1 above, outreach should also include support, whether peer-to-peer or district level, for existing congregations in changing areas, that they may provide a physical presence while witnessing about Christ. Also in line with recommendations set forth in #1 above, where the need is great for specific skills, the seminaries should be encouraged to focus their SMP programs primarily on educating students who meet such needs and can immediately reach people of other cultures. In all of their routes to the ministry, they are encouraged to emphasize reaching people of other cultures with the Gospel.

4. **To establish minimal standards for pastors (while keeping the optimum in view)**

**Recommendation:** The PFC continue and amplify its existing work, gathering regularly as needed with key leaders, including (as appropriate in given circumstances) representatives from the Boards of Regents of the seminaries, the International Center, the Council of Presidents, pastors, key laypersons, Lutheran Church Extension Fund (LCEF), Lutheran Federal Credit Union, and the auxiliaries of the Synod.

The PFC shall diligently seek:

1. To discuss the unique contribution of each seminary to the life of the church;
2. To plan for the ongoing vitality and use of the seminaries;
3. To advocate increasing Synod dollars to the seminaries and finding avenues to finance preparation of pastors;
4. To explore providing fully supported seminary education into the future;
5. To work with the Boards of Regents of the seminaries to align the Synod and seminaries’ strategic plans;
6. To develop an aggressive recruitment effort to supply the Church with faithful pastors, working with the seminaries and district coordinators as outlined under recommendation #2;
7. To work with Synod staff to project Synod demographics, pastoral needs, and congregational health for five-, 10-, and 15-year intervals;
8. To assess the future of accreditation for the seminaries;
9. To work with the seminary Boards of Regents to recommend any needed improvements to the standards for pastoral formation, including the interplay of academics and confession;
10. To review, evaluate and set appropriate standards and best practices for Synod-based accreditation of CUS pre-seminary programs and locations, to ensure optimal deployment of resources; and
11. To explore options for co-locating Synod entities to the seminary campuses.

**Recommendation:** The PFC evaluate the routes to ordination already in place and bring them all to a standard of excellence that will form pastors to proclaim God’s Word to all people with faithfulness and integrity. This should involve consolidating all non-residential education routes to pastoral ministry into the SMP program, and strengthening the quality of the SMP program to ensure that both those enrolled and those served by its graduates benefit from fully and appropriately formed and equipped pastors.

5. **To recommend avenues to finance preparation of pastors**

**Recommendation:** We give thanks for the work already done by Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, and Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, to this end, and encourage continued support of our seminaries at the Synod (especially the Joint Seminary Fund), district, congregational, and individual level. We also encourage the seminaries (and CUS) to work with LCEF to explore the possibility of non-government related student loans. (See also recommendations #1 and #4.)

The task force also recommends that careful attention be given to preparing for government action that might impact Lutheran higher education. Our seminaries and CUS schools could face significant challenges in the next few years relating to accreditation and student financial aid (state and federal).

Accreditation is the process whereby an independent third party reviews an educational institution to ensure that the institution’s academic programs and operations meet recognized standards of quality and viability. Accreditation is intended to provide a “stamp of approval” for the degrees that graduates receive. It is also required for students to obtain federal and state financial aid (only accredited institutions qualify), and for students to have their credits transfer to other institutions, or for advanced degrees. Traditionally, institutions have been able to define their own mission (which in the case of LCMS schools, includes the confession of our faith). The accrediting agency does not make a value judgment on the mission, but simply determines whether the institution is doing what it says it intends to do—however that may be defined. Recently, proposals have been advanced to have accrediting agencies make value judgments on an institution’s commitment to serving “diverse populations,” which could have adverse effects on institutions as they carry out their stated mission. Navigating these waters requires real wisdom. Loss of accreditation could have a devastating effect: Students could not receive financial aid, and academic credits or degrees would be “devalued.”

Another issue relates to tax-exempt status, as well as financial aid that is provided through federal and state governments. At the federal level, any school with discriminatory policies cannot have tax-exempt status. The seminaries and CUS schools do not engage in discrimination, but they do operate consistently with a biblical understanding of issues of human sexuality and the qualifications for the Office of the Holy Ministry. The First Amendment protects the right of religious institutions to operate, but the scope within which we can exercise our religious liberty may be reduced with adverse legislation or court decisions.

The Lutheran Federal Credit Union, in partnership with LCEF, continues to explore avenues for alternate student loan financing. The task force commends these efforts, as well as the work of the Lutheran Center for Religious Liberty in advocating for our religious freedom.

6. **To explore the possibility of providing free seminary education**

**Recommendation:** We give thanks for the work already done
by Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, and Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, to this end, especially the recent establishment of 100 percent guaranteed tuition, and encourage continued support of our seminaries at the Synod, district, congregational, and individual level.

7. To consider relevant recommendations in the 4-06A and 5-14A task force reports

Recommendation: That in concurrence with 4-06A (“Districts vigorously encourage the establishment of multi-point parishes”), the LCMS Office of Pastoral Education with the Council of Presidents develop resources that assist districts in serving congregations that are no longer able to support a full-time pastor. These resources will include, but are not restricted to, materials to assist consideration of the consolidation of congregations, creation of multi-point parishes, models of ministry in rural and urban settings, revitalization, peer-to-peer congregational support, and bi-vocational pastors.

Recommendation: Recognizing the benefit of local expertise, circuit visitors are encouraged to fulfill their duties to ensure the provision of pastoral care for vacant congregations within the circuit and to work with area congregations to provide fraternal support for one another.

8. That in its work the task force encourage the ongoing work of the district lay training programs and the CUS programs for evangelism and outreach in order to identify, equip, encourage, and empower men and women for mission, witness, and service to Christ and His Church

Recommendation: The No. 1 lay training program is regular attendance at the Divine Service, where God’s Word is proclaimed and His Sacraments administered. This should be supplemented by each pastor by the availability of regular adult classes in each congregation studying not only God’s Word, but also our Lutheran Confessions that are a faithful exposition of it, so that all our laity may know and understand that which they believe and confess. Additional resources are available through Every One His Witness, the publications of Concordia Publishing House, and resources for advanced theological education both at the CUS and seminary level for laity who wish for a deeper understanding without pursuing full-time church work. We must start by recognizing that all of us in our daily vocations are masks of God, as Luther wrote. We encourage all congregations and their members to use these resources so that they may be immersed in God’s Word and the Confessions and ready to confess them boldly to all whom God places in our daily lives. The Synod should emphasize the importance of lay people carrying out their God-given vocations as members of the priesthood of all believers—in their work of the laity as members of the royal priesthood of believers.

Summary of the Minority Report

There are several reasons for the submission of this minority report:

+ Omitted from the majority report are recommendations for church leaders who are “commissioned ministers” of the Synod, along with those who belong to “the priesthood of all believers”—they, too, exercise significant church leadership positions and are facing current and future challenges in their ministry.

+ The majority report fails to establish a minimum standard for pastoral formation; instead, it focuses the majority of its task force labor in defending and promoting one model of theological education—the residential model of pastoral formation—and minimizes proven non-formal and alternative models of theological education that sufficiently form pastors and that meet the biblical standard (1 Timothy 3; Titus 1).

+ It was necessary to share additional comments and recommendations that are derived from personal graduate studies and from ministry experiences as a parish pastor, overseas missionary and theological educator, and district president.

Summary of the recommendations:

+ That a significant number of LCMS congregations consider the gathering of His people around Word and Sacrament, and for the extension of His Gospel in new places, through a network of house churches.

+ That male teachers who were educated at one of our Concordia universities, and who possess the pastoral qualifications expressed in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1, be encouraged to pursue SMP pastoral formation so that they can serve in a bi-vocational ministry.

+ That those who occupy and serve within the pastoral office be strongly encouraged to acquire at least a “S-3 level” of fluency in the Spanish language.

+ That the SMP curriculum be developed in the major languages spoken in the U.S., beginning with the Spanish language, so that congregations can be established within, and pastors formed among, the indigenous leaders of that language group.

+ That the SMP curriculum be digitalized and made available at the district level at no cost as a way of equipping congregational elders, and other selected congregational members within “the ministry of the baptized,” so that they might become mature disciples of Jesus Christ and be better equipped for their leadership and ministry among God’s people.

+ In response to the task force assignment to establish a minimum standard for pastoral formation, we would recommend that the current SMP program serve as the minimum standard for pastoral formation, with the M.Div. serving as the optimum standard.

+ That a “university model” of pastoral formation be incorporated into our Concordia University System through on-site and distance-education platforms, with the student being assigned to a local LCMS congregation for his fieldwork ministry practicums.
+ The need for training in basic leadership skills among clergy and laity, specifically those skills connected with biblical and adaptive leadership.

+ To affirm “the ministry of the baptized” and to equip His disciples to live out their identity and ministry as His “scribe … trained for the kingdom” (Matt. 13:52) so that they may serve faithfully and fruitfully as His evangelizing, edifying, and missionary priesthood to the nations (Matt. 7:24–27; 13:1–23; Rom. 10:9–17; 2 Cor. 5:16–21).

+ That the Synod establish “helping offices” for the edification of God’s people (teaching office) and the evangelization of the nations (evangelist office).

+ That LCMS congregations, as they seek to proclaim the Gospel and extend His Kingdom in new places, would be wise to consider Paul’s missionary methods as expressed in Acts 14:21–23.

+ Since LCMS congregations are located in the third-largest mission field in the world, it is essential that those who lead His people, along with “the ministry of the baptized,” receive training to live as missionaries in their daily lives and vocations.

+ That the members of the Synod engage in an intensive and comprehensive study of the Book of Acts so that we might fully understand what “the ministry of the Word” entails post-Ascension and post-Pentecost; churches were established through the ministry of the apostolic church, and the Early Church experienced significant ecclesiastical and missiological ministry shifts as “the Word of the Lord grew.”

+ That credentialed missiologists and directors of Christian outreach, along with “ordained and commissioned ministers” who have demonstrated fruitful ministry expertise and experience in evangelism and outreach, should be encouraged and commissioned to develop evangelism and outreach resources for district training and congregational usage.

+ That the ministry functions connected with the five “Word gifts” of Eph. 4:11–16 inform and norm our ecclesiastical and missiological labors.

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Dr. Robert Newton, West Region district president
representative

Rev. Dr. Anthony Steinbronn, East Region district president
representative

To read the full minority report, visit lcms.org/doc/res13-03-taskforce-minority-report.

Notes

1 Foelsch, “Ministerial Education,” 1564.


3 Armin Siedlecki, “Protestant Theological Education at German Universities in the Sixteenth Century,” ATLA 2008 Proceedings, 251. Foelsch (“Ministerial Education,” 1565) notes that while raising the standard of philosophical acumen, this curricular shift had the unfortunate result in leading many students to unbelief. On the other hand, many clergy, who lacked a university education, knew little substantively of the church’s faith. “Many of the university-trained students became skeptics. Most priests, however, had no higher education at all. The outlook for a worldly trained ministry was dismal.”


5 Siedlecki, “Protestant Theological Education,” 253.


7 Siedlecki, “Protestant Theological Education,” 257.

8 Foelsch, “Ministerial Education,” 1565.


11 Edward Farley, Theologia: Fragmentation and Unity in Theological Education (Fortress Press). This section summarizes Farley’s argument in a portion of this book, specifically the chapter “Schleiermacher and the Beginning of the Encyclopaedia Movement.”


13 For many years, the Missouri Synod published the curricula for its colleges and seminaries in a single volume. This listing is for the 1873–74 school year for the combined seminary at St. Louis. The following year, the Synod moved the practical department to Springfield.


1. National Witness

REPORTS
R1, R1.1, R1.2, R1.3, R1.4, R7, R15, R20, R56, R57, R59.1–13, R60, R61, R63, R65, R66

OVERTURES
Ov. 1-01
To Reaffirm and Expand the Use of Every One His Witness

WHEREAS, Every Christian, as a member of the royal priesthood, is called to “proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness and into his marvelous light” (2 Peter 2:9); and
WHEREAS, When Jesus told His disciples “You will be my witnesses” (Acts 1:8), He was proclaiming that all members of His Church would bear witness of Him throughout the world and throughout the ages; and
WHEREAS, As Christ’s witnesses we participate in His mission to seek and save the lost and we share in His joy as the elect are gathered into His Church; and
WHEREAS, Evangelism is a critical element for the planting, sustaining, and revitalization of Lutheran congregations; and
WHEREAS, Effective evangelism is especially important for carrying out the work of the Great Commission in our “post-churched” culture; and
WHEREAS, One of the stated objectives for the Synod in the Synod’s constitution is to “strengthen congregations and their members in giving bold witness by word and deed to the love and work of God, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and extend that Gospel witness into all the world” (Constitution Article III 2); and
WHEREAS, The Office of National Mission (ONM) is “responsible for domestic ministries that especially serve congregations and schools through the districts of the Synod,” specifically including evangelism (Bylaw 3.8.2.3); and
WHEREAS, The Witness & Outreach Ministry of the ONM has developed Every One His Witness, a theologically sound evangelism program designed to equip Lutherans to be more active and effective witnesses of Jesus Christ in the contexts of their vocations by being Third Article witnesses telling the Second Article story using their First Article gifts; and
WHEREAS, The Every One His Witness core module is readily available through Concordia Publishing House (CPH) at a low cost and over 10,000 workbooks (over 800 kits plus additional workbooks) have been distributed by CPH since its introduction in September 2017; and
WHEREAS, Supplemental materials to address specific witnessing contexts (i.e., context modules) are available to all workshop participants at no cost through the Every One His Witness website, including “Witnessing to Muslims,” “Witnessing to Mormons,” “Witnessing to Jewish People,” “Witnessing to Dechurched Adult Children,” and “Responding to Scientism”; and
WHEREAS, The ONM is developing additional context modules addressing specific witnessing contexts under the categories of “World Religions,” “Religious Organizations and Movements,” “Unchurched,” “Dechurched,” “Life Events,” and “Human Care” to include on the Every One His Witness website; and
WHEREAS, The ONM has produced a Spanish language version of the Every One His Witness core module and made it available at no cost to The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) entities; and
WHEREAS, Youth Ministry has developed a supplement to the Every One His Witness core module to equip high school youth for witnessing and Campus Ministry is developing a supplement to equip college students for witnessing; and
WHEREAS, The ONM is exploring additional methods of delivering the content of the Every One His Witness website to ensure that all participants have access to the materials; and
WHEREAS, The 2016 Synod convention adopted Every One His Witness as a Synod-wide evangelism program; and
WHEREAS, The 2016 Synod convention commended the use of the Every One His Witness evangelism program to all districts, congregations, recognized service organizations (RSO), and auxiliaries; and
WHEREAS, Some evangelism resources being used or promoted by LCMS entities have not been doctrinally reviewed by the LCMS and reflect Arminian theology or other heterodox teachings; therefore be it
Resolved, That the Synod reaffirm Every One His Witness as the preferred evangelism program of the LCMS; and be it further
Resolved, That the Synod once again encourage all LCMS districts, congregations, RSOs, and auxiliaries to make use of the Every One His Witness evangelism program; and be it further
Resolved, That the Synod discourage all LCMS entities from using or promoting evangelism resources that have not been doctrinally approved by the LCMS; and be it further
Resolved, That the Synod encourage all LCMS entities involved in evangelism training and/or the development of evangelism materials to work with the ONM to incorporate Every One His Witness into their resources, to assist with creating needed supplements to or translations of the Every One His Witness core module, and to participate in the development of additional Every One His Witness context modules; and be it further
Resolved, That the Synod support the ONM in the production of additional Every One His Witness resources to address evangelism needs; and be it finally
Resolved, That the Synod support the ONM in developing additional methods of delivering Every One His Witness resources to make them more widely available to LCMS entities.

Board for National Mission

Ov. 1-02
To Encourage Workers in Personal Evangelism

WHEREAS, Jesus sent his disciples into the world to be his witnesses; and
WHEREAS, Jesus declared to his followers “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” (Acts 1:8); and
WHEREAS, St. Paul reminds us that we cannot believe in Christ of whom we have not heard. We cannot hear unless someone is sent
out to proclaim. “How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, ‘How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!’ But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, ‘Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?’ So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.” (Rom. 10:14–17); and


WHEREAS, Our Synod in its 2016 convention adopted language that encourages all congregation members to support witnessing of the Gospel: “Resolved, That the 2016 LCMS convention pray that the Lord of the harvest bless our work of witness to the Gospel and our work of mercy, that His will may be done among us, and that all may be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth.” (Res. 2-02); and

WHEREAS, The 2016 Synod convention adopted Res. 4-02A, stating:

Resolved, That the 2016 LCMS convention reaffirm the threefold emphasis of “Witness, Mercy, Life Together,” including the following … priorities:

- Plant, sustain, and revitalize Lutheran churches
- Support and expand theological education
- Perform human care in close proximity to Word and Sacrament ministries
- Collaborate with the Synod’s members and partners to enhance mission effectiveness
- Promote and nurture the spiritual, emotional, financial, and physical well-being of pastors and professional church workers
- Enhance early childhood education, elementary and secondary education, and youth ministry
- Strengthen and support the Lutheran family in living out God’s design;

and

WHEREAS, Called workers set an example for personal witnessing; and

WHEREAS, Congregations often experience an increase in guests to their worship services when the pastor, staff, and members consistently spend time each week cultivating relationships and sharing the faith in the community; and

WHEREAS, Pastors and called workers are often limited in their opportunity for personal witnessing by finances and time constraints due to expectations of their ministry; and

WHEREAS, The Mid-South (MDS) District has conducted workshops throughout the district, using Everyone His Witness materials produced by The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS); and

WHEREAS, The 2016 convention of Synod stated, “Resolved, That districts be directed and congregations be encouraged to develop specific outreach plans to share the Gospel with their Muslim neighbors” (Res. 14-06A); and

WHEREAS, The MDS District has partnered with the MDS District Lutheran Women’s Missionary League (LWML) to bring witnessing and outreach into each congregation of the district; and

WHEREAS, The MDS District in convention in 2018 affirmed the importance of personal witnessing for the salvation of the lost and the health of the local congregation; therefore be it

Resolved, That the LCMS seek a continued partnership with its auxiliaries, the LWML and Lutheran Hour Ministries, to provide training and resources to assist called workers and lay leaders in personal witnessing and the promotion of personal witnessing among the members of each of our Synod’s congregations; and be it further

Resolved, That congregations be encouraged to demonstrate personal witnessing as a priority of their church by encouraging their workers to spend time on a weekly basis in the community, and by assisting the workers in their current responsibilities so as to not add further to their work load; and be it finally

Resolved, That congregations be encouraged to include funds to be used at the discretion of the pastor, and when possible, all called workers to support their efforts for personal witnessing in the community.

Board of Directors
Mid-South District

Ov. 1-03

To Prepare a Report for Small Congregations

WHEREAS, The United States is undergoing shifts in demographics and living patterns (in both rural and urban areas) which have left many congregations with fewer members; and

WHEREAS, People come to saving faith through the ministry of teaching the gospel and administering the sacraments (Augsburg Confession [AC] XIV, Matthew 28, Romans 10); and

WHEREAS, We believe that no one should publicly teach, preach, or administer the sacraments without a proper call (AC XIV); and

WHEREAS, It is salutary that congregations stay open with pastors preaching and administering the sacraments in as many places as it is possible to do so; and

WHEREAS, We must at the same time be good stewards of the gifts with which God has blessed us; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Synod in convention direct the Office of National Mission (ONM) to investigate and study the means by which smaller congregations in different conditions are trying to remain open (for example, but not limited to: dual-/tri-congregation parish arrangements, circuit riding, preaching stations, home church with satellites, etc.); and be it further

Resolved, That the ONM prepare a report of its findings, including information of how these churches arrange their polity, staffing, budgets, etc., so as to be instructive to other congregations in similar situations; and be it finally

2019 Convention Workbook
Resolved. That the report should be completed and available to the Synod by or before the Synod convention in 2022.

Circuit 4
Southern Illinois District

Ov. 1-04

To Prioritize the Study of Dual- and Multi-Congregation Parish Ministry Situations within the Synod

WHEREAS, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod has currently over 500 dual- and multi-congregation parish arrangements being served by sole pastors (which constitutes over 15 percent of our congregations); and

WHEREAS, Due to converging factors of economics and demographics, many more congregations will be exploring some form of partnership arrangement to meet Word and Sacrament needs into the future; and

WHEREAS, The importance of maintaining a faithful Christian and Lutheran witness across the landscape of our nation depends upon reliable Word and Sacrament ministry in many places where congregations are not self-sustainable, and they have thus joined forces to maintain such ministry; and

WHEREAS, A shortfall of available ministerial candidates may also contribute to this picture; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Synod in convention direct the LCMS Council of Presidents to conduct or authorize a study of the LCMS residents to conduct or authorize a study of the Great Commission; congregations); served by sole pastors (which constitutes over 15 percent of our arrangements being served by sole pastors (which constitutes over 500 dual- and multi-congregation parish settings to help acquire information on how best to select, prepare, serve, and support those in such settings for the purpose of enhancing the ministry conducted under these circumstances.

Altenburg Circuit
Missouri District

Ov. 1-05

To Prioritize the Study of Dual- and Multi-Congregation Parish Ministry Situations and the Men Who Serve Them within the LCMS

WHEREAS, We have been charged with carrying out the Savior’s Great Commission; and

WHEREAS, The importance of maintaining a faithful Christian and Lutheran witness across the landscape of our nation depends upon reliable Word and Sacrament ministry; and

WHEREAS, Dual- and multi-congregation parish arrangements permit many smaller congregations to benefit from having a trained and ordained pastor they would otherwise do without; and

WHEREAS, The greatest number of these congregations exist in rural and small town situations where distance and other factors heighten difficulties in conducting ministry; and

WHEREAS, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) has currently over 500 dual- and multi-congregation parish arrangements being served by sole pastors (which constitutes over 15 percent of our congregations); and

WHEREAS, Due to converging factors of economics and demographics, many more congregations will be exploring some form of partnership arrangement to meet Word and Sacrament needs into the future; and

WHEREAS, Very little is known about the long-term circumstances of these congregations; and

WHEREAS, A shortage of ministerial candidates may also contribute to this picture; and

WHEREAS, Such situations often result in shorter pastoral tenure which tends to be detrimental to congregational life; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Synod in convention direct the LCMS Council of Presidents to conduct or authorize a study of pastors serving in dual- and multi-congregation parish settings to help acquire information on how best to equip, support, and serve those serving in such settings for the purpose of enhancing the ministry conducted under dual and multi-congregation parish situations, as well as to better aid in selection and recruitment; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod in convention direct the LCMS Council of Presidents to conduct or authorize a study of the congregations in dual- and multi-congregation parish situations for the purpose of tracking data to assist in developing strategies and resources targeted for the benefit of these congregations and the men who pastor them.

Grace, Uniontown, MO; Zion, Longtown, MO

Ov. 1-06

To Coordinate the Synod’s Response to Assaults on Marriage, Life, and Family

WHEREAS, God instituted holy marriage between a man and a woman (Gen. 1:27; Gen. 2:21–24; Matt. 19:4–7; Eph. 5:22–33); and

WHEREAS, God’s will for the married man and woman is clearly stated, “Be fruitful and multiply …” (Gen. 1:28), thus perpetuating the gift of life; and

WHEREAS, Marriage and life lead to family for God’s Word to spread: “You shall therefore lay up these words of mine in your heart and in your soul … You shall teach them to your children …” (Deut. 11:18a, 19a); and

WHEREAS, Holy marriage is an honorable estate instituted and blessed by God in Paradise, before humanity’s fall into sin; and

WHEREAS, In marriage we see a picture of the communion of Christ and His bride the Church; and

WHEREAS, Holy marriage and family is to be confessed and taught in the church in accordance with the purposes for which it was instituted by God for the benefit of both church and society; and

WHEREAS, The union of husband and wife in heart, body, and mind is intended by God for mutual companionship, help, and support that each person ought to receive from the other, both in prosperity and adversity; and

WHEREAS, Holy marriage was also ordained by God so that man and woman may find delight in one another and thus avoid sexual immorality; and

WHEREAS, The gift of being either male or female is intended by God for the giving and receiving of sexual love within holy marriage and, when it is God’s will, for the procreation of children who are to be brought up in the fear and instruction of the Lord so that they may offer Him their praise in the holy lives that they live; and

WHEREAS, Holy marriage is the foundation for family and the care and nurture of children; and
WHEREAS, Marriage, life, and family are inextricably linked, as Dr. Martin Luther emphasized and taught on the household estate, and the family vocations of husband and wife, father, mother, and child were a key insight of the Reformation; and

WHEREAS, The Synod in the 2016 convention resolved (Res. 16-02, Proceedings, pp. 253–4) to add a seventh Synod mission priority, “Strengthen and support the Lutheran family in living out God’s design,” effectively launching the Office of National Mission’s (ONM) Lutheran Family Initiative; and

WHEREAS, The Synod has commended the essay entitled, “Marriage, Life and Family: Reflecting The Holy Trinity,” and the booklet, “A Small Catechism on Human Life,” as well as other excellent resources further demonstrating these three—marriage, life and family—should be treated and defended together; and

WHEREAS, Sin, the world and Satan are clearly extending a two-pronged attack against the family both by seeking to sever the bond between parents and child, and by seeking to sever the bond of husband and wife; and

WHEREAS, Murder is clearly condemned by the Fifth Commandment (including murder through abortion, infanticide, physician-assisted suicide and euthanasia); and

WHEREAS, There are moral and ethical implications surrounding contraception, assistive reproductive technologies, and related research; and

WHEREAS, We are seeing before us increased cultural acceptance of gender confusion leading to denial of one’s own God-given sexuality and ever-new anti-Scriptural categories for “gender identity” leading to further erosion of God’s design for marriage; and

WHEREAS, These assaults against marriage and life are directly corroding the family, causing increased isolation and neglect of family members who are very young, weak, poor, or with special needs, alienating school children from the family by near total immersion in a worldview antithetical to Christianity, and leading to extreme loneliness among the elderly, and those nearing death; and

WHEREAS, Such isolation and neglect further contribute to cultural values that discount, ignore, and consider irrelevant Christian family values and life-long commitment; and

WHEREAS, These cultural assaults lead to tragedies within the family that include the pain of divorce, the pain of barrenness, the pain of parents with rebellious children, domestic violence, elder abuse, the neglect of people with disabilities or who are frail, child abuse, and alienation from the Church; and

WHEREAS, As a result, there is increased formation of new social and cultural groups, constructs, and relationships replacing the traditional role of the family; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Synod rejoice in the truth that the Lord of the Church, Jesus Christ, has promised to be with us until the end of the age, not simply to sustain us, but to bless us as we call on His name to help holy marriage, life, and the family (John 14:14) while we hold true to His Word and Sacraments; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod continue in increasing unanimity of purpose and sacred stewardship, that the work of the ONM, our recognized service organizations, the service of the Lutheran Center for Religious Liberty, our partners at Lutherans For Life, and other appropriate entities may coordinate to uphold and defend marriage, life, and family as inextricably linked; and be it further

Resolved, That the ONM implement the seventh mission priority by boldly promoting the biblical and crucial relationship between marriage, life, and family by generating resources and strategies which clearly counter the cultural assaults against these while also encouraging, uplifting and equipping the Body of Christ in all three areas; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod encourage and offer resources to all 35 districts for the development and equipping of marriage, life, and family coordinators representing all 35 districts; and be it finally

Resolved, That the Synod direct the ONM, Concordia Publishing House, her seminaries and universities, and the Commission on Theology and Church Relations to provide resources that not only help the families of our Synod, but also enable the church to confess the truth boldly and deal compassionately with those who are adverse towards the biblical teaching on marriage, life, and family.

Board for National Mission

Ov. 1-07

To Promote Awareness of and Provide Educational Resources for Specialized Pastoral Ministry

WHEREAS, There are many ways for the individual members of Synod (ministers of religion–ordained and ministers of religion–commissioned) to serve the church in full and part-time mission and ministry roles, including Specialized Pastoral Ministry (SPM) (e.g., institutional chaplains and pastoral counselors); and

WHEREAS, Not every ordained minister of Synod possesses all the qualifications needed to serve effectively in SPM; and

WHEREAS, “Making Disciples for Life” is the triennial theme for the Synod; and those who serve in specialized pastoral ministries daily provide spiritual care to many of the church’s disciples who are struggling in times of crisis; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Concordia University System (CUS) and the seminaries be implored to promote awareness and provide educational resources to serve in non-parish ministry vocations and that the Office of National Mission (ONM) and SPM work with CUS and the seminaries to determine what is needed to equip ministers for bi-vocational ministry in institutional chaplaincy and pastoral/spiritual counseling; and be it further

Resolved, That the ONM seek additional funding to provide scholarships for specialized training in specialized pastoral ministries; and be it further

Resolved, That the ONM explore what is needed to help already ordained and commissioned ministers to prepare them for service in SPM related fields of ministry; and be it finally

Resolved, That network-supported ministries—for example in nursing homes, hospitals, prisons, etc.—be considered by districts and circuits as opportunities for SPM service.

Board for National Mission

Ov. 1-08

To Request that the LCMS Provide Assistance to Workers Crossing the Canada/United States Border to Serve

WHEREAS, There have been a number of seminary graduates from The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) who are
called to serve in the Lutheran Church—Canada, a partner church of the LCMS; and

WHEREAS, There are and will continue to be workers called to serve in either Canada or the United States who are citizens of the other country; and

WHEREAS, The procedures and policies for immigration are complex and difficult to understand, as well as constantly changing; and

WHEREAS, The procedures may take many hours to achieve and can be very expensive, as well as be a potential hindrance to the ministry to which the person is called; therefore be it

Resolved, That the English District in convention memorialize the LCMS in convention to direct a board or staff person to either be a resource person or to give direction for resources assisting in the immigration process for those workers called from one country to another; and be it further

Resolved, That the resulting LCMS resources provide direction to the calling body about the immigration process and encourage them to assume the final obligations in order to assist the church worker and family.

Board of Directors
English District

Ov. 1-09

To Memorialize the LCMS regarding Proactive Child Protection

WHEREAS, Congregations and recognized service organizations (RSOs) of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) operate over 2,300 schools and have 230,000 students in their schools, and the charge to protect all staff and students; and

WHEREAS, Statistics demonstrate that a significant number of children have been exposed to sexual abuse in connection with their schooling, and those involved with schools of LCMS congregations and RSOs are not immune to temptation and the works of evil; and

WHEREAS, The Lord of the Church has commanded that overseers protect those who learn, especially bringing children up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord (Eph. 2:6), and that the actions of those who educate are being observed in heaven (Matt. 18:10); and

WHEREAS, Various “proactive” child sexual abuse prevention measures have been advocated and implemented in congregations and schools; and

WHEREAS, The LCMS is commended for taking steps already, including engaging and recommending a national background check provider; and

WHEREAS, Even one child protected from evil is worth the effort; therefore be it

Resolved, That the LCMS in convention condemn all sexual abuse and misuse of God’s gift of sexuality according to the Sixth Commandment; and be it further

Resolved, That the LCMS remind schools in its fellowship that taking prudent proactive protective measures, including an effective program of background checks and effective child protection policies, can help reduce risk of harm for children in their care; and be it further

Resolved, That LCMS member congregations and schools be memorialized by this convention to consider consulting a child abuse protection advocate, and the LCMS memorialized to consider how best to assist schools in connecting with such a resource; and be it further

Resolved, That the LCMS be memorialized by this convention to provide resources to the districts and schools of the LCMS that demonstrate the risks that children face, as well as proactive strategies employed by various schools in the Synod and in other denominations; and be it finally

Resolved, That the LCMS report back to the next Synod convention the steps taken between 2019 and 2022 to encourage and assist schools operated by LCMS congregations or recognized service organizations to proactively address child protection.

Pilgrim
Green Bay, WI

Ov. 1-10

To Limit Mission Fundraising during Advent and Lent

WHEREAS, The Office of National Mission has the right to call pastors out of their parishes at any time to serve in the mission field; and

WHEREAS, This right has been exercised by them, to the detriment of parishes and circuits, during Advent and Lent; therefore be it

Resolved, That the English District in convention memorialize Synod that pastors no longer be required or asked to leave their parishes for the mission fundraising field between Thanksgiving and New Year’s Eve and between Ash Wednesday and Easter.

English District

Ov. 1-11

To Support the Continued Legacy of Dr. Rosa J. Young through the Rosa J. Young Memorial Committee at Rosebud

WHEREAS, The closing of Concordia College Alabama, a ministry idea of Dr. Rosa J. Young, has left a deep chasm in the hearts of members and congregations of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS); and

WHEREAS, The LCMS produced the movie, The First Rosa, based upon Dr. Rosa J. Young’s book, Light in the Dark Belt—The Story of Rosa Young; and

WHEREAS, The work and dreams of Dr. Rosa J. Young have not had a strong advocate identified for continuing her work; and

WHEREAS, The Rosa J. Young (RJY) Memorial Committee has generated a proposal to continue active support of the legacy of Dr. Rosa J. Young with a plan of action, management, funding, and advocacy; and

WHEREAS, The sale of the property of Concordia College Alabama, Jan. 4, 2019, which included the housed location of the Rosa J. Young Museum for more than ten years, forced the move of the museum to a temporary storage location until an adequate permanent location of the museum can be established; and
WHEREAS, The RJY Memorial Committee has a plan to include the relocation, management, and direction of the Rosa J. Young Museum; and

The following whereas was not included in the submission by Berea, Baltimore, MD:

WHEREAS, The RJY Memorial Committee has proposed the establishment of a new Rosa J. Young Academy charter-school in Wilcox County, Ala., the original home of Dr. Rosa J. Young and her ministry, under its leadership; and

WHEREAS, The RJY Memorial Committee is seeking organization partners to support the continued legacy of Dr. Rosa J. Young; and

WHEREAS, The types of organizational support the committee is seeking consists of mutual advocacy, financial, in-kind services, and personal actions; and

WHEREAS, The National Alumni & Friends of Concordia College, at their annual convention in June 2018, voted to support the legacy of Dr. Rosa J. Young through partnership with the RJY Memorial Committee with mutual service actions, acknowledgement of the management of the legacy of Dr. Rosa J. Young; and

WHEREAS, The Southern District (September 2018) voted to support Dr. Rosa J. Young’s legacy through partnership with the RJY Memorial Committee, with mutual service actions, acknowledgement of management, and by transfer of property associated with Christ Lutheran, Rosebud, Ala. (her first church plant); and

WHEREAS, The RJY Memorial Committee is seeking support through Synod in convention, with acknowledgement of authority, and management of this legacy to remain with the RJY Memorial Committee; therefore be it

Resolved, That Synod in convention will continue to support the legacy of Dr. Rosa J. Young through partnership with the RJY Memorial Committee; and be it further

Resolved, That the partnership of the Synod with the RJY Memorial Committee will be in the form of mutual advocacy, financial, in-kind services, and personal actions of the members and congregations of the LCMS; and be it finally

Resolved, That the Synod shall acknowledge the authority and management of the legacy of Dr. Rosa J. Young to reside with the RJY Memorial Committee at Rosebud, so it can reach all the ends of the earth with the Gospel of Jesus Christ; and be it further

Resolved, That intentional, dedicated and committed partnership with Synod, its member congregations and RJY Memorial Committee be formed to provide, but not be limited to, in-kind services, financial, and personal actions.

Transfiguration
Saint Louis, MO

Ov. 1-13

To Support the Continued Legacy of Dr. Rosa J. Young through the Rosa J. Young Memorial Committee at Rosebud

WHEREAS, The closing of Concordia College Alabama, a ministry idea of Dr. Rosa J. Young, has left a deep chasm in the hearts of members and congregations of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS); and

WHEREAS, The LCMS produced the movie, The First Rosa, based on Dr. Rosa J. Young’s book, Light in the Dark Belt—The Story of Rosa Young; and

WHEREAS, The work and dreams of Dr. Rosa J. Young have not had a strong advocate identified for continuing her work; and

WHEREAS, The Rosa J. Young (RJY) Memorial Committee at Rosebud has generated a proposal to continue the active support of the legacy of Dr. Rosa J. Young with a plan of action, management, funding, and advocacy; and

WHEREAS, The sale of the property of Concordia College Alabama, Jan. 4, 2019, which included the housed location of the Rosa J. Young Museum for more than ten years, forced the move of

Ov. 1-12

To Support the Continued Legacy of Dr. Rosa J. Young by the Rosa J. Young Memorial Committee at Rosebud

WHEREAS, The closing of Concordia College Alabama, a ministry idea of Dr. Rosa J. Young, has left a deep chasm in the hearts of members and congregations of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod; and

WHEREAS, The sale of the property of Concordia College Alabama, Jan. 4, 2019, which included the housed Dr. Rosa J. Young Museum for ten plus years, was forced to move the museum to temporary housing until a permanent location is established; and

WHEREAS, The Rosa J. Young (RJY) Memorial Committee has an action plan for relocation, management and future direction of the museum; and

WHEREAS, It has been proposed that a new Rosa J. Young Academy be established in Wilcox County, Ala., the original home where Dr. Rosa J. Young began her leadership and ministry; and

WHEREAS, The alumni and friends of Concordia College Alabama pledged support of Concordia College Alabama at their annual convention (June 2018) through service actions, advocacy, acknowledgements, financial, in-kind services; and

WHEREAS, The Southern District (September 2018) voted to support Dr. Rosa J. Young’s legacy through partnership with the RJY Memorial Committee, with mutual service actions, and by transfer of property associated with Christ Lutheran, Rosebud, Ala., (her first church plant); and

WHEREAS, The RJY Memorial Committee is asking support through Synod in convention, with acknowledgement of authority, for the residency and management of this legacy to remain with the RJY Memorial Committee; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Synod shall acknowledge the authority and management of the legacy of Dr. Rosa J. Young to remain with RJY Memorial Committee at Rosebud, so it can reach all the ends of the earth with the Gospel of Jesus Christ; and be it further

Resolved, That intentional, dedicated and committed partnership with Synod, its member congregations and RJY Memorial Committee be formed to provide, but not be limited to, in-kind services, financial, and personal actions.

Transfiguration
Saint Louis, MO
the museum to a temporary storage location until an adequate permanent location of the museum can be established; and

WHEREAS, The RJY Memorial Committee has a plan to include the relocation, management and direction of the Rosa J. Young Museum; and

WHEREAS, The RJY Memorial Committee has proposed the establishment of a new Rosa J. Young Academy charter school in Wilcox County, Ala., the original home of Dr. Rosa J. Young and her ministry, under its leadership; and

WHEREAS, The RJY Memorial Committee is seeking organization partners to support the continued legacy of Dr. Rosa J. Young; and

WHEREAS, The types of organizational support the committee is seeking consists of mutual advocacy, financial, in-kind services, and personal actions; and

WHEREAS, The National Alumni and Friends of Concordia College, at their annual convention in June 2018, voted to support the legacy of Dr. Rosa J. Young through partnership with the RJY Memorial Committee with mutual service, actions, acknowledgement of the management of the legacy of Dr. Rosa J. Young; and

WHEREAS, The Southern District (September 2018) voted to support Dr. Rosa J. Young’s legacy through partnership with the RJY Memorial Committee, with mutual service actions, acknowledgement of management, and transfer of property associated with the Christ Lutheran, Rosebud, Ala., (her first church plant); and

WHEREAS, The RJY Memorial Committee is seeking support through the Synod in convention, with acknowledgement that the authority and management of this legacy to reside with the RJY Memorial Committee; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Circuit Forum of Circuit 15 of the Southeastern District hereby petition Synod in convention to support the legacy of Dr. Rosa J. Young through partnership with the RJY Memorial Committee; and be it further

Resolved, That the partnership of the Synod with the RJY Memorial Committee will be in the form of mutual advocacy, financial, in-kind services, and personal actions of the members and congregations of the LCMS; and be it finally

Resolved, That the Synod shall acknowledge the authority and management of the legacy of Dr. Rosa J. Young to reside with the RJY Memorial Committee at Rosebud, so it can reach to the ends of the earth with the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Circuit 15
Southeastern District
2. International Witness

REPORTS

R1, R1.1, R1.2, R1.3, R8, R15, R56, R57, R58, R59.1–13, R61

OVERTURES

Ov. 2-01

To Support International Missionaries

WHEREAS, The Great Commission of Matt. 28:1–20 has been and will until the Last Day remain the heart of the Church’s mission, to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ to all nations; and

WHEREAS, One of the reasons congregations banded together to form a Synod union is for the sending of missionaries; and

WHEREAS, The English District is blessed to count several career missionaries among its individual members (including Rev. Ted Krey, Rev. Dale Kaster, Rev. Charles Ferry and others); and

WHEREAS, Many congregations of the district are providing support for international missionaries; and

WHEREAS, At present the district does not provide direct support for any international missionaries who are members of the district; and

WHEREAS, The district budget includes a line item for missions; therefore be it

Resolved, That the English District give thanks to God for the increase of international missionaries; and be it further

Resolved, That the district celebrate the faithful service of missionaries who are members of the district by encouraging congregations to support them financially; and be it further

Resolved, That the district mission budget include funding for international missionaries who are members of the district; and be it finally

Resolved, That the district memorialize the 2019 Synod convention to making the funding of international missionaries a key priority for the next triennium.

English District

Ov. 2-02

To Commend and Thank God for Accomplishments in International Mission

WHEREAS, The number of missionaries on the field has increased to approximately 130 full-time, career missionaries; and

WHEREAS, There are currently a record 1,700+ congregations supporting these international missionaries; and

WHEREAS, The Global Seminary Initiative, in partnership with both Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod seminaries, has provided $3.8 million to send professors overseas to provide theological education as requested by international partners and to bring dozens of future leaders to Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, and Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, for study; and

WHEREAS, A Spanish-language confessional Lutheran seminary has been started in the Dominican Republic for the Latin American Region; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Synod in convention commend the Office of International Mission and all those involved in these accomplishments; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod in convention give thanks to God for blessing these efforts.

St. Matthew
Bonne Terre, MO

Ov. 2-03

To Overrule Commission on Constitutional Matters Opinion 14-2724

WHEREAS, The Texas District of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS), at its 2015 convention, adopted the following resolution 02-01-15A, “To Overrule CCM Opinion 14-2724,” which states as follows:

WHEREAS, The Word of God (Acts 13) clearly reveals that in the first century of the New Testament a local congregation of believers in the Lord Jesus, assembled in Antioch, after much prayer and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, freely consecrated and sent missionaries, notably Barnabas and Saul, into mission fields; and

WHEREAS, Article III 2 of the Constitution of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod identifies as an objective of the Synod to “[s]trengthen congregations and their members in giving bold witness by word and deed to the love and work of God, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and extend that Gospel witness into all the world”; and

WHEREAS, Article VII 1 of the Constitution states, “In its relation to its members the Synod is not an ecclesiastical government exercising legislative or coercive powers, and with respect to the individual congregation’s right of self-government it is but an advisory body”; and

WHEREAS, Article XIV of the Constitution states, “The Synod in convention may adopt bylaws that are consistent with and do not contradict the Constitution of the Synod, which controls and supersedes such bylaws and all other rules and regulations of the Synod”; and

WHEREAS, 2010 Res. 8-32B encourages the Synod to study Article VII of the Constitution, including study of Congregations and Synod: Background Material on the Advisory Nature of the LCMS (2004), along with opinions of the Commission on Constitutional Matters (CCM) related to this topic (including CCM Opinion 09-2573, listed in a whereas paragraph in Res. 8-32B); and

WHEREAS, 1983 Res. 5-10A in a resolved clause states “That The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod reaffirms that its synodical polity is essentially and principally congregational in nature ...”; and

WHEREAS, CCM Opinion 09-2573 states in part that “there is a common understanding that a congregation exercises its self-
WHEREAS, Synod Bylaw 3.8.3 deals only with who has authority to send ministers of religion and other workers into Synod foreign mission fields, and prior bylaws have been careful not to restrict congregational activity specifically relating to whom congregations could send funds overseas, and nothing in the current bylaws restricts or could restrict the right of member congregations to (a) fund ministries in foreign countries, or (b) send/fund congregation members for service with organizations seeking to share the Gospel; and

WHEREAS, 1983 Res. 5-37, in amending the bylaws, only dealt with who on behalf of Synod as a whole could send missionaries at the expense of the Synod, and where the restriction applied, it being a sending bylaw only, was clearly not applicable to congregations in any event; and

WHEREAS, CCM Opinion 14-2724, referring to 2013 Res. 1-08, “To Work Together in Mission,” called for a two-fold response: First, “Resolved, That the Synod, by the next convention, develop and provide a mission best-practices policy document for districts and congregations engaged in mission projects to assist them to better carry out their mission and their life together,” indicating that districts and congregations have and are recognized to have mission work and practices of their own, and because they have their own mission work and practices, the Synod should assist and support those efforts by developing a best-practices policy; and second, “Resolved, That these best practices include encouragement to districts and congregations to communicate their international mission activities to the Synod’s Director of Church Relations and Offices of National and International Mission for the purposes of healthy coordination and stewardship” (emphasis added), indicating that districts and congregations can have their own mission activities, and when they do they are encouraged to communicate these activities to the Synod for coordination and good stewardship; and

WHEREAS, CCM Opinion 14-2724 states in part, “Congregations may not send funds to mission societies and non-Synod entities for work in foreign areas without taking into consideration policies developed and determined for this purpose by the Board of International Mission as the only sending agency”; and

WHEREAS, CCM Opinion 14-2724 incorrectly restricts the mission outreach of congregations and others to give bold witness by word and deed to the love and work of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and extend that Gospel witness into all the world; therefore be it

Resolved, That the congregations of the Texas District and of the LCMS be encouraged, with much prayer and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to send missionaries to foreign areas; and be it further

Resolved, That the Texas District affirms and encourages congregations, auxiliaries, recognized service organizations, districts, and individual members of the Synod in their efforts to give bold witness by word and deed, to the love and work of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and extend that Gospel witness to all the world; and be it further

Resolved, That nothing in the bylaws of Synod should ever be interpreted to limit efforts by congregations, auxiliaries, recognized service organizations, districts, and individual members of the Synod to give bold witness by word and deed to the love and work of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and extend that Gospel witness to all the world, but only be interpreted as requesting information which might allow the Synod to support (and to assist in connecting potential support for) congregations and individual members, to assist in connecting potential mission partners, and to provide best-practices information which could assist the efforts; and be it finally

Resolved, That the Texas District in convention memorialize the Synod in convention to adopt this resolution and to overrule CCM Opinion 14-2724, to be thereby declared null and void and of no effect.

AND

WHEREAS, The above resolution appears in the 2016 Workbook as Overture 2-04 (pp. 318–9) thereby affirming its material accuracy; and

WHEREAS, Three other LCMS districts, three district boards of directors, one circuit, and seventeen LCMS congregations also adopted this resolution; and

WHEREAS, Two other overtures (2016 Ov. 2-07 and 2-09, Workbook, 320–22) were submitted to the 2016 Synod convention that also requested that CCM Opinion 14-2724 be overruled; and

WHEREAS, LCMS Bylaw 3.9.2.2 (c) regarding the CCM says, in part:

An opinion rendered by the commission shall be binding on the question decided unless and until it is overruled by a convention of the Synod. Overtures to a convention that seek to overrule an opinion of the commission shall support the proposed action with substantive rationale from the Constitution, Bylaws, and resolutions of the Synod. All such overtures shall be considered by the floor committee to which they have been assigned and shall be included in a specific report to the convention with recommendations for appropriate action. (emphasis added)

AND

WHEREAS, No such report was given to the 2016 Synod convention, as a report and a resolution (including the resolution identified as Res. 2-06A in Today’s Business, pp. 348–50, that was never brought to the convention floor) are not the same thing according to Bylaw 3.1.6.1 and Bylaw 3.1.6.2, which clearly differentiate between reports and overtures, defining reports, in part, as “statements of work performed or contemplated by those charged with conducting the business of the Synod” (2016 Handbook, 101) and overtures, in part, as “recommendations in the form of proposed resolutions requesting action on the part of the convention” (cf. Bylaw 3.9.2.2.1, which also distinguishes between reports and overtures); and

WHEREAS, No disposition of these overtures whatsoever is recorded in the 2016 Proceedings; and

WHEREAS, The document “LCMS Best Practices in Short-Term Mission” requests congregations to receive approval from the Synod to be involved in short-term mission trips by referencing the Bylaws, which has been seen, correctly or incorrectly, as restricting congregations in “giving bold witness by word and deed” when and where they see fit (https://wmiltblog.org/2015/01/lcms-best-practices-in-short-term-mission/, accessed 3/9/2018); therefore be it
Resolved, That the resolution quoted above be submitted as an overture to the 2019 Synod convention by the adoption of this current resolution; and be it further

Resolved, That the President of Synod be directed to assure that both the spirit and the provisions of Bylaw 3.9.2.2 (c) are followed with respect to this resolution and any other resolution that becomes an overture to the Synod asking for a CCM opinion to be overruled; and be it finally

Resolved, That also in our agreements in how we will work together in the LCMS, things “be done in a fitting and orderly way” (1 Cor. 14:40).

Texas District

Ov. 2-04

To Overrule Commission on Constitutional Matters Opinion 14-2724

WHEREAS, The Word of God (Acts 13) clearly reveals that in the first century of the New Testament a local congregation of believers in the Lord Jesus, assembled in Antioch, after much prayer and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, freely consecrated and sent missionaries, notably Barnabas and Saul, into mission fields; and

WHEREAS, Article III 2 of the Constitution of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) identifies as an objective of the Synod to “[s]trngthen congregations and their members in giving bold witness by word and deed to the love and work of God, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and extend that Gospel witness into all the world”; and

WHEREAS, Article VII 1 of the Constitution of the LCMS states, “In its relation to its members, the Synod is not an ecclesiastical government exercising legislative or coercive powers, and with respect to the individual congregation’s right of self-government it is but an advisory body”; and

WHEREAS, Article XIV of the Constitution states, “The Synod in convention may adopt bylaws that are consistent with and do not contradict the Constitution of the Synod, which controls and supersedes such bylaws and all other rules and regulations of the Synod”; and

WHEREAS, 2010 Resolution 8-32B encourages the Synod to study Article VII of the Constitution, including study of Congregations and Synod: Background Material on the Advisory Nature of the LCMS (2004) along with opinions of the Commission on Constitutional Matters (CCM) related to this topic (including CCM Opinion 09-2573, listed in a whereas paragraph in Res. 8-32B); and

WHEREAS, 1983 Res. 5-10A in a resolved clause states “That The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod reaffirms that its synodical polity is essentially and principally congregational in nature . . .”; and

WHEREAS, CCM Opinion 09-2573 states in part that “there is a common understanding that a congregation exercises its self-government . . . in carrying out . . . its own ministry programs and financial affairs”; and

WHEREAS, Synod Bylaw 3.8.3 deals only with who has authority to send ministers of religion and other workers into Synod foreign mission fields, and prior bylaws have been careful not to restrict congregational activity specifically relating to whom congregations could send funds overseas, and nothing in the current bylaws restrict or could restrict the right of member congregations to (a) fund ministries in foreign countries, or (b) send/fund congregation members for service with organizations seeking to share the Gospel; and

WHEREAS, 1983 Res. 5-37, in amending the bylaws, only dealt with who on behalf of Synod as a whole could send missionaries at the expense of the Synod, and where the restriction applied, it being a sending bylaw only, was clearly not applicable to congregations in any event; and

WHEREAS, CCM Opinion 14-2724, referring to 2013 Res. 1-08, “To Work Together in Mission,” called for a two-fold response: First, “Resolved, That the Synod, by the next convention, develop and provide a mission best-practices policy document for districts and congregations engaged in mission projects to assist them to better carry out their mission and their life together,” indicating that districts and congregations have and are recognized to have mission work and practices of their own, and because they have their own mission work and practices, the Synod should assist and support those efforts by developing a best-practices policy; and second, “Resolved, That these best practices include encouragement to districts and congregations to communicate their international mission activities to the Synod’s Director of Church Relations and Offices of National and International Mission for the purposes of healthy coordination and stewardship” (emphasis added), indicating that districts and congregations can have their own mission activities and when they do they are encouraged to communicate these activities to the Synod for coordination and good stewardship; and

WHEREAS, CCM Opinion 14-2724 states in part, “Congregations may not send funds to mission societies and non-Synod entities for work in foreign areas without taking into consideration policies developed and determined for this purpose by the Board of International Mission as the only sending agency”; and

WHEREAS, CCM Opinion 14-2724 incorrectly restricts the mission outreach of congregations and others to give bold witness by word and deed to the love and work of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and extend that Gospel witness into all the world; and

WHEREAS, The Atlantic District and a number of other LCMS districts, circuits, and churches submitted overtures that were never dealt with nor was the disposition of these overtures recorded in the 2016 Proceedings; therefore be it

Resolved, That the congregations of the Atlantic District and of the LCMS be encouraged, with much prayer and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to send missionaries to foreign areas; and be it further

Resolved, That the Atlantic District affirms and encourages congregations, auxiliaries, recognized service organizations, districts, and individual members of the Synod, in their efforts to give bold witness by word and deed, to the love and work of God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and extend that Gospel witness to all the world; and be it finally

Resolved, That the Atlantic District in convention memorialize the Synod in convention to adopt this resolution and to overrule CCM Opinion 14-2724, to be thereby declared null and void and of no effect.
Ov. 2-05

**To Overrule Commission on Constitutional Matters Opinion 14-2724**

**WHEREAS,** Article VII 1 of the Constitution of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod states that in relation to its members, the Synod is not an ecclesiastical government exercising legislative or coercive powers, and with respect to the individual congregation’s right of self-government is but an advisory body; and

**WHEREAS,** Article XIV of the Constitution of the Synod states that the Synod in convention may adopt bylaws that are consistent with and do not contradict the Constitution of the Synod, which controls and supersedes such bylaws and all other rules and regulations of the Synod; and

**WHEREAS,** 2010 Synod convention Res. 8-32B encourages the Synod to study Const. Art. VII, including study of Congregations and Synod: Background Material on the Advisory Nature of the LCMS (2004) along with opinions of the Commission on Constitutional Matters related to this topic (including CCM Opinion 09-2573) listed in a *whereas* paragraph in Resolution 8-32B; and

**WHEREAS,** 1983 Synod convention Res. 5-10A in a *resolved* clause states “That The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod reaffirms that its synodical polity is essentially and principally congregational in nature”; and

**WHEREAS,** CCM Opinion 09-2573 states in part that “there is a common understanding that a congregation exercises its self-government … in carrying out … its own ministry programs and financial affairs”; and

**WHEREAS,** Synod Bylaw 3.8.3 deals only with who has authority to send ministers of religion into Synod foreign mission fields (prior bylaws have been careful not to restrict congregational activity relating to whom congregations could send funds overseas, and nothing in the current bylaws restricts or could restrict the right of member congregations to [a] fund any ministries in foreign countries, or [b] send/fund congregation members for service with any organizations seeking to share the Gospel); and

**WHEREAS,** 1983 Res. 5-37, in amending the bylaws, only dealt with who on behalf of Synod as a whole could send missionaries at the expense of the Synod and where the restriction applied, it being a sending bylaw only, was clearly not applicable to congregations in any event; and

**WHEREAS,** There is no Constitution or bylaw provision restricting the right of a member congregation to support any mission organization or effort doing work in foreign areas; and

**WHEREAS,** CCM Opinion 14-2724 states in part, “congregations may not send funds to mission societies and non-Synod entities for work in foreign areas without taking into consideration policies developed and determined for this purpose by the Board for International Mission as the only sending agency”; therefore be it

**Resolved,** That CCM Opinion 14-2724 be overruled, be declared null and void and of no effect insofar as it restricts the congregational right of self-government to fund and participate in such foreign mission activity as it deems correct and appropriate; and be it finally

**Resolved,** That the Pacific Southwest District memorialize the Synod in the adoption of this overture.

Pacific Southwest District

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Ov. 2-06

**To Overrule Commission on Constitutional Matters Opinion 14-2724**

**WHEREAS,** 2016 Overture 2-04, “To Overrule CCM Op. 14-2724” *(Workbook, 318–9),* was not brought forward for debate at the 2016 convention though it was submitted by four districts, three district boards of directors, one circuit, and seventeen member congregations, and two other overtures (Overtures 2-07, 2-09, *Workbook, pp. 320–21*) were submitted to the 2016 convention that also requested that the Commission on Constitutional Matters (CCM) Op. 14-2724 also be overruled; and

**WHEREAS,** LCMS Bylaw 3.9.2.2 (c) regarding the CCM says, in part: “An opinion rendered by the commission shall be binding on the question decided unless and until it is overruled by a convention of the Synod. Overtures to a convention that seek to overrule an opinion of the commission shall support the proposed action with substantive rationale from the Constitution, Bylaws, and resolutions of the Synod. All such overtures shall be considered by the floor committee to which they have been assigned and shall be included in a specific report to the convention with recommendations for appropriate action ...”; and

**WHEREAS,** No such report was given to the 2016 convention of the Synod; and

**WHEREAS,** The Word of God (Acts 13) clearly reveals that in the first century of the New Testament, a local congregation of believers in the Lord Jesus, assembled in Antioch, after much prayer and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, freely consecrated and sent missionaries, notably Barnabas and Saul, into mission fields; and

**WHEREAS,** Constitution Article III 2 identifies an objective of the Synod as to “[s]trengthen congregations and their members in giving bold witness by word and deed to the love and work of God, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and extend that Gospel witness into all the world; and

**WHEREAS,** Const. Art. VII states, “In relation to its members, the Synod is not an ecclesiastical government exercising legislative or coercive powers, and with respect to the individual congregation’s right of self-government it is but an advisory body ...”; and

**WHEREAS,** Const. Art. XIV states, “The Synod in convention may adopt bylaws that are consistent with and do not contradict the Constitution of the Synod, which controls and supersedes such bylaws and all other rules and regulations of the Synod ...”;

**WHEREAS,** 2010 Resolution 8-32B, “Congregations Walking Together in Mission with Covenants of Love To Study Article VII of Synod’s Constitution” *(Proceedings, 169–71)* encourages the Synod to study Const. Art. VII, including study of “Congregations and Synod, Background Material on the Advisory Nature of the LCMS” along with opinions of the CCM related to this topic (including CCM Op. 09-2573, 2010 *Workbook, 280–84*) listed in a *whereas* paragraph in Res. 8-32B; and

**WHEREAS,** 1983 Res. 5-10A, “To Reaffirm Essential Congregational Polity of the Synod” *(Proceedings, 181)* in a “Resolved” clause states that “The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod reaffirms that its synodical polity is essentially and principally congregational in nature ...”; and

**WHEREAS,** CCM Op. 09-2573 states in part that “there is a common understanding that a congregation exercises its self-
government ... in carrying out ... its own ministry programs and financial affairs"; and

WHEREAS, Synod Bylaw 3.8.3 deals only with who has authority to send ministers of religion and other workers into Synod foreign mission fields, and prior bylaws have been careful not to restrict congregational activity specifically relating to whom congregations could send funds overseas, and nothing in the current bylaws restrict or could restrict the right of member congregations to (a) fund ministries in foreign countries, or (b) send/fund congregation members for service with organizations seeking to share the Gospel; and

WHEREAS, 1983 Res. 5-37, “To Add Bylaw Paragraph to Board for Mission Services” (Proceedings, 195), in amending the bylaws, only dealt with who on behalf of Synod as a whole could send missionaries at the expense of the Synod, and where the restriction applied, it being a sending bylaw only, it was clearly not applicable to congregations in any event; and

WHEREAS, CCM Op. 14-2724 referring to 2013 Res. 1-08, “To Work Together in Mission,” (Proceedings, 103), called for a two-fold response: First, “Resolved, That the Synod, by the next convention, develop and provide a mission best practices policy document for districts and congregations engaged in mission projects to assist them to better carry out their mission and their life together”, indicating that districts and congregations have and are recognized to have mission work and practices of their own, and because they have their own mission work and practices, the Synod should assist and support those efforts by developing a best-practices policy; and second, “that these best practices include encouragement to districts and congregations to communicate their international mission activities to the Synod’s Director of Church Relations and Offices of National and International Mission for the purposes of healthy coordination and stewardship” (emphasis added), indicating that districts and congregations can have their own mission activities and when they do they are encouraged to communicate these activities to the Synod for coordination and good stewardship; and

WHEREAS, CCM Op. 14-2724 states in part, “Congregations may not send funds to mission societies and non-Synod entities for work in foreign areas without taking into consideration policies developed and determined for this purpose by the Board of International Mission as the only sending agency”; and

WHEREAS, CCM Op. 14-2724 incorrectly restricts the mission outreach of congregations and others to give bold witness by word and deed to the love and work of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and extend that Gospel witness to all the world; therefore be it

Resolved, That the congregations of the LCMS be encouraged, with much prayer and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to send missionaries to foreign areas; and be it further

Resolved, That the LCMS affirms and encourages congregations, auxiliaries, recognized service organizations, districts, and individual members of the Synod, in their efforts to give bold witness by word and deed, to the love and work of God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and extend that Gospel witness to all the world; and be it further

Resolved, That nothing in the Bylaws of the Synod should ever be interpreted to limit efforts by congregations, auxiliaries, recognized service organizations, districts, and individual members of the Synod, to give bold witness by word and deed to the love and work of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and extend that Gospel witness to all the world, but only be interpreted as requesting information which might allow Synod to support (and to assist in connecting potential support for) congregations and individual members, to assist in connecting potential mission partners, and to provide best practices information which could assist the efforts; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod in convention overrule CCM Op. 14-2724, to be thereby declared null and void and of no effect; and be it further

Resolved, That the President of Synod be directed to assure that the provisions of Bylaw 3.9.2.2 (c) are followed with respect to this resolution and any other resolution that becomes an overture to the Synod asking for a CCM opinion to be overruled; and be it finally

Resolved, That also in our agreements in how we will work together in the LCMS, things “be done in a fitting and orderly way” (1 Cor. 14:40).

New Jersey District

Ov. 2-07

To Overrule Commission on Constitutional Matters Opinion 14-2724

WHEREAS, The 2016 convention of the Synod, in its Resolution 12-14 (“Regarding the Right of an Accuser to Appeal When a District President or President of the Synod Fails to Act or Declines to Suspend,” 2016 Res. 12-14, Proceedings, 233) and according to Bylaw 7.1.2, deferred its rightful legislative authority and directed the Board of Directors (BOD) of the Synod to draft bylaws to resolve a situation where, it claimed, “portions of the expulsion processes of the Synod’s Bylaws are presently in an unconstitutional state with respect to Constitution Art. XI B 1–3 and Const. Art. XIII 2” (ibid.); and

WHEREAS, Four Synod districts, three district boards of directors, one circuit, and seventeen Synod congregations adopted this resolution, entitled “To Overrule CCM Opinion 14-2724”;

WHEREAS, The above resolution appears in the 2016 Workbook as Overture 2-04, thereby affirming its material accuracy; and

WHEREAS, The above resolution appears in the 2016 Workbook as Overture 2-04, thereby affirming its material accuracy; and

WHEREAS, LCMS Bylaw 3.9.2.2 (c) regarding the Commission on Constitutional Matters says:

An opinion rendered by the commission shall be binding on the question decided unless and until it is overruled by a convention of the Synod. Overtures to a convention that seek to overrule an opinion of the commission shall support the proposed action with substantive rationale from the Constitution, Bylaws, and resolutions of the Synod. All such overtures shall be considered by the floor committee to which they have been assigned and shall be included in a specific report to the convention with recommendations for appropriate action. (emphasis added);

WHEREAS, No such report was given to the 2016 convention of the Synod, as a report and a resolution (including the resolution identified as Res. 2-06A in 2016 Today’s Business, pp. 348–50, that was never brought to the convention floor) are the not the same thing according to Bylaw 3.1.6.1 and Bylaw 3.1.6.2, which clearly
differentiate between reports and overtures, defining reports, in part, as “statements of work performed or contemplated by those who are charged with conducting the business of the Synod” and overtures, in part, as “recommendations in the form of proposed resolutions requesting action on the part of the convention” (see Bylaw 3.9.2.1, which also distinguishes between reports and overtures); and

WHEREAS, No disposition of these overtures whatsoever is recorded in the 2016 Proceedings; and

WHEREAS, The document “LCMS Best Practices in Short-Term Mission” requests congregations to receive approval from the Synod to be involved in short-term mission trips by referencing the Bylaws, which has been seen, correctly or incorrectly, as restricting congregations in “giving bold witness by word and deed” when and where they see fit (wmltblog.org/2015/01/lcms-best-practices-in-short-term-mission/, accessed 3/9/2018); therefore be it

Resolved, That the resolution quoted above be submitted as an overture to the 2019 convention by the adoption of this current resolution; and be it further

Resolved, That the President of Synod be directed to assure that both the spirit and the provisions of Bylaw 3.9.2.2 (c) are followed with respect to this resolution and any other resolution that becomes an overture to the Synod asking for a CCM opinion to be overruled; and be it finally

Resolved, That also in our agreements in how we will work together in the Synod, things “be done in a fitting and orderly way” (1 Cor. 14:40 [NIV]).

Christ, Juniata, NE; Christ, Scituate, MA;
Concordia, Lakewood, CO; Our Savior, Rehoboth Beach, DE;
Trinity, Houston, TX; Zion, Mayer, MN

Ov. 2-08
To Overrule Commission on Constitutional Matters Opinion 14-2724

WHEREAS, The Texas District of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS), at its 2015 convention, adopted the following resolution which appeared in the 2016 convention Workbook (p. 318) as Overture 2-04, “To Overrule CCM Opinion 14-2724,” thereby affirming its material accuracy:

See 2019 Ov. 2-03, above, for the complete text of 2016 Ov. 2-04, “To Overrule CCM Opinion 14-2724.”

and

WHEREAS, Three other LCMS districts, three district boards of directors, one circuit, and seventeen LCMS congregations also adopted this resolution; and

WHEREAS, Two other overtures (2016 Ov. 2-07, “To Overrule CCM Opinion 14-2724” and Ov. 2-09, “To Overrule CCM Opinion 14-2724 and Amend Bylaw 3.8.3”, Workbook, 320–21), submitted to the 2016 convention, also requested that CCM Op. 14-2724 be overruled; and

WHEREAS, LCMS Bylaw 3.9.2.2 (c) regarding the Commission on Constitutional Matters (CCM) says, in part:

3.9.2.2 The Commission on Constitutional Matters shall interpret the Synod’s Constitution, Bylaws, and resolutions upon the written request of a member (congregation, ordained or commissioned minister), official, board, commission, or agency of the Synod.

(c)An opinion rendered by the commission shall be binding on the question decided unless and until it is overruled by a convention of the Synod. Overtures to a convention that seek to overrule an opinion of the commission shall support the proposed action with substantive rationale from the Constitution, Bylaws, and resolutions of the Synod. All such overtures shall be considered by the floor committee to which they have been assigned and shall be included in a specific report to the convention with recommendations for appropriate action.

and

WHEREAS, No such report was given to the 2016 convention of the Synod, as a report and a resolution (including the resolution identified as Resolution 2-06A in Today’s Business, 348–50, that was never brought to the convention floor) are the not the same thing according to Bylaw 3.1.6.1 and Bylaw 3.1.6.2, which clearly differentiate between reports and overtures, defining reports, in part, as “statements of work performed or contemplated by those charged with conducting the business of the Synod” and overtures, in part, as “recommendations in the form of proposed resolutions requesting action on the part of the convention” (cf. Bylaw 3.9.2.2.1, which also distinguishes between reports and overtures); and

WHEREAS, No disposition of these overtures whatsoever is recorded in the 2016 Synod convention proceedings; and

WHEREAS, The document “LCMS Best Practices in Short-Term Mission” requests congregations to receive approval from the Synod to be involved in short-term mission trips by referencing the Bylaws, which has been seen, correctly or incorrectly, as restricting congregations in “giving bold witness by word and deed” when and where they see fit (wmltblog.org/2015/01/lcms-best-practices-in-short-term-mission/, accessed 3/9/2018); therefore be it

Resolved, That it is his constitutional responsibility (Const. Art. XI B) that the President of Synod be directed to assure that both the spirit and the provisions of Bylaw 3.9.2.2 (c) are followed with respect to this resolution and any other resolution that becomes an overture to the Synod asking for a CCM opinion to be overruled; and be it finally

Resolved, That the resolution quoted above be submitted as an overture to the 2019 convention by the adoption of this current resolution; and be it further

Resolved, That also in our agreements in how we will work together in the LCMS, things “be done in a fitting and orderly way” (1 Cor. 14:40, NIV).

Trinity
Roselle, IL

Ov. 2-09
To Return 2016 Ov. 2-04, “To Overrule CCM Opinion 14-2724,” for Action by the 2019 Synod Convention

WHEREAS, CCM Opinion 14-2724, “Synod as the ‘Only Sending Agency’—Bylaw 3.8.3” states in part, “Congregations may not send funds to mission societies and non-Synod entities for work in foreign areas without taking into consideration policies developed and determined for this purpose by the Board of International Mission as the only sending agency”; and
WHEREAS, CCM Op. 14-2724 incorrectly restricts the mission outreach of congregations and others to give bold witness by word and deed to the love and work of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; and

WHEREAS, The above-noted overture (2015 Texas District Res. 02-01-15A) appears in the 2016 Workbook as Overture 2-04; and See 2019 Ov. 2-03, above, for the complete text of 2016 Ov. 2-04, “To Overrule CCM Opinion 14-2724.”

WHEREAS, Three other districts, three district board of directors, one circuit, and seventeen congregations also adopted this resolution; and

WHEREAS, 2016 Overtures 2-07 and 2-09 also requested that CCM Op. 14-2724 be overruled; and

WHEREAS, LCMS Bylaw 3.9.2.2 (c) regarding the CCM says, in part, “An opinion rendered by the commission shall be binding on the question decided unless and until it is overruled by a convention of the Synod. Overtures to a convention that seek to overrule an opinion of the commission shall support the proposed action with substantive rationale from the Constitution, Bylaws, and resolutions of the Synod. All such overtures shall be considered by the floor committee to which they have been assigned and shall be included in a specific report to the convention with recommendations for appropriate action”; and

WHEREAS, No such report was given to the 2016 Synod convention; and

WHEREAS, No disposition of these overtures whatsoever is recorded in the 2016 Proceedings; therefore be it

Resolved, That the resolution in question be submitted as an overture to the 2019 Synod convention by the adoption of this current resolution; and be it further

Resolved, That the President of the Synod be directed to assure that the provisions of Bylaw 3.9.2.2 (c) are followed with respect to this resolution and any other resolution that becomes an overture to the Synod asking for a Committee on Constitutional Matters opinion to be overruled; and be it finally

Resolved, That the Eastern District in its 99th convention memorialize the 1999 Synod convention to adopt this resolution and to overrule CCM Op. 14-2724, to be thereby declared null and void and of no effect.

Eastern District

Ov. 2-10

To Amend Synod Bylaws to Recognize Authority of Congregations to Send Missionaries

WHEREAS, The Lord Jesus Christ sent us into His mission field with the words, “Go you, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matt. 28:19); and

WHEREAS, The last words that our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ spoke on earth were, “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8), clearly charging all of His people to bear brave witness and to proclaim the Gospel to all the world, giving all of us, the Synod, congregations, and individuals, the promise of the power of the Holy Spirit to carry out this command; and

WHEREAS, The church at Antioch, while worshiping, was instructed by the Holy Spirit to set apart Barnabas and Saul for the work to which God had called them. The congregation recognized this divine call to missionary service and released Saul and Barnabas to serve in this evangelistic mission (Acts 13:1–3). This is the basis for the right of congregations to call and send missionaries; and

WHEREAS, God’s Word does not say that the church at Antioch consulted with the church in Jerusalem or any of the other apostles before releasing Paul and Barnabas to their missionary service; and

WHEREAS, The Treatise on the Power and the Primacy of the Pope states, “For wherever the church exists, the right to administer the Gospel also exists. Wherefore it is necessary for the church to retain the right of calling, electing, and ordaining ministers. This right is a gift given exclusively to the church, and no human authority can take it away from the church. It is as Paul testifies to the Ephesians when he says, ‘When he ascended on high he gave gifts to men’ (Eph. 4:8, 11, 12). He enumerates pastors and teachers among the gifts belonging exclusively to the church, and he adds that they are given for the work of ministry and for building up the body of Christ” (Tr 67, ed. Tappert). Ephesians 4 also lists apostles, prophets, and evangelists as those gifts which God has given to His Church. By extension, it is the right of the congregation to call missionaries for the expansion of the Kingdom of God; and

WHEREAS, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) recognizes the congregation as the entity through which God calls pastors to proclaim the Gospel; and

WHEREAS, The Board for International Mission (BIM), the districts of the Synod, and other non-congregational entities derive their authority to call from the congregations they represent; and

WHEREAS, CCM Opinion 14-2724 states, “Foreign missions is a jurisdiction that the Synod has retained for itself (Bylaw 4.1.5). Districts and congregations may not call rostered church workers for service in foreign areas, as supported throughout the Bylaws of the Synod.” This interpretation impinges on the rights of congregations to serve as the agency through which God calls His workers; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Synod in convention affirm and encourage the biblical right of each congregation to call pastors and missionaries to serve the congregation locally and/or to serve on their behalf anywhere there is a need for the Good News of Jesus Christ; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod in convention affirm the rights of those who represent congregations (such as the BIM, districts of the Synod, Recognized Service Organizations, and LCMS mission agencies) to call workers on behalf of the congregations they represent; and be it further

Resolved, That the Northwest District memorialize the Synod in convention to amend its bylaws to reflect this theological truth. Specifically, Bylaw 3.8.3 (regarding the BIM) and Bylaw 4.1.5 (regarding Synod/district jurisdiction) should be amended as follows:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

Board for International Mission

3.8.3 The Board for International Mission is charged with developing and determining policies in support of mission and ministry in foreign countries for the Office of International Mission (Bylaw 1.2.1 [m]). ...
Upon the recommendation of the Office of International Mission, the board shall serve as the only sending agency through which workers and funds are sent to the foreign mission areas of the Synod, including the calling, appointing, assigning, withdrawing, and releasing of missionaries (ministers of religion—ordained and ministers of religion—commissioned) and other workers for the ministries in foreign areas.

**PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING**

4.1.5 Jurisdiction with respect to everything that is administered by or for the entire Synod resides in the national Synod itself. Jurisdiction includes but is not limited to general supervision of doctrine and practice; coordination of foreign missions; institutions of the Synod; qualification for ordination, commissioning, and installation of ordained and commissioned ministers and requirements for individual as well as congregational membership in the Synod; publication of official religious periodicals; conduct of negotiations and affiliations with other church bodies; and the like.

and be it further

Resolved, That Bylaw 1.1.1 be amended to add an additional paragraph (c):

**PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING**

1.1.1 Committed to a common confession and mission, congregations of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod ...

... (c) Neither the Synod nor any board, commission, or agency on its behalf shall adopt any policy or practice which may inhibit or restrict individual members or congregations in giving bold witness by word or deed to the love and work of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit and extend that Gospel witness into all the world.

and be it finally

Resolved, That congregations be expected to coordinate and communicate with their circuits, districts, and the BIM when making missionary calls so that everything be done decently and in good order.

Northwest District

Ov. 2-11

**To Reaffirm Synod Bylaw 3.8.3**

Guaranteeing the Board for International Mission Remains the Sole Sending Agency through Which Workers and Funds are Sent to the Foreign Mission Areas of the Synod

**WHEREAS,** The Synod’s very purpose for existence was to accomplish more together rather than as disparate districts and congregations; and

**WHEREAS,** This unity encompassed not only confessional agreement but also practical aspects such as the coalescing of personnel and funds for foreign missions; and

**WHEREAS,** Partner churches request cooperation with those officially sent by the Synod and are often confused by individual congregations and districts who initiate mission work independent of the Office of International Mission (OIM); and

**WHEREAS,** The Synod provides proper accounting to ensure funds are not utilized by terrorist organizations, non-Lutheran entities or non-partner churches; and

**WHEREAS,** Significant threats exist in the international community (natural, terrorist, or medical) in which Synod maintains constant geographical threat assessments, disaster readiness, and evacuation procedures for her missionaries and their families which would be challenging for individual congregations or districts to provide and maintain themselves; and

**WHEREAS,** The decrease in membership within Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod congregations as well as the decrease in congregational giving to districts would make the supporting of international missionary efforts challenging for congregations and districts to provide and maintain themselves; and

**WHEREAS,** Districts and congregations have made past attempts to initiate international projects which ultimately exceeded their financial capacity or the will of newly elected officials, often resulting in the remediying of these situations by Synod’s overseas international staff; and

**WHEREAS,** Districts and congregations already possess the ability to support foreign missions through the OIM as well as auxiliary and recognized service organizations; and

**WHEREAS,** Districts and congregations already possess the ability to initiate a dual or seconded call when recommended to the Board for International Mission (BIM) by the OIM, with supervision and financial responsibility remaining upon the district and congregations; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Synod in convention would reaffirm her commitment to Bylaw 3.8.3; and be it further

Resolved, That districts and congregations would reaffirm their desire to work cooperatively in the sending of foreign missionaries and funds through the BIM; and be it further

Resolved, That the OIM would work collaboratively with districts and congregations who desire to initiate a dual call of an international missionary via the BIM; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod Board of Directors would only approve funding for OIM projects upon the reception of a reasonable strategic plan for international missions; and be it further

Resolved, That the Council of Presidents would annually report any international mission endeavors they may be aware of for consideration to become supported by Synod personnel and funds; and be it finally

Resolved, That the 2019 Synod in convention would reaffirm her desire to work in coordination and cooperation with international, existing church partners, and where no existing church partner operates, start new international initiatives to share the gospel with the unchurched.

Zion
Bridgeville, PA

Ov. 2-12

**To Encourage and Support**

International Theological Education by Our Seminaries in Aid of World Lutheran Churches

**WHEREAS,** Numerous Lutheran church bodies throughout the world are seeking closer relations with The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) (including seventeen new churches being received into membership in the International Lutheran Council in 2018); and

**WHEREAS,** In recent years, a number of Lutheran church bodies throughout the world have, by God’s grace, experienced unprecedented growth, with prospects for much further growth in the future (among the largest examples are the Malagasy Lutheran
Church which has grown to 4 million members, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Tanzania now at over 6 million members, and the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus which has grown from 2.3 million members in 2007 to 8.3 million by 2016 statistics; and

WHEREAS, Many world Lutheran churches, including our long-established international partner churches, look to the seminaries of our church to assist them with theological education, either by sending our professors overseas to teach or by receiving international students in our seminaries’ pastoral formation programs or, especially, graduate programs; and

WHEREAS, Our seminaries have already been responding to these requests for assistance to the extent that their limited financial resources available to support this work allows; and

WHEREAS, God has blessed the people and congregations of our Synod with financial resources that are truly rich and far beyond the capacities of other world Lutheran churches; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Synod in convention endorse our seminaries’ continued engagement in international theological education in support of world Lutheran churches; and be it further

Resolved, That the seminaries be encouraged to continue their commitment to support world Lutheran churches by sending professors overseas to teach, by developing online resources to support international theological education, and by receiving international students in their pastoral formation and graduate programs as appropriate; and be it finally

Resolved, That the Synod and our seminaries work together to develop a dedicated fund to provide the financial resources necessary to allow our seminaries to continue and extend this God-pleasing work.

Faculty, Concordia Seminary;
Faculty, Concordia Theological Seminary

Ov. 2-13

To Commend the Lutheran Heritage Foundation on its 25th Anniversary

WHEREAS, The Lutheran Heritage Foundation (LHF) is a recognized service organization of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) founded on November 10, 1992; and

WHEREAS, Many Lutheran churches around the world do not have the books vital to understanding the Lutheran faith because no one had translated them into their language. LHF is working to change that; and

WHEREAS, In more than 90 countries and 100 languages, thousands of people have come to faith in Christ because they have been able to read books that include the Book of Concord (12 translations), Luther’s Small Catechism (86 translations), and A Child’s Garden of Bible Stories (29 translations) in their own language; and

WHEREAS, In the past decade, LHF has published and distributed more than 925 titles in 102 languages with many more in progress; and

WHEREAS, Over 3 million Lutheran books have been distributed to pastors, seminary students, missionaries, and churches—at no cost to them; therefore be it

Resolved, That the 2019 Synod convention give thanks for the ministry of LHF and encourage support.

Michigan District
3. Mercy

REPORTS

R1, R1.1, R1.2, R1.3, R7, R8, R14, R20, R57, R60, R61

OVERTURES

Ov. 3-01

To Commend LCMS Life Ministry

WHEREAS, Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) Life Ministry has conducted National Life Conferences in conjunction with the March for Life in 2013, 2015, and 2017; and

WHEREAS, LCMS Life Ministry prepared a National Life Conference in conjunction with the March for Life in January of 2019; and

WHEREAS, LCMS Life Ministry has prepared an informational campaign known as Eyes of Life (eyesoflife.org) to help each person see the God-given value of all human lives; and

WHEREAS, LCMS Life Ministry is working closely with the newly formed Lutheran Center for Religious Liberty (LCRL) to advocate for life-affirming policies and practices within the civil realm; therefore be it

Resolved, That we, the Central Illinois District in convention assembled, commend LCMS Life Ministry for its work in advocating for the life, dignity and health of all people from conception to natural death, particularly mothers, unborn children, those who are gravely ill, and those who are dying; and be it further

Resolved, That we encourage each circuit of the district to send at least one pastor, one lay adult, and one youth representative to the 2019 Life Conference; and be it further

Resolved, That we encourage each congregation of the district to avail themselves of the resources available through eyesoflife.org to encourage their members toward a more life-affirming outlook; and be it further

Resolved, That we encourage each congregation of the district to utilize the work of the LCRL in effecting change toward more God-pleasing policies and practices in our federal, state, and local governments; and be it finally

Resolved, That we memorialize the Synod to adopt the above resolution.

Central Illinois District

Ov. 3-02

To Commend Lutherans For Life

WHEREAS, Lutherans For Life is a pan-Lutheran organization serving the congregations of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS); and

WHEREAS, Lutherans For Life has attained recognized service organization status within the LCMS; and

WHEREAS, Lutherans For Life advocates for people at all stages of life through various educational and service activities; and

WHEREAS, Lutherans For Life is organized at the local level in chapters organized within congregations or groupings of congregations; therefore be it

Resolved, That we commend Lutherans For Life for its efforts; and be it further

Resolved, That we encourage each circuit within the Central Illinois District to have at least one Lutherans For Life chapter; and be it further

Resolved, That we give thanks and praise to God for the work of Lutherans For Life by standing and singing the common doxology; and be it finally

Resolved, That we memorialize the Synod to adopt the above resolution.

Central Illinois District

Ov. 3-03

To Provide for the Adequate Training of Our Synod, Districts, Seminaries, Pastors, and Congregations in the Area of Mental Illnesses and Disorders

WHEREAS, Our Lord commands us to love our neighbor as ourselves (Mark 12:31); and

WHEREAS, Paul, the apostle, reminds us, “If one part of the body of Christ) suffers, every part with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it” (1 Cor. 12:26); and

WHEREAS, Paul, the apostle, also reminds us, “Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ” (Gal. 6:2); and

WHEREAS, Jesus, in fulfilling the Scripture, quoted Isaiah saying, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering the sight of the blind” (Luke 4:14–21); and

WHEREAS, According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), an estimated 22.1 percent of Americans ages 18 and older, about one out of five adults, suffer from an array of diagnosable mental disorders in a given year—that one of our churches with a membership of 100 has an estimated 20 persons with a mental illness; that 10 percent of children aged 5–16 have a clinically diagnosable mental health problem and 70 percent have not had appropriate interventions to treat them (National Mental Health Foundation); that diagnosable mental disorders range from traumatic brain injury, post-traumatic stress, bipolar disorder, depression, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, and schizophrenia and include addictions and eating disorders like bulimia and anorexia with other disorders on the increase that include autism and Alzheimer’s Disease; and

WHEREAS, Mental illness and mental disorders have a downward spiral effect in families and among people that may include behavioral malfunctions, addictions, marital problems leading to divorce, loss of job, incarceration, and suicide; that it is estimated that 90 percent of people committing suicide suffer from a diagnosable mental illness (The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention); and

WHEREAS, There is stigma among and against the mentally ill to understand mental illness and a fear of being identified with a
mental illness/disorder; that because mental illness carries with it an undesirable regard, there is indecision among the mentally ill to get help; that mental illness is different from a physical illness in the way it is treated and understood; that due to reasons like stigma and lack of access to the mental health system, the average delay between experiencing symptoms and seeking help is 10 years (the executive director of NAMI, Mary Giliberti); that mental illnesses and mental disorders present both challenges and problems for pastors and congregations because of the stigma connected with the illness and/or disorder from the one suffering from it to the ones ministering to them, attempting to provide care and compassion to their members; and

WHEREAS, In general, our pastors and congregations may be ill-equipped to provide ministry and compassionate care to those suffering from a mental illness/disorder—to more fully understand the plight of human need regarding those suffering mental illness and to draw from Scripture that which is needed to provide them with compassionate, caring, knowledgeable, effective ministry; therefore be it

Resolved, That Synod, districts, and congregations advocate for the mentally ill, including pastors themselves, in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod congregations to the end that they receive pastoral care and Christ-centered ministry that brings peace to the troubled mind; and be it further

Resolved, That our pastors, churches, and districts actively advocate for mental health and wellness today in their churches, among their people, and provide Christ-centered compassion and ministerial supportive care to those in need; and be it finally

Resolved, That our seminaries and schools of higher learning more adequately provide sufficient training to those studying to be pastors and church leaders to the end result that pastoral care is provided to the mentally ill; that pastors learn to recognize and seek appropriate care for their own mental illness; that those in training come to understand the symptoms, nature of, and needs of the mentally ill and are able to advocate for professional assistance that leads to diagnosis and treatment that follows to overcoming the illness/disorder or the ability to manage it successfully; to the end that the pastor and his congregation will effectively minister to the spiritual needs of those suffering from a mental illness and mental disorder, and especially proclaim that Jesus is our brother and defender even in the depths of life—to comfort them with the promise that God is love and He rescues and restores those who call upon Him.

Augsburg
Shawnee, KS

Ov. 3-04

To Encourage Adequate Training of Our Pastors and Congregations to Recognize and Provide Pastoral Care for Those Suffering from Clinical Depression, Mental Illnesses, and Other Mental Disorders

WHEREAS, Our Lord commands us to love our neighbor as ourselves (Mark 12:31); and

WHEREAS, Our Lord also calls us to “bear one another’s burdens” (Gal. 6:2) and because clinical depression, mental illness, and other mental disorders are a great burden for those who suffer from them; and

WHEREAS, Paul, the apostle, reminds us, “If one part [of the Body of Christ] suffers, every part with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it” (1 Cor. 12:26); and

WHEREAS, Jesus, in fulfilling the Scripture, quoted Isaiah saying, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor” (Luke 4:18–19); and

WHEREAS, According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), an estimated 22.1 percent of Americans ages 18 and older, about one out of five adults, suffer from an array of diagnosable mental disorders in a given year—that one of our churches with a membership of 100 has an estimated 20 persons with a mental illness; that 10 percent of children aged 5–16 have a clinically diagnosable mental health problem and 70 percent have not had appropriate interventions to treat them (National Mental Health Foundation); that diagnosable mental disorders range from traumatic brain injury, post-traumatic stress, bi-polar disorder, depression, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, and schizophrenia and include addictions and eating disorders like bulimia and anorexia with other disorders on the increase that include autism and Alzheimer’s Disease; and

WHEREAS, Mental illness or a mental disorder has a downward spiral effect in families and among people that may include behavioral malfunctions, addictions, marital problems leading to divorce, loss of job, incarceration, and suicide; that its estimated that 90 percent of people committing suicide suffer from a diagnosable mental illness (American Foundation for Suicide Prevention); and

WHEREAS, There is a stigma among the mentally ill to understand their illness and a fear of being identified with a mental illness/disorder; that because mental illness carries with it an undesirable regard, there is indecision among the mentally ill to get help; that mental illness is different from a physical illness in the way it is treated and understood; that due to reasons like stigma and lack of access to the mental health system, the average delay between experiencing symptoms and seeking help is 10 years (the executive director of NAMI, Mary Giliberti); that mental illnesses and mental disorders present both challenges and problems for pastors and congregations because of the stigma connected with the illness and/or disorder from the one suffering from it to the ones ministering to them, attempting to provide care and compassion to their members; and

WHEREAS, In general, our pastors and congregations may be ill-equipped to provide ministry and compassionate care to those suffering from a mental illness/disorder—to more fully understand the plight of human need regarding those suffering mental illness and to draw from Scripture that which is needed to provide them with compassionate, caring, knowledgeable, effective ministry; therefore be it

Resolved, That Synod, districts, and congregations advocate for the mentally ill in our congregations to the end that they receive pastoral care and Christ-centered ministry that brings peace to the troubled mind and so bear one another’s burdens; and be it further

Resolved, That our pastors and churches actively advocate for mental health and wellness today in their churches, among their
people, and provide Christ-centered compassion and ministerial supportive care to those in need; and be it finally

Resolved, That our seminaries and schools of higher learning, including recognized service organizations (e.g., DOXOLOGY), be encouraged to more adequately provide sufficient training to those studying to be pastors and church leaders, including other staff, to the end result that pastoral care is provided to the mentally challenged; that those in training come to understand the symptoms, nature of, and needs of the mentally challenged and are able to advocate for professional assistance that leads to diagnosis and treatment that follows to overcoming the illness/disorder or the ability to manage it successfully; to the end that the pastor and his congregation will effectively minister to the spiritual needs of those suffering from a mental illness and mental disorder, and especially proclaim that Jesus is our brother and defender even in the depths of life—to comfort them with the promise that God is love and He rescues and restores those who call upon Him.

Life in Christ
Grand Marais, MN

Ov. 3-05

To Provide Ministry Assistance to Our Pastors and Congregations in the Areas of Clinical Depression, Mental Illnesses and Disorders

WHEREAS, Our Lord commands us to love our neighbor as ourselves (Mark 12:31); and

WHEREAS, Paul, the Apostle, reminds us, “If one part suffers, every part with suffers it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.” (1 Cor. 12:26 NIV); and

WHEREAS, The Psalmist declared, “Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good! Blessed is the man who takes refuge in Him! For those who fear Him have no lack!” (Ps. 34:8, 9b); and

WHEREAS, Jesus, in fulfilling the Scripture, quoted Isaiah saying: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.” (Luke 4:18–19); and

WHEREAS, According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), an estimated 22.1 percent of Americans, ages 18 and older—about 1 out of 5 adults—suffer from an array of diagnosable mental disorders in a given year or that one of our churches with a membership of 100 has an estimated 20 persons with a mental illness; that 10 percent of children aged 5–16 have a clinically diagnosable mental health problem and 70 percent have not had appropriate interventions to treat them (National Mental Health Foundation); that diagnosable mental disorders range from traumatic brain injury, post-traumatic stress, bi-polar disorder, depression, ADHD, and schizophrenia and, include addictions and eating disorders like bulimia and anorexia, with other disorders on the increase that include autism and Alzheimer’s Disease (NAMI homepage, nami.org/Learn-More/Mental-Health-By-the-Numbers); and

WHEREAS, Mental illness and a mental disorder has a downward spiral effect in families and among people that may include behavioral malfunctions, addictions, marital problems leading to divorce, loss of job, incarceration, and suicide; that it’s estimated that 90 percent of people committing suicide suffer from a diagnosable mental illness (American Foundation for Suicide Prevention); and

WHEREAS, There is a stigma among the mentally ill to understand their illness and a fear of being identified with a mental illness/disorder; that because mental illness carries with it an undesirable regard, there is indecision among the mentally ill to get help; that mental illness is different from a physical illness in the way it is treated and understood; that due to reasons such as stigma and lack of access to the mental health system, the average delay between experiencing symptoms and seeking help is ten years (the executive director of NAMI, Mary Giliberti); that mental illnesses and mental disorders present both challenges and problems for pastors and congregations because of the stigma connected with the illness and/or disorder from the ones afflicted to the ones ministering to them and attempting to provide care and compassion to their members; and

WHEREAS, In general, our pastors and congregations may be ill-equipped to provide ministry and compassionate care to those suffering from a mental illness/disorder and may need additional resources to help them more fully understand the plight of human need regarding those suffering from mental illness and to draw from Scripture that which is needed to provide them with compassionate, caring, knowledgeable, effective ministry; therefore be it

Resolved, That we advocate for the mentally ill in our Synod’s congregations to the end that they receive pastoral care and Christ-centered ministry that brings peace to the troubled mind; and be it further

Resolved, That our pastors and churches actively advocate for mental health and wellness today in their churches, among their people, and provide Christ-centered compassion and ministerial supportive care to those in need; and be it further

Resolved, That our seminaries, schools of higher learning, and the recognized service organization Doxology more adequately provide sufficient training to those studying to be pastors and church leaders, including other staff, to the end result that pastoral care is provided to the mentally afflicted; that those in training will effectively minister to the spiritual needs of those suffering from a mental illness/disorder and may need additional resources to help them more fully understand the plight of human need regarding those suffering from mental illness and to draw from Scripture that which is needed to provide them with compassionate, caring, knowledgeable, effective ministry; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Minnesota North District memorialize this to the Synod.

Minnesota North District

Ov. 3-06

To Direct the CTCR to Prepare an Addendum to the Study, Immigrants Among Us

WHEREAS, In November 2012 the Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR) approved a report on immigration, requested by President Kieschnick, entitled Immigrants Among Us: A Lutheran Framework for Considering Immigration Issues; and

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WHEREAS, The report is meant to be a study and discussion document for the benefit of lively conversation within the Synod and is not the official position of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) unless adopted by the Synod in convention as its official position; and

WHEREAS, “The report does not seek to provide policy recommendations … Rather, it considers immigration issues in light of important Lutheran theological concepts such has the love of neighbor and the doctrine of vocation” (2013 Workbook, 78); and

WHEREAS, “The study is addressed especially, although not exclusively, to Lutherans who are asking how they can engage in mission, mercy work, and spiritual care among immigrants who live in their midst—whether documented or not—while also upholding their responsibility to obey the government authorities and the immigration laws they enact” (Immigrants Among Us, 8–9); and

WHEREAS, The report does not distinguish between “documented” and “undocumented” immigrants (e.g. Immigrants Among Us, 17n29: “it remains still problematic in the New Testament era to argue that for immigrants to participate in the blessings of the church or spiritual Israel in the U.S. today, they must first become legal residents or citizens of the temporal national-state. The New Testament places no such temporal conditions for becoming children of God through faith in Christ”); and

WHEREAS, The report seems to ignore the “important Lutheran theological concept” of distinguishing rightly Law and Gospel in that the report does not explicitly call for those who are breaking temporal laws to come to a place of repentance and forgiveness; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Synod in convention direct the CTCR of the LCMS to prepare an addendum to the CTCR report entitled Immigrants Among Us: A Lutheran Framework for Considering Immigration Issues, with the instruction that this addendum would specifically address how the biblical doctrines of Law and Gospel, repentance and forgiveness, apply to the immigration issue.

Rocky Mountain District

Ov. 3-07

To Give Thanks and Praise to God and Encourage Support for LIRS Ministry Welcoming Refugees and Displaced Persons

WHEREAS, In 1939, Lutherans in the United States, committed to the mercy work of the church, rose up to help Lutheran refugees from Europe displaced by World War II; and

WHEREAS, Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service (LIRS) is an inter-Lutheran organization and in partnership with Lutheran congregations across the country, has resettled over 500,000 refugees in its almost 80 years of ministry; and

WHEREAS, Christians are called to welcome the stranger (Deut. 10:18–19; Matt. 25:36), working to protect, embrace, and empower migrants and refugees through ministries of service and mercy; and

WHEREAS, LIRS in partnership with Lutheran congregations continues to serve over 10,000 refugees and 20,000 detained torture survivors, victims of trafficking, and unaccompanied children every year; and

WHEREAS, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) has a long history with LIRS in mercy work in what has historically been described as “cooperation in externals”; and

WHEREAS, Through the work of LIRS, the Lord extends His mercy to those in need; and

WHEREAS, The ministry of LIRS is still sorely needed in today’s war-strewn, conflict-ridden world; therefore be it

Resolved, That the delegates assembled in convention in 2019 to utilize its communications mechanisms to share these stories and inspire action throughout the LIRS 80th anniversary year; and be it further

Resolved, That Atlantic District congregations be encouraged to tell the stories of their acts of welcome to refugees, displaced persons and migrants—signs of witness, mercy, and life together; and be it further

Resolved, That the Atlantic District in convention memorialize the Synod at its 2019 convention to encourage congregations, individuals, and organizations to engage with and support the LIRS mission of welcoming the stranger through gifts of time, talent, and treasure.

Atlantic District

Ov. 3-08

To Sever Any Agreements with Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service

WHEREAS, God’s Word says, “And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him” (Acts 17:26–27a); and

WHEREAS, God’s Word says, “Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. Therefore, whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval, for he is God’s servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God’s wrath on the wrongdoer. Therefore, one must be in subjection, not only to avoid God’s wrath but also for the sake of conscience” (Rom. 13:1–6); and

WHEREAS, God’s Word says, “Remind them to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work, to speak evil of no one, to avoid quarreling, to be gentle, and to show perfect courtesy toward all people” (Titus 3:1–2); and

WHEREAS, We confess, “In addition, it would be well to preach to the parents also, and such as bear their office, as to how they should deport themselves toward those who are committed to them
for their government. For although this is not expressed in the Ten Commandments, it is nevertheless abundantly enjoined in many places in the Scripture. And God desires to have it embraced in this commandment when He speaks of father and mother. For He does not wish to have in this office and government knaves and tyrants; nor does He assign to them this honor, that is, power and authority to govern, that they should have themselves worshiped; but they should consider that they are under obligations of obedience to God; and that, first of all, they should earnestly and faithfully discharge their office, not only to support and provide for the bodily necessities of their children, servants, subjects, etc., but, most of all, to train them to the honor and praise of God. Therefore, do not think that this is left to your pleasure and arbitrary will, but that it is a strict command and injunction of God, to whom also you must give account for it.” (Large Catechism [LC] I:167–169); and

Whereas, As seen above it is the true and living God who establishes the nations of the earth and sets their boundaries (Acts 17:26). The governing authorities in those nations are established by God and Christians are to be obedient to those governing authorities (Rom. 13:1–6; Titus 3:1), except where they must obey God rather than man (Acts 5:29). The governing authorities have the God-given responsibility to faithfully discharge their office for the support and provision of their subjects (LC I:167–169); and

Whereas, Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service (LIRS) states on its website, “LIRS is concerned that legislative efforts to increase immigration enforcement, such as a border wall, an increase in agents, and an end to family migration only seeks to threaten family unity, community stability, and strips away protections for vulnerable newcomers. Reforming only select areas of our complex system does not reflect the needs of the country, nor does it uphold the dignity of migrants and refugees seeking safety, family reunification, or the opportunity to contribute to the United States. LIRS continues to advocate for the welcome, protection, and care of our migrant brothers and sisters through compassionate immigration reform” (lirs.org/immigration-reform, accessed Aug. 17, 2018); and

Whereas, LIRS clearly advocates for a specific political agenda:

Take action now!

#KeepFamiliesTogether Urge Congress to uphold this country’s standards of family unity and protect children and families at our border;

#RaiseTheCeiling Urge the Administration to raise the refugee admissions ceiling from 45,000 to 75,000 in FY 2019;

#WhereReTheRefugees Hold the Administration accountable to resettling the 45,000 refugees they have committed to bring to this country” (lirs.org/advocate, accessed Aug. 17, 2018);

Only the version submitted by Circuit 3, Southern Illinois District, includes the following additional citation:

“Demand that Congress #RAISETHECEILING. Refugees are under attack, and they need your help.

On September 17, the Administration announced its intentions to set the annual admissions ceiling for refugees at 30,000—the lowest ceiling in the history of U.S. refugee resettlement. The consequences of this decision could be devastating for tens of thousands of refugees, and LIRS is calling on Congress and the Administration to revise and amend this figure.

There’s still time to make your voice heard! Call Your Representatives Today!” (lirs.org/raisetheceiling, accessed Oct. 10, 2018); and

Whereas, Individual members of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS), and members of Synod congregations are free to disagree with the political advocacy of the LIRS and in fact advocate for increased immigration enforcement, a border wall, and lowering refugee admissions and may do so without sin, and in fact may do so for the good of their neighbor; therefore be it

Resolved, That the LCMS take no position on the political issues of immigration enforcement, border wall, increase in federal agents and other related issues except to confess that it is the government’s responsibility to “bear the sword” (Rom. 13:4) for the provision and bodily necessities of its own citizens (LC I:169); and be it further

Resolved, That the LCMS sever any agreements with LIRS and cease any financial grants or support to LIRS,

Circuit 3, Southern Illinois District;
Circuit 4, Southern Illinois District

Ov. 3-09

To Mark the 75th Anniversary of Lutheran World Relief

Whereas, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod helped to found Lutheran World Relief (LWR) in 1945 for the purpose of providing emergency aid for thousands of homeless, displaced, and starving individuals and families in war-torn Europe; and

Whereas, Our Synod each year since then has continued to support LWR’s efforts both to respond to international disasters resulting from droughts, earthquakes, and typhoons, and to address global poverty, along with the human suffering and injustices that so frequently accompany this problem, primarily through development projects designed to help small, local farmers become self-sustaining; and

Whereas, Our Synod’s congregations and their individual members have strengthened these same efforts by providing generous donations, handcrafted quilts, personal care and school kits, as well as through direct purchase of LWR coffee and other special gifts; and

Whereas, Our Synod and LWR are currently working together in Latin America to fund and to manage the “mercy” arm of international mission and outreach projects on the part of the Synod and its partner churches; and

Whereas, LWR will celebrate its 75th anniversary of this worldwide ministry and its partnership with our Synod in 2020; therefore be it

Resolved, That our Synod encourage its congregations to let this anniversary become an occasion to give thanks for all that God has accomplished over the past three-quarters of a century in our world of human need through LWR; and be it further

Resolved, That our Synod assist our congregations and their leaders in recognizing LWR as an organization through which they can serve international neighbors who face poverty, suffering, and injustices on a daily basis, and thereby joyfully to put their Lutheran faith into action; and be it further

Resolved, That our Synod’s congregations and their leaders use this 75th anniversary to set aside an annual Sunday to bring the work
of LWR in the areas of emergency relief and sustainable development to the attention of their members; and be it further

Resolved, That our Synod’s congregations and their leaders be encouraged to avail themselves of the tools and resources that LWR freely provide, in order to educate, to inspire, and to motivate their members joyfully to affirm and support this same work with their prayers, their hands, and their financial gifts; and be it finally

Resolved, That the Synod in convention gives thanks to God for the global work being done by LWR in the name of our compassionate Savior, Jesus Christ, and that the Synod delegates rise and sing the common doxology in thanksgiving for LWR.

Redeemer, Fort Collins, CO; St. Andrew, Silver Spring, MD; Trinity, Lisle, IL

Ov. 3-10

To Support the Well-being of All the Church’s Workers and Church Worker Families

WHEREAS, The well-being of the church’s workers is vital to the ministry and mission of the church; and

WHEREAS, Those who are called to serve the church in various capacities are well advised to care for themselves and for their families so that they can carry out their work to the best of their ability; and

WHEREAS, Congregations, schools, and other agencies are vital to the well-being of their church workers as they support those workers in pursuit of their well-being; and

WHEREAS, Major challenges to the well-being of the church’s workers are known and documented, such as depression, addiction, marital strife, and burnout, etc.; and

WHEREAS, There are effective strategies to deal with those challenges to enhance their well-being; therefore be it

Resolved, That the English District in convention express its support for all efforts of congregations, schools, and agencies to care for our workers and support them and their families in their well-being, including the following components of holistic well-being: spiritual, financial, vocational, intellectual, relational, emotional, and physical; and be it further

Resolved, That our congregations, schools, and agencies be encouraged to do all they can to support the holistic well-being of their church workers, focusing on intentional, strategic, practical efforts at preventing problems before they develop and resolving them before they become crises; and be it further

Resolved, That our congregations, schools, and agencies be encouraged to support the holistic well-being of all their workers’ families as well; and be it further

Resolved, That the church’s workers of the English District be encouraged to care for themselves in every aspect of holistic well-being so that they can continue to serve to the best of their ability with the gifts and strength that God supplies; and be it further

Resolved, That the district in convention publicly recognize and show appreciation for the district Ministerial Health Commission for all of the work it does; and be it finally

Resolved, That the district in convention memorialize The 67th Regular Convention of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (2019) to encourage the care and well-being of church workers and their families throughout the Synod.

English District

Ov. 3-11

To Promote Worker Wellness

WHEREAS, The Old Testament and New Testament Scriptures are clear about God’s concern for the well-being of those who serve His people as when Hezekiah speaking for the Lord admonished the people of Israel living in Jerusalem to “give [from the firstfruits of the harvests] the portion due to the priests and the Levites, that they might give themselves to the Law of the Lord . . . ” (2 Chron. 31:4–10); and again in Paul’s first letter to the Thessalonians, “We ask you, brothers, to respect those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love because of their work” (1 Thess. 5:12); and

WHEREAS, The 2017 worker wellness survey of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod Church (with 917 completed surveys from ordained and commissioned ministers and their spouses) reveals a great deal of joy, but also a significant challenge to well-being among its 13,000 rostered workers; and

WHEREAS, The same survey notes that although workers recognize their needs in all seven areas of well-being (spiritual, physical, emotional, relational, vocational, financial, and intellectual), some of the most noteworthy include:

• 45 percent of ordained and 34 percent commissioned ministers do not believe they have anyone to provide them with pastoral care;

• 33 percent of all ministers admit having a struggle with compulsive behaviors (food, alcohol, pornography, etc.);

• over half (54 percent) of the spouses say they do not have anyone they call their pastor or spiritual companion, and 30 percent say they do not have anyone they trust with personal matters;

• workers’ families are forced to make many sacrifices as they struggle under low incomes. Many are searching for additional sources of income, with 20–30 percent recently considering leaving ministry for economic reasons;

• our workers suffer from being overweight or obese at about the same rates as the American population, with 75 percent having a body mass index ratio that is above normal, and nearly 50 percent having been told by a doctor that they are overweight or obese;

and

WHEREAS, The church worker wellness survey identifies two clusters of obstacles that get in the way of church workers and spouses seeking the help they need: (1) lack of time, energy, and money; and (2) some combination of shame, worry, and fear of unfavorable repercussions in the exercise of ecclesiastical supervision; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Synod in convention encourage all rostered and non-rostered church workers to engage the services of a faithful pastor as their father confessor in order to receive pastoral care, counsel from God’s Word and the ministry of individual confession and absolution; and be it further

Resolved, That the Office of National Mission (ONM) work with the districts of the Synod to develop materials to use in a Synodwide effort to catechize our workers and congregations concerning the importance and salutary benefits of individual confession and absolution for ongoing spiritual health and the protection of our workers in spiritual warfare; and be it further
Resolved, That the Synod in convention encourage all our pastors to seek father confessors for themselves and to make themselves available as father confessors to church workers near their ministries; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod in convention reaffirm the absolute confidentiality of the seal of the confessional, so that church workers are not afraid to seek guidance from God’s Word and the strength and comfort for their troubled consciences that the absolution affords; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod in convention reaffirm the need to cultivate trustworthiness in all matters of pastoral care; and be it further

Resolved, That all congregations and recognized service organizations (RSO) consider ways they can support the well-being of their church workers and their families; and be it further

Resolved, That congregations and RSOs be encouraged to make use of the growing treasury of resources available at lcms.org/wellness, on the websites of Synod’s partners (Concordia Plan Services, Lutheran Church Extension Fund, Lutheran Federal Credit Union, Concordia University System, and Pastoral Education) and from those ministries organized with God-given intention of caring for workers and families: Grace Place Wellness, DOXOLOGY, Shepherd’s Canyon, Soldiers of the Cross, and others; and be it further

Resolved, That district executives and/or circuit visitors aid congregations and RSOs to become more aware of and attentive to the well-being of church workers on their staffs as well as more informed about the available resources and services; and be it finally

Resolved, That the ONM and Synod’s partners work with districts to help them provide resources for church workers and their families that provide appropriate and proper pastoral and spiritual care that is distinct from and properly coordinated with ecclesiastical supervision.

Board for National Mission

Ov. 3-12

To Encourage District and Circuit Action toward Worker Wellness

WHEREAS, The 2016 Synod convention resolved that the Board for National Mission through its Office of National Mission assess wellness needs among church workers, promote well-being through Synod publications, and facilitate the sharing and use of wellness resources in service of all church workers; and

WHEREAS, By God’s grace and blessing, significant progress has been made with the Office of National Mission, Council of Presidents, Concordia Plan Services, Lutheran Church Extension Fund, Concordia University System, Lutheran Federal Credit Union, and Pastoral Education joining together to create the “2017 LCMS Church Worker Wellness Survey” and the Worker Wellness Action Group for sharing ideas, creating new resources, and improving service to our church workers and their families; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Synod give thanks to God for Synod’s research team and for the above-named partners who in their unique and varied ways have invested in the wellbeing of our church workers and their ministries; and be it further

Resolved, That Synod also give thanks to God for the creation of the new worker wellness Web page at lcms.org/wellness and for the laborers who have invested themselves in the construction and resourcing of the Web page; and be it finally

Resolved, That districts and circuits encourage grassroots worker wellness action groups to be formed to make use of the Synod-identified and other vetted resources in service to church workers and their families in nearby churches and recognized service organizations.

Board for National Mission
4. Life Together

REPORTS
R1, R1.1, R1.2, R1.3, R2, R3, R6–6.2, R7, R8, R12, R13, R15, R21–55, R56, R57, R58, R59.1–13, R61, R65

OVERTURES

Ov. 4-01
To Establish Mission and Ministry Emphases for the 2019–2021 Synod Triennium

WHEREAS, The Synod’s Bylaws call for the districts of the Synod to assist in the establishment of mission and ministry emphases to be adopted by the Synod in convention, (Bylaw 4.2.1 [b, d]); and
WHEREAS, The Synod is a union of congregations established by a common confession of faith; and
WHEREAS, That confession of faith is under constant attack from within and without; and
WHEREAS, The Synod is not where mission and ministry happens, but rather the Synod is developed to assist the congregations in the proclamation of the gospel; therefore be it
Resolved, That the Montana District submit the following three emphases to the 2019 Synod convention for adoption as its own:
1. Maintain the purity of our confession in doctrine and practice.
2. Every effort shall be made to limit the work of the Synod to the following essential duties:
   a. educating pastors, teachers, and other called or commissioned church workers
   b. sending missionaries
   c. ecclesiastical supervision
   d. publishing orthodox material
   e. large scale works of mercy
3. The administration of the Synod be focused on supporting congregations to do the work of proclamation of the gospel.

Montana District

Ov. 4-02
To Reaffirm “Witness, Mercy, Life Together” as the Mission and Ministry Emphasis for the 2019–2021 Triennium

WHEREAS, Our commitment together as the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) congregations and workers is to walk together with the Word of God as our only norm and guide for doctrine and practice; and
WHEREAS, The current triennial emphasis of “Witness, Mercy, Life Together” established at our 2013 Synod convention has served the Synod well and has blessed congregations with a richer understanding of the nature and mission of the Church of Christ; and
WHEREAS, Nine (9) of 35 districts submitted overtures to the 2016 Synod convention suggesting mission and ministry emphases for the 2016–2019 triennium; and
WHEREAS, These submissions continue to focus on our life together, service to our community and to those in need, and reaching out with the Gospel; and
WHEREAS, These submissions have given special focus to ministering to families, people of different nations, and people of different ethnicities; therefore be it
Resolved, That the Indiana District encourage the 2019 Synod convention to reaffirm the threefold emphasis of “Witness, Mercy, Life Together,” including the following six priorities:
   • plant, sustain and revitalize Lutheran churches;
   • support and expand theological education;
   • perform human care in close proximity to Word and Sacrament ministries;
   • collaborate with the Synod’s members and partners to enhance mission effectiveness;
   • promote and nurture the spiritual, emotional, financial and physical well-being of pastors and professional church workers;
   • enhance early childhood education, elementary and secondary education, university and campus ministries and youth ministry;

and be it further
Resolved, That the Indiana District encourage the Synod in convention to establish a seventh priority, namely:

• strengthen and support the families in living out God’s design;

and be it finally
Resolved, That the Indiana District encourage the Synod in convention to continue to give special focus toward:
   • ministry to and with people of all nations and races;
   • preaching and Bible study;
   • visitation.

Indiana District

Ov. 4-03
To Forward Emphases to Synod for Next Triennium

WHEREAS, As stated in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) Constitution, Article III, among the Objectives of the Synod are:
1. Conserve and promote the unity of the true faith (Eph. 4:3–6; 1 Cor. 1:10), work through its official structure toward fellowship with other Christian church bodies, and provide a united defense against schism, sectarianism (Rom. 16:17), and heresy;
2. Strengthen congregations and their members in giving bold witness by word and deed to the love and work of God, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and extend that Gospel witness into all the world;
3. Recruit and train pastors, teachers, and other professional church workers and provide opportunity for their continuing growth;
Resolved, That the Board of Directors of the Southeastern District forward the three selected emphases to the Synod on behalf of the Southeastern District in convention for consideration in developing national priorities for mission and ministry:

WITNESS: Expand our witness of God’s saving Gospel by intentionally promoting, supporting, and encouraging church planting in densely populated and multi-cultural settings.

MERCY: Extend our response to God’s great mercy by performing human care in close proximity to Word and Sacrament ministries.

LIFE TOGETHER: Enhance the quality of our life together under God’s Grace by sustaining and revitalizing our member congregations.

Board of Directors
Southeastern District

Ov. 4-05

To Recommend Mission and Ministry Emphases for the Synod’s Next Triennium

WHEREAS, Synod Bylaw 4.2.1 (d) directs the “district convention shall, through delegate vote, forward to the national convention a list of two or three triennial mission and ministry emphases for consideration by the national convention”; and

WHEREAS, The delegates to the 2018 Mid-South District convention selected its top three mission and ministry priorities from among those recommended by circuit forums; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Board of Directors of the Mid-South District hereby forward the following three mission and ministry emphases to the Synod for consideration in developing Synodwide emphases for mission and ministry in the next triennium:

1. strong support for pro-life initiatives and legislation;
2. examining best practices in reaching millennials and next youngest generation;
3. focus on reconciliation and unity within the body of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod:
   a. unity in our congregations around Synod;
b. disconnection (not only between churches in circuit, but to district and Synod);

c. we’re on the same team;

d. work on unity in both doctrine and practice (and how they are connected).

Board of Directors
Mid-South District

Ov. 4-07

To Provide Mission and Ministry Emphases

WHEREAS, Our Lord has built His Church upon the rock of the solid declaration of the confession that “Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God” and that even the gates of hell shall not prevail against this Church; and

WHEREAS, Our common confession of the true exposition of Scripture, the Book of Concord, stipulates the necessary and fundamental aspects of the ordering of the Church, such as the call of those who preach and administer the Sacraments (Augsburg Confession [AC] XIV) and the doctrine of the Gospel (AC VII); and

WHEREAS, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) finds itself in the midst of the ever-changing tides of culture which have resulted in falling demographics including fewer baptisms and professions of faith proving that churches need resources that will enable them to meet the challenges specific to this age; and

WHEREAS, The LCMS solicits its congregations and districts to provide ministry and mission emphases to help guide it to faithful and fruitful work; and

WHEREAS, The Florida-Georgia District believes the following recommendations to be helpful not only to the Florida-Georgia District itself, but to the entire LCMS and through it, to provide a witness to the Church worldwide; therefore be it

Resolved, That the LCMS study and endeavor to help its member congregations to help define congregational health in our day, including how our congregations of the LCMS can be most effective in pursuing a common mission throughout the Synod; and be it further

Resolved, That the LCMS explore possible changes in the training of professional ministers of the Gospel, ordained and commissioned, to help congregations that may not be able to afford a pastor or other church worker currently, specifically exploring alternatives to residential education; and be it finally

Resolved, That the LCMS help its member congregations to train both its ministers and laity to communicate via relational conversation in addition to declaration of the truth.

Florida-Georgia District

Ov. 4-08

To Amend Bylaw Section 6.2 to Revitalize Synod’s Recognized Service Organization Program

Rationale
The 2016 convention, noting the Synod’s long history of recognizing contributions made by service organizations, as well as the changing needs of the Synod and of social service organizations (especially with changes in governmental regulation and oversight) and the concerns raised over the years as to the continued health and usefulness of the recognized service organization (RSO) program, assembled and charged (Proceedings, 146–7) the 2016 Res. 4-03B Task Force:

- to review and report on the original purpose and intent of the RSO program and its predecessors.
- to determine the needs of and benefits to the Synod with respect to the RSO program.
- to identify the best model for the Synod to engage with organizations that: (1) foster the mission and ministry of the church and that (2) engage in programs that are in harmony with the programs of the Synod.
- to 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.
- to recommend appropriate changes to the bylaws, as needed.
- to ensure that all recommendations maintain the important relationships with the agencies that are recognized by the Synod, 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.

The task force, having met throughout the triennium and consulted with various Synod and RSO constituents of the existing program, has produced its report (included as R-61 in the Convention Workbook) and, in accordance with Bylaw 3.1.6.2, this overture, which would enact the report’s fundamental recommendations in the form of bylaw changes and directives to responsible boards and offices to develop implementing policies and procedures. Another overture proposes further enhancements and future directions that build on the model presented here.

Briefly, the task force reported as required, noting the following, each point of which is developed in much more detail in its report:

- The RSO program has proven itself of significant value to the Synod as a whole and should be maintained. The mutual benefit of the Synod—RSO relationship should not be underestimated but rather should be promoted and expanded, wherever and whenever possible. The task force’s recommendations intend to bring clarity and direction to how best the Synod can continue to identify, develop and expand collaborative efforts with an increasing complex and diverse set of RSOs.
- Simultaneously ensuring that “the important relationships with the agencies [sic] that are recognized” are maintained and that the model improve the engagement of the Synod and recognized organizations to increase the mutual benefit to the organizations and the congregations of the Synod requires a diversification of approach, so that the very different types of organizations under the RSO “umbrella” can each receive the attention and counsel they need, and so that positive goals can be stated for each type of organization’s relationship to the Synod. The program needs to move beyond a “one size fits all” approach.
- A revitalized RSO program should distinguish witness (WSO), education (ESO), and mercy (MSO) service organizations under the existing title, with a clearer and more positive statement of Synod’s expectations for each. WSOs, for example, are to be expected to advance doctrine and
practice of the Synod’s confessional position overtly in the foreground of all they do; MSOs, by the nature of their work, are involved in cooperation-in-externals mercy activities and may rely on government or other support that enables the scale or reach of their work but also limits the degree to which unbridled proclamation can be at the forefront. To “respect and not act contrary to the doctrine and practice of the Synod” has a particular application to each situation, which should be more explicit and more positively elaborated than it now can be under one umbrella.

- A revitalized RSO program should further acknowledge a distinction, where appropriate and only within the ESO and MSO categories, of those organizations that, due to operating constraints, including government funding and regulation, cannot in all their activities directly advance the confessional position of the Synod (i.e., may have to suffer odious regulation or cease activities). Recognition of these organizations, which already exist in the RSO program, does provide mutual benefit if the organizations are truly suffering regulation and not themselves taking an adverse position, and if the organizations offer services in a way that concretely and demonstrably multiplies the ministry of congregations. Acknowledging this distinction is a first step toward better relationships. Such a distinction is not possible in the WSO category, where “witness” activity is intrinsically bound up with the Church’s confession.

- Tier I RSOs have the ability to advance the mission of the church purely and explicitly in every circumstance, positively advancing our churchly confession, performing the mission of the church, so that these may be urged to that standard of practice.

- Tier II MSOs and ESOs, on the other hand, operate under such regulatory and financial constraints that the doctrine and teaching of the church cannot be at the overt forefront of all activities. Nonetheless, these latter are recognized for multiplying the mission of the church. Tier II organizations are expected to demonstrably do what they do in coordination with, alongside, congregations and schools so that their mission is multiplied. It may be the best they can do is carry out some merciful purpose in a moral fashion, and to do it in close proximity to congregational ministries of the Synod, which have the freedom to proclaim Law and Gospel with all the fullness of the church’s confession and practice. The distinction of tiers is not a value judgment; simply an acknowledgement that RSOs operate in two chief domains—different domains, but both of service to the church and those in need. Organizations operating in those generally larger domains where the church is not the only input or authority, although pressed hard in these days, are of immense value to multiplying the church’s mercy and in supporting and surrounding the church’s nearer and higher work of the proclamation of Law and Gospel.

- A revitalized RSO program should seek an expanded role for districts in managing RSOs with local impact, involving more significant district—RSO conversation in the application and review process. Appropriate instruments would be developed, completed by an RSO with the district and then reviewed by Synod’s RSO office, to ensure that program expectations are being applied uniformly. The program should also provide much more explicitly for a district president’s ecclesiastical oversight of an RSO’s operations within his district. Association schools, governed exclusively by Synod congregations (which do not require RSO status to receive any benefit status could offer), should as soon as possible be transitioned to simple district recognition—reducing overhead and improving connections with the appropriate district.

- The nature of calls by RSOs—especially by those not governed exclusively by members of Synod member congregations—should receive careful attention. RSOs will be able to call if they agree to conditions similar to those for other Synod calling organizations, including resolution of call-related disputes through the Synod dispute resolution process.

- A revitalized program should include increased interaction and opportunities for cross-pollination among the RSOs and Synod ministries. The task force suggests investigation of triennial RSO conferences or other opportunities, without dictating a specific, untried course.

- A revitalized program should include the possibility of granting offices recovering a portion of their administrative costs through appropriate fees, sharing mutually with the organizations the cost of a mutually valuable relationship.

The task force’s proposals were presented in brief to the Council of Presidents and Board of Directors of the Synod in November 2018. Comment was also sought from Concordia Plan Services, the Lutheran Church Extension Fund, and a representative swath of various types of RSOs across the five regions of the Synod, with comments incorporated into the final report of the task force in January 2019. The task force feels that its proposal shows a way forward supported by a broad consensus of Synod and RSO constituents and is grateful for much fruitful and hopeful conversation in the course of its work.

These proposals together, offered by consensus of the convention, task force membership at the conclusion of its work, with direction given in the report for further development of policy and procedure by responsible boards and offices, propose a revitalization of the RSO program that can be expected—with the Lord’s blessing—to strengthen the relationships between the Synod (and the Synod’s congregations, schools, and agencies) and the incredible variety of recognized organizations, and to increase the benefit of the program to both.

Therefore be it

Resolved, That the report of the Res. 4-03B Task Force on RSOs, as included as R-61 in the 2019 Workbook, be approved as guidance for revitalization of the program by the appropriate boards and offices of the Synod, and that those boards and offices be directed to proceed with development of policies and procedures required for its implementation; and be it further

Resolved, That Bylaw 6.2.1 be amended, to consolidate the basic program definition, to clarify that congregations may form RSOs, to clarify ecclesiastical supervisory and oversight (cf. Bylaws 1.2.1 [k] and [o]) relationships between the RSOs and relevant district presidents, to make explicit Synod’s expectations of RSOs coordination in mission (both domestic and foreign), and to clarify that Synod does not endorse or assume financial liabilities for the organizations (long part of policies but heretofore omitted from the bylaws), as follows:

2019 Convention Workbook
PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

6.2.1 The granting of recognized service organization 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 extends the mission and ministry of the Synod, 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.

(a) Under the governance and policies of its own board, a recognized service organization operates with freedom and self-determination as a ministry organization, structurally independent of the Synod or districts or member congregations of the Synod and its agencies, in the establishment and evaluation of its own objectives, activities, and programs, in organization and administration, and in financial matters.

(b) The Board of Directors of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod shall adopt common policies for granting recognized service organization status. A recognized service organization respects the rights and obligations of Synod’s members, individual and congregational. Respecting proper evangelical supervision, counsel, and care of church workers and congregations, a recognized service organization accepts and agrees to facilitate the respective district president’s ecclesiastical supervision of its rostered workers and his role in the recognized service organization’s call process. A recognized service organization recognizes a congregation’s right and duty to regularly call its own pastor and agrees not to extend pastoral ministry to a congregation without the specific consent of the congregation’s district president.

(c) Each other granting office or agency may also adopt policies and criteria approved by the Synod’s Board of Directors to assure that the office or agency’s unique needs are met. A recognized service organization respects the authority of Synod’s districts. A recognized service organization operating within a geographical district, or with a congregation of a non-geographical district, accepts and agrees to facilitate the ecclesiastical oversight of the respective district’s president over the organization’s activities within his district. The overseeing district president shall report unresolved doctrinal and practical concerns to the Synod mission office granting status.

(d) A recognized service organization operating domestically respects the role of districts in mission planning. A recognized service organization shall pursue church planting or establishment of preaching stations/missions only after consulting with and obtaining the concurrence of the geographical district’s president and board or committee responsible for missions.

(de) Operating with freedom and self-determination in its mission independent of control by the Synod, a recognized service organization also operating internationally agrees to inform, seek the counsel of, and cooperate with the Office of International Mission in its international work and respects protocol documents that may exist between The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and her partner churches that have been made available to the recognized service organization.

(f) Each recognized service organization shall be required to give its assurance in its governing documents that recognition as a service organization is not an endorsement by the Synod or a guarantee of financial responsibility for the debts and obligations of the organization or for services provided or offered, and be it further

Resolved, That Bylaw 1.2.1 be amended to include a definition of ecclesiastical oversight, as follows:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

1.2.1 The following definitions are for use in understanding the terms as used in the Bylaws of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod:

(i) Ecclesiastical oversight: The responsibility, primarily of district presidents, to monitor; to make inquiry and receive a response thereto; to make suggestions; to bring concerns to the attention of a higher authority, namely the Synod status granting office, as relates specifically to the ecclesial relations of a recognized service organization operating within his district, and the impact and/or reflection of its work on the mission and ministry of the church.

Resolved, That new Bylaws 6.2.2 and 6.2.2.1 be added, renumbering existing Bylaw 6.2.2 as Bylaw 6.2.4, to provide for distinction of three classes of RSO based on the type of work done by the RSO, providing a basis for a positive definition of Synod’s expectations for each, and for a further distinction of ESOs and MSOs regarding their degree of churchly governance and support (and therefore freedom to act in an unconditioned, churchly manner), as follows:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

6.2.2 Policies shall distinguish the three classes of recognized service organization, with criteria, procedures, and benefits appropriate to each, further distinctions being drawn within the categories as needed:

(a) A witness service organization, under the Scriptures and Lutheran Confessions, engages in Word or Word-and-Sacrament ministry (including chaplaincy), religious media/programming, mission society activity, support of specific missions, mission-and ministry training, church worker professional development, church worker care, or other work directly related to the church’s proclamation. A witness service organization is governed solely by Synod (or partner church) congregations or a board comprised solely of members of member congregations of the Synod (or its partner churches).

(b) An educational service organization, under the Scriptures and Lutheran Confessions, operates a Christian school (other than one governed solely by a Synod congregation or congregations), camp (with Christian programming), or the like. (Schools governed solely by Synod congregations, by virtue of their recognition as such by their districts, do not need recognized service organization status and have the rights and responsibilities of parish schools without obtaining recognized service organization status.)

(c) A mercy service organization facilitates the church’s extension of the divine mercy without compromising the church’s scriptural and confessional standards. It does so in areas in which cooperation in externals is possible, in demonstrated coordination and connection with member congregations of the Synod or its partners and, wherever possible, in close proximity to the Word-and-Sacrament ministry of the Synod and/or its partners.

6.2.2.1 Policies of the Board of Directors and the mission boards and offices of the Synod may distinguish, within the educational and mercy service classes (educational service organization and mercy service organization), tiers of status recognizing different degrees of
churchly governance and support and commensurate expectations for performance of activities and realization of mutual benefits.

6.2.4. According to policies …

and be it further

Resolved, That Bylaw 6.2.2.2 be added, to make explicit Synod’s expectations of an RSO allowed to call a rostered worker of the Synod, and to provide enhanced protection for such called workers, as follows:

PRESEN/PROPOSED WORDING

6.2.2.2 The right to extend a Synod-recognized, regular call to a rostered worker is afforded to the board of directors of a recognized service organization, provided that:

(a) the board’s composition contains at least the proportion of members of Synod member congregations required by recognized service organization program policies; and
(b) the appropriate district president is properly consulted in the call process; and
(c) the call document is approved by the district president who would assume ecclesiastical supervision of the member as clearly stating that the organization:

(1) expects that the worker will, without compromise or constraint, carry out the ministry for which ordained or commissioned, and to which called, according to the doctrine and practice of the Synod;
(2) agrees to accommodate and encourage the ecclesiastical supervision of the worker by the appropriate district president;
(3) submits, as an exclusive remedy, to the dispute resolution process of the Synod for the resolution of any issues arising under the divine call;
(d) the organization demonstrates to the district president its ability to provide for the reasonable needs of the called worker for the duration of the period of the call.

and be it further

Resolved, That Bylaw 6.2.2.2 be amended to include auxiliaries and RSOS agreeing to use the dispute resolution process to address call-related disputes, as follows:

1.10.2 This procedure is established to resolve, in a God-pleasing manner, disputes that involve as parties, (1) members of the Synod; (2) corporate Synod or an agency of the Synod; (3) members of congregations challenging the procedure used in their eccumunications; (4) Auxiliaries and recognized service organizations that have agreed to address call-related disputes through the dispute resolution system, in regard to such disputes; or (45) members of congregations of the Synod elected or appointed to positions with the LCMS Board of Directors or an agency of the Synod. It shall be the exclusive remedy to resolve such disputes that involve theological, doctrinal, or ecclesiastical issues except those covered under Bylaw sections 2.14–2.17 and except as provided in Bylaw 1.10.3, and shall be binding on all parties. It is applicable whether the dispute involves only a difference of opinion without personal animosity or is one that involves ill will and sin that requires repentance and forgiveness. No person, congregation, or agency to whom or to which the provisions of this dispute resolution process are applicable because of their membership in the Synod may render this procedure inapplicable by terminating that membership during the course of the dispute resolution process.

and be it finally

Resolved, That Bylaws 6.2.3–4 (as the latter was renumbered above) be amended to apply the effects of Synod’s 2010 restructuring, to allow for gradual expansion of the administrative role of districts in the program, to remove unused provisions, and to provide for the development of appropriately scoped policies and of a possible cost recovery model, as follows:

PRESEN/PROPOSED WORDING

6.2.3 Each-granting agency authorized by the Synod Board of Directors’ policy shall adopt policies requiring each recognized service organization to give its assurance in its governing documents that recognition as a service organization is not an endorsement by the Synod or a guarantee of financial responsibility for the debts and obligations of the organization or for services provided or offered. Program administration shall be carried out by the Offices of National and International Mission according to these bylaws, and according to policies and criteria developed by the Synod Board of Directors, mission boards, and mission offices.

(a) The Board of Directors of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod shall adopt common policies and criteria for granting of recognized service organization status by Synod’s mission offices, such policies relating to expectations for the corporate structure and governance of the organizations, statements regarding their legal and corporate independence from the Synod, and the necessary relation of their work to the mission and ministry of the Synod as generally expressed in its Constitution and Bylaws. The Board of Directors shall approve the standard form of agreement to be entered into by the Synod and each recognized service organization.

(b) Each mission board of the Synod shall adopt further policies and criteria, related to its area of responsibility, for granting of recognized service organization status by its respective mission office, such policies relating to the organizations’ alignment with and augmentation of the mission and ministry of the Synod, as the Constitution and Bylaws relate to the board’s area of responsibility and as further expressed in the Synod’s triennial emphases and the board’s specific goals and activities.

(c) Each mission office shall, subject to the above, adopt further policies and criteria, for granting, renewal, and withdrawal of recognized service organization status, and shall develop such instruments as are necessary for coordination with districts.

6.2.4 According Subject to policies adopted by the Synod’s Board of Directors, and the respective mission board, recognized service organization status may be granted by the Office of National Mission, or the Office of International Mission, the boards of the synodwide corporate entities, and other agencies as identified in the Board of Directors’ policy to a service organization (other than an auxiliary) that extends the mission and ministry of the Synod but is not part of the Synod as defined by its Constitution and Bylaws.

(a) Applications for recognized service organization status shall be made to the Office of the Secretary of the Synod for processing according to policies developed by the Synod Board of Directors, which will facilitate the application as follows:

(1) Educational service organization status is evaluated by the geographical district in which the school or camp is located on the basis of an instrument jointly developed by the Office of National Mission and the Council of Presidents. The instrument, completed by the organization and district, is reviewed and approved by the Office of National Mission. The status of schools is managed on a per-site basis.

(2) Witness or mercy service organization status, if the organization’s activity is entirely within a single geographical district, may, if the policies of the Board for National Mission permit, be evaluated by the relevant district on the basis of an instrument developed by the Office of National Mission. The instrument, completed by the organization and district, is...
reviewed, further investigated, if needed, and finally approved by the Office of National Mission. Until and unless such policies and instrument are developed, applications for witness service organization or mercy service organization status shall be handled under (3) below.

(3) Status of all other organizations, and the application therefor, is administered directly by the Office of National or International Mission, as appropriate, with district presidents exercising ecclesiastical oversight of the operations of recognized service organizations within their boundaries.

(b) Within the area of its responsibility and in accordance with the Synod Board of Directors’ policies and criteria developed by the Synod Board of Directors, the respective mission board and office, each granting mission office or agency may shall determine those to which organizations to which recognized service organization status will be granted.

(c) Granting offices may be authorized to set and charge application, renewal, and maintenance fees to recoup the cost of administration, subject to policies set by the Board of Directors of the Synod.

2016 Resolution 4-03B Task Force

Ov. 4-09

To Commend Actions to Synod Boards and Offices to Revitalize Synod’s Recognized Service Organization Program

WHEREAS, Pending approval by the current 2019 Synod convention, the report of the 2016 Resolution 4-03B Task Force on recognized service organizations (RSOs), included in the 2019 Workbook as R-61) provides guidance for revitalization of the program by the appropriate boards and offices of the Synod, and those boards and offices will thus desire to proceed with development of policies and procedures required for the implementation of the report’s recommendations; and

WHEREAS, The 2016 Res. 4-03B Task Force, during the course of its work and at various points in its report, noted opportunities for a number of specific, anticipated, and beneficial action items that will improve the Synod’s RSO program and therefore could be carefully considered, planned, and subsequently implemented by the appropriate boards and offices of the Synod; and

WHEREAS, These anticipated beneficial action items fall outside the direct purview of proposed amendments to Bylaw section 6.2, which have been delineated in a separate overture by the 2016 Res. 4-03B Task Force; therefore be it

Resolved, That The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) Office of National Mission (ONM), Council of Presidents and district staffs, over the 2019–2022 triennium, work together to create, document, and implement standard practices that promote Synodwide uniformity and best practices in: (1) ecclesiastical oversight of RSO relationships with the Church; (2) ecclesiastical supervision of workers called by RSOs; and (3) administration of the program by Synod and districts for the support of RSOs; and be it further

Resolved, That the aforementioned standard practices are developed, consideration be given to the identification of cost-effective means of gathering RSO, congregation, district and Synod representatives together (e.g., in conference, webinar, or other formats) to enhance communication, coordination, collaboration, and cooperation between participants in mission and ministry efforts; and be it further

Resolved, That the ONM consider and implement with the assistance of LCMS Communications an improved RSO “home presence” on the Synod’s website, including but not limited to an effective public-facing RSO search engine and an expanded clarification of the nature of the Synod’s working relationship with RSOs; and be it further

Resolved, That the ONM and LCMS Communications work cooperatively to develop an effective communication plan that highlights the work of RSOs to a wide audience of Synod and RSO stakeholders; and be it further

Resolved, That this aforementioned communication plan include provisions to inform such stakeholders of changes to the RSO program adopted by the 2019 Synod convention, especially during the first six months immediately following the convention; and be it further

Resolved, That this aforementioned communication plan include production of materials by LCMS schools and the RSO office for the use of schools and districts to ease and lend confidence to the transition of association schools off of RSO status and on to district recognition, without loss of benefits, and to ensure that districts are prepared properly to recognize association schools as those schools strictly governed by multiple LCMS member congregations; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod’s districts and congregations be encouraged to continue to learn about the resources and opportunities available for the enhancement of their mission and ministry efforts through the work of RSOs; and be it finally

Resolved, That The 67th Regular Convention of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod joyfully give thanks to God for the work of RSOs in carrying out and enhancing the mission of the Church.

2016 Resolution 4-03B Task Force

Ov. 4-10

To Encourage Every Sunday Communion

WHEREAS, The Sacrament of Holy Communion was celebrated every Lord’s day during the first centuries of Christendom; and

WHEREAS, The opportunity to receive the Lord’s Supper each Lord’s day was a reality cherished by Dr. Martin Luther and set forth clearly with high esteem in the confessional writings of the Evangelical Lutheran Church (Article XXIV of the Augsburg Confession and Article XXIV 1 of the Apology of the Augsburg Confession); and

WHEREAS, Our Synod’s 1983 Commission on Theology and Church Relations document on the Lord’s Supper (p. 28) and our Synod’s 1986 [1991] translation of Luther’s Small Catechism both remind us that the Scriptures place the Lord’s Supper at the center of worship (“And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.” [Acts 2:42]; “On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul talked with them, intending to depart on the next day, and he prolonged his speech until midnight.” [Acts 20:7]); “When you come together, it is not the Lord’s Supper that you eat.” [1 Cor. 11:20]; “For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread ... [1 Cor. 11:23] “), and not as an appendage or an occasional extra, and that the new 2017 edition of Luther’s
Small Catechism and Explanation also notes the importance of receiving the Sacrament and its centrality in worship (q. 358, p. 329; q. 374 [E], pp. 344–5); and

WHEREAS, The English District in convention passed Resolution 91-6-02, “To Urge Weekly Communion” (adopted 6/8/91), which then went as an overture to the 1995 convention of The Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod and was adopted (Resolution 2-08A), encouraging an every Sunday celebration of the Holy Supper of our Lord’s Body and Blood; therefore be it

Resolved, That the English District command our congregations and pastors who have instituted weekly Communion in accordance with district Res. 91-6-02, and continue to encourage them in this common practice; and be it finally

Resolved, That this resolution be sent to the 2019 Synod convention encouraging its pastors and congregations to study the scriptural, confessional, and historical witness to every Sunday Communion with a view toward recovering the opportunity for receiving the Lord’s Supper each Lord’s day.

English District

Ov. 4-11

To Encourage the Study and Practice of Every Sunday Communion by All Congregations of the Synod/District

WHEREAS, The practice of celebrating the Lord’s Supper at each Sunday worship service continued in the Lutheran church from the time of the Reformation until the rise of rationalism in the church; and

WHEREAS, The Synod has been encouraging congregations to study the practice for many years; and

WHEREAS, The Lord’s Supper is an element of the Means of Grace, i.e., Word and Sacrament, and is therefore appropriate in Lutheran worship at every primary worship service; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Minnesota North District again encourage every congregation to study the practice of every Sunday Communion and move towards the practice of every Sunday Communion in every congregation; and be it further

Resolved, That the Minnesota North District memorialize the 2019 Synod convention to encourage every district, circuit, and congregation to study the practice of every Sunday Communion and move towards the practice of every Sunday Communion in every congregation.

Minnesota North District

Ov. 4-12

To Reaffirm Formula of Concord Article X and the Freedom to Practice Certain Church Ceremonies

WHEREAS, Certain Christian practices and ceremonies are true matters of adiaphora (Formula of Concord [FC] X); and

WHEREAS, The Formula of Concord (FC) declares that that “the congregation of God of every place and every time has, according to its circumstances, the good right, power, and authority in such matters that are truly adiaphora to change, to diminish, and to increase them, without thoughtlessness and offense, in an orderly and becoming way, as at any time it may be regarded most profitable, most beneficial, and best for preserving good order, and the edification of the Church,” (FC Solid Declaration [SD] X 9); and

WHEREAS, Even in such matters which are truly adiaphora, when they are in effect banned, whether by violence or by cunning, to the detriment of the true worship of God, we must not yield to our adversaries (FC SD X 10); and

WHEREAS, Among these matters of true adiaphora are genuflecting, and the elevation of the elements of Holy Communion at their consecration; and

WHEREAS, Genuflecting is a laudable and biblical act of adoration (cf. Matt. 2:11); and

WHEREAS, The elevation of the elements has universally been regarded as a confession of the real and substantial presence of the body and blood of Christ in the Sacrament, one which Blessed Martin Luther desired to be retained, “We do not want to abolish the elevation, but retain it because it goes well with the German Sanctus and signifies that Christ has commanded us to remember him,” (Luther’s Works 53:82); therefore be it

Resolved, That The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) reaffirm in accordance with FC X on adiaphora that ceremonies such as genuflecting and the elevation of the elements of Holy Communion at their consecration are permissible and even laudable Christian practices for “the edification of the Church” (FC SD X 9); and be it further

Resolved, That the LCMS reaffirm in accordance with its congregational polity that when a local host congregation’s pastor desires to genuflect or to elevate the elements while presiding at a convention of the Synod or district or a Synod or district conference, he is free to do so; and be it finally

Resolved, That the LCMS reaffirm and confess: “We also believe, teach and confess that at a time of confession, when the enemies of God’s Word want to suppress the pure doctrine of the Holy Gospel, God’s entire church, indeed, every single Christian, but especially the ministers of the Word, as the directors of the community of God, is bound by God’s Word to confess the doctrine freely and openly. They are bound to confess every aspect of pure religion, not only in words, but also in works and actions. In this case, even in adiaphora, they must not yield to the adversaries or permit these adiaphora to be forced on them by their enemies whether by force or cunning, to the detriment of the true worship of God and the introduction and sanction of idolatry. For it is written: ‘For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery’ (Gal. 5:1). ‘Yet because of false brothers secretly brought in—who slipped in to spy out our freedom that we have in Christ Jesus, so that they might bring us into slavery—to them we did not yield in submission even for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel might be preserved for you.’ (Gal. 2:4–5)” (FC SD X 10–11).

Saint Paul
Hamel, IL

Ov. 4-13

To Reaffirm Our Encouragement for the Use of Approved Synod Worship Materials in Missouri Synod Congregations

WHEREAS, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) has three primary official hymnals, to wit, The Lutheran Hymnal of

2019 Convention Workbook
1941, Lutheran Worship of 1982, and Lutheran Service Book of 2006, arguably among the finest Lutheran hymnals in the English language, and containing multiple liturgical settings for worship and hundreds of hymns appropriate for use in Lutheran worship; and

Whereas, These hymnals admit themselves of a variety of modes of presentation, such as being printed out and projected on a screen where the use of the individual books is not desired; and

Whereas, The Synod has expressed the desire for at least minimal consistency from congregation to congregation in worship and has previously encouraged the use of the approved hymnals in public worship; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Minnesota North District reaffirm its encouragement for the use of Synod-approved worship materials in LCMS congregations and memorialize the Synod to likewise reaffirm its encouragement of the use of these materials in every congregation for public worship.

Minnesota North District

Ov. 4-14

To Study Responsible Stewardship of the Mysteries of God, That is, “Closed Communion”

Whereas, Our Lord Jesus Christ has instituted the Sacrament of the Altar (Matt. 26:26–28, Mark 14:22–24, Luke 22:19–20 and 1 Cor. 11:23–26); and

Whereas, Pastors have been called to be stewards of the Mysteries of God, and it is required that they be found faithful, (1 Cor. 4:1–2); and

Whereas, Dr. Francis Pieper wrote, “Auch die apostolische Kirche praktizierte nicht ‘open,’ sondern ‘closed’ communion” (Francis Pieper, Christliche Dogmatik [St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1920], III:444), translated, “So the apostolic Church did not practice ‘open’ but ‘closed’ communion” (the term “closed communion” is the longstanding usage of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) to denote responsible stewardship of the Mysteries of God); therefore be it

Resolved, That the Southern Illinois District convention direct its circuit visitors to lead a study of the following theses in their pastoral conferences (winkels) in the next triennium; and be it

further

Resolved, That the Southern Illinois District submit these theses to the 2019 Synod convention for study:

THESSES ON THE RESPONSIBLE STEWARDSHIP OF THE MYSTERIES OF GOD—THAT IS, CLOSED COMMUNION.

Part I: Definitions

Thesis 1: A sin is any thought, word, or deed that is contrary to the will of God. (Discussion: Axiom. I John 3:4)

Thesis 2: There is a sin that leads to death (mortal sin) and a sin that does not lead to death (venial sin). (Discussion: I John 5:16–17)

Thesis 3: In Lutheran theology (as opposed to Roman Catholic theology) it is not the inherent sinfulness of an act that distinguishes a mortal sin from a venial sin, but rather the intent of the subject. (Discussion: See below under #4.)

Thesis 4: To wit, in Lutheran theology a mortal sin is defined as an ongoing, willful sin that is committed against better knowledge. Such sins will eventually kill faith and drive the Holy Spirit away. A venial sin is a sin committed by a Christian out of weakness, lack of knowledge, error, or misunderstanding. (Discussion: Smalcald Articles III.3.43. It is, accordingly, necessary to know and to teach that when holy men, still having and feeling original sin, also daily repenting of and striving with it, happen to fall into manifest sins, as David into adultery, murder, and blasphemy, that then faith and the Holy Ghost has departed from them [they cast out faith and the Holy Ghost]. For the Holy Ghost does not permit sin to have dominion, to gain the upper hand so as to be accomplished, but represses and restrains it so that it must not do what it wishes. But if it does what it wishes, the Holy Ghost and faith are [certainly] not present. For St. John says, 1 John 3:9: Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin, ... and he cannot sin. And yet it is also the truth when the same St. John says, 1:8: If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.)

Thesis 5: Holy Communion was instituted by our Lord for the forgiveness of sins. (Discussion: Words of Institution)

Thesis 6: Repentance and the forgiveness of sins are connected by an insoluble connection. (Discussion: Luke 24)

Thesis 7: Christians will never be completely free from venial sin in this life. (Discussion: Romans 7)

Thesis 8: Repentance means to turn away.

Thesis 9: A Christian living in the grace of the Lord is constantly repenting of his sins and striving to follow the Lord more faithfully, even as he stumbles to struggle against the weakness of his flesh and the original sin which inheres therein. (Discussion: Romans 7)

Thesis 10: Clearly, people living in a state of moral sin should not commune. (Discussion: 1 Cor. 11:29)

Thesis 11: People who cannot properly examine themselves should not commune. (Discussion: 1 Cor. 11:29)

Thesis 12: All Christians struggle with venial sin and stumble due to weakness; this weakness is a proper object of Christian self-examination. That is, it is consciously felt, recognized, lamented, and repented of by the Christian. (Discussion: Romans 7)

Thesis 13: Christians may also fall into venial sin through misunderstanding, confusion, or error. By its very definition, venial sins stemming from such a source resist self-examination: they are the “speck in the eye” which one cannot remove oneself.

Thesis 14: It is a Christian duty to call fellow believers to repentance when they fall into sin. (Discussion: Matthew 18; Luke 6)

Thesis 15: When a fellow Christian falls into sin through error, confusion, or misunderstanding, it is therefore the duty of his fellow believers to correct him gently, lovingly, and in accordance with the Word of God. (Discussion: Gal. 6:1)

Part II: Exclusion from the Lord’s Table within the Congregation

Thesis 16: For example, an otherwise faithful Lutheran could, through confusion and misunderstanding, fall into the sin of bigamy by thinking that he could take two wives as the patriarchs in the Old Testament did.

Thesis 17: In fact, such a case did happen in the 16th century with the bigamy of Landgrave Philip of Hesse.
Thesis 18: Philip was unable to examine himself in this regard since he erroneously believed that his bigamy was God-pleasing.

Thesis 19: An LCMS pastor confronted with such a parishioner who is sinning through misunderstanding and confusion has the duty to inform the conscious of such a parishioner with the Word of God and call him to self-examination and repentance.

Thesis 20: Such a call to self-examination and repentance, and the actual repentance of the individual must precede communing at the Lord’s table. (Discussion: #11)

Thesis 21: Therefore, there are cases in which faithful pastors will exclude even members of the congregation from the Lord’s Table.

Thesis 22: Sometimes this exclusion will occur due to public, willful, mortal sin; yet sometimes it will occur due to venial sin committed out of error or misunderstanding.

Part III: Exclusion from the Lord’s Table of those outside the congregation who are ensnared in sin through misunderstanding and error.

Thesis 23: The Baptism of infants is in accordance with the will of God. (Discussion: Acts 2; Colossians 2; Matthew 28)

Thesis 24: The forbidding of infants from Baptism is contrary to the will of God. (Discussion: Converse of #23)

Thesis 25: Thinking that God forbids infants from Baptism is a sin. (Discussion: #1; #23)

Thesis 26: One sort of venial sin is a sin of error, or misunderstanding, or lack of knowledge. (Discussion: Galatians 2)

Thesis 27: A sin committed out of error, or misunderstanding, or lack of knowledge is still sinful. (Discussion: #1)

Thesis 28: A sin committed out of error, or misunderstanding, or lack of knowledge is a venial sin. (Discussion: #4)

Thesis 29: A Baptist sins in thinking that God forbids infants from Baptism. (Discussion: #1; #24–25; #27)

Thesis 30: Such a sin is venial and will not imperil the salvation of said Baptist. (Discussion: #2; #4; #28)

Thesis 31: An LCMS pastor has the duty to call such a Baptist to repentance. (Discussion: #14)

Thesis 32: Since a Baptist commits the sin of thinking that God forbids infants from Baptism out of error, misunderstanding, or lack of knowledge, he is incapable of properly examining himself. (Discussion: #13)

Thesis 33: Therefore, a Baptist should not commune. (Discussion: #11; #19)

Thesis 34: It is wrong to lead others into error, and in fact, one shares in the errors of the other if one thus leads another. (Discussion: Ezekiel 3)

Thesis 35: An LCMS pastor should not ordinarily commune a Baptist. (Discussion: #11; #31–34; 1 Cor. 10:17)

Thesis 36: In the above, one can replace “Baptist” with “Roman Catholic,” and “forbids infants from Baptism” with “thinks the Pope is infallible.”

Thesis 37: Therefore, an LCMS pastor should not commune a Roman Catholic. (Discussion: #35)

Thesis 38: In fact, one can replace any confessional group with the particular doctrinal error of that confessional group (Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and women’s ordination; Presbyterians and a denial of the real presence; Eastern Orthodox and prayer to the saints, etc.).

Thesis 39: Therefore, a Lutheran pastor should not ordinarily commune anyone who adheres to a false confession, but rather has the duty to lovingly inform them of what the Word of God says and call them to repent of their error and believe it. (Discussion: #14; #35; #38)

Thesis 40: The practice of closed communion serves faithful pastoral care by communicating the importance of adhering to biblical teaching.

Thesis 41: This practice is, in fact, followed by nearly all Christians, including the Roman Catholic church, Eastern Orthodox church, confessional Lutherans, and other confessional protestants.

Part IV: Pastoral Exceptions

Thesis 42: As the motivation for this practice of closed communion is love for the neighbor and concern for his highest good, so also there will be pastoral exceptions to this generally holding practice when the highest good of the neighbor dictates.

Thesis 43: For example, the Roman Catholic church’s rule in this regard is as follows: “If the danger of death is present or other grave necessity, in the judgment of the diocesan bishop or the conference of bishops, Catholic ministers may licitly administer these sacraments to other Christians who do not have full communion with the Catholic church, who cannot approach a minister of their own community and on their own ask for it, provided they manifest Catholic faith in these sacraments and are properly disposed” (Codex Iuris Canonici [CIC] 844 § 4).

Thesis 44: This is substantially similar to the teaching of the first president of the Missouri Synod: “The Holy Supper is one of the marks, one of the banners of the church, one of the seals of the church’s doctrine and faith (see Rom. 4:11; 1 Cor. 10:21; Ex. 12:48). In whichever church one receives the Holy Supper, one is confessing that church and its doctrine. There cannot be a more inward, brotherly fellowship than that into which one enters with those in whose fellowship he receives the holy Supper. … Even one who confesses the Real Presence cannot ordinarily, except in the case of death, be admitted if he is and wants to remain, not a member of our orthodox church, but rather a Roman Catholic, Reformed, so-called Evangelical or Unionist, Methodist, Baptist, in short, a member of an erring fellowship. For the Sacrament, as it is a seal of faith, is also the banner of the fellowship in which it is administered” (C.F.W. Walther, Pastoral Theology [New Haven, MO: Christian News, 1995], 110–111, 149).

Part V: Suggestions for Pastoral Exceptions

Thesis 45: When a pastor feels that a pastoral exception to the ordinary practice of excluding Christians from the Lord’s Table who are ensnared in sin through misunderstanding, error, or lack of knowledge, he does well to first discuss this with his ecclesiastical supervisor.

Thesis 46: Failing this prior discussion, for example when circumstances force a decision upon a pastor in short order, the pastor does well to brief his ecclesiastical supervisor after the fact and seek his counsel on how to move forward.
Ov. 4-15

To Adhere To, Teach, and Confess a Faithful Practice of Close(d) Communion

Preamble

In 1967 The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod in convention introduced what all would probably call a safe resolution regarding the Synod’s official practice of close(d) Communion. The exception in 1967 Resolution 2-19 was introduced as an “emergency” situation which was either explained or broadened to include “special cases of pastoral care.” The exception read: “That pastors and congregations of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, except in situations of emergency and in special cases of pastoral care, commune individuals of only those synods which are now in fellowship with us.”

It is important to note that in 1967 the Synod was dealing with a unified understanding of close(d) Communion: it was to “commune individuals of only those synods which are now in fellowship with us.” That resolution spoke of exceptions to this rule. A shift took place in Synod when in 1986 Res. 3-08 the exception was sealed within the understanding of close(d) Communion itself. The use of “emergency” was abandoned: “That the pastors and congregations of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod continue to abide by the practice of close communion, which includes the necessity of exercising responsible pastoral care in extraordinary situations and circumstances.” No longer were exceptions deemed “exceptions” to the rule. Instead the “rule” was defined by “the necessity of exercising responsible pastoral care in extraordinary situations and circumstances.” With the idea of “emergency” left behind, the altar was opened for the “extraordinary” by “necessity.” One can see how important for the future unity of the church would be the understanding of “extraordinary situations and circumstances.”

By the 1990s it was obvious that divisions in practice were the cause of rising concern. The following resolve from 1995 Res. 3-08 (emphasis added) illustrates this concern:

Resolved, That the Synod reaffirm 1986 Res. 3-08, “that the pastors and congregations of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod continue to abide by the practice of close Communion, which includes the necessity of exercising responsible pastoral care in extraordinary situations and circumstances,” and beseech one another in love to remember that “situations of emergency and special cases of pastoral care” or “extraordinary situations and circumstances” are, by their nature, relatively rare, ...

The Synod’s practice of close(d) Communion was more and more coming down to the local pastor’s understanding of “extraordinary situations and circumstances” apart from denominational distinctions based on doctrine. A former unified practice prior to 1967 has bifurcated into a hundred or a thousand different ones. For many this brings the very question of “Synod” to the fore.

What has happened in regard to Synod’s Communion practice is that what was a matter of doctrine with a “pastoral care” concern as expressed in 1967 has become, at least since 1986, a matter of pastoral care with a doctrinal concern. Sadly, lost in the exchange is the understanding that the pastor who limits the distribution of the Lord’s Supper only to those with whom one shares doctrinal unity is exercising true “pastoral care” for Christ’s flock as well as for the outsider. Opening up Communion to those with whom one does not share doctrinal unity or being lax in the administration brings confusion to the flock, fails to hallow God’s name, and endangers the outsiders who commune. On the last point any discussion of being “pastoral” with regard to the Eucharist must take seriously St. Paul’s warning regarding those who “do not discern the body” (1 Cor. 11:29). On this point John Stephenson’s words describing the Sunday morning reality are significant:

... even if non-Lutheran visitors do read the bulletin’s communion invitation, is it likely that they understand what is written there? To begin with, a generic visitor is unlikely to concede that a Lutheran pastor may supervise the content of his faith. Moreover, teaching the real presence involves hours of catechesis, discussion back and forth, and the assimilation of the true faith in the setting of the worshipping congregation. Should a casual visitor sign a communion registration card phrased in an orthodox way, it is unlikely that he has any idea what is meant and even if the registration of a non-Lutheran communicant is to take the form of a personal announcement to the pastor, can we really take seriously as confession of faith a smile and a nod when the pastor, a few minutes before the Divine Service begins, says something about the bread and wine being the Lord’s body and blood? Pieper’s statement about confession of the real presence as a precondition for admission to the sacrament contains the law’s accusing bite: “This provision excludes the Christians in Reformed denominations.” (John Stephenson, “Admission to the Lutheran Altar: Reflections on Open versus Close Communion,” Concordia Theological Quarterly 53, No.1–2 [January-April 1989] 44, emphasis added).

Since the Reformation era to participate in the Eucharist at a Lutheran altar one had to be Lutheran: hold to the confession of the Lord’s Supper as set forth in the Augsburg Confession and reiterated in the Smalcald Articles (SA) and the Formula of Concord (FC). In the Smalcald Articles, Martin Luther drew a deliberate line between Lutherans and papists as well as one between Lutherans and Martin Bucer (and all who were sympathetic to Zwingli). Thus, Luther’s refusal to commune with Ulrich Zwingli for the sake of the truth and Christ’s holy name affected the followers of Zwingli as well. In the Formula of Concord the discussion of the Lord’s Supper [FC Ep/SD VII] must be understood in a similar way with respect to the crypto-Calvinists and their adherents. The approach toward the followers of such false teachers is addressed plainly in the preface to the Book of Concord: “It is furthermore to be hoped that when they are rightly instructed in this doctrine, they will, through the guidance of the Holy Spirit, turn to the infallible truth of the divine Word and unite with us and our churches and schools. Consequently, the responsibility devolves upon the theologians and ministers duly to remind even those who err ingenuously and ignobly of the danger to their souls and to warn them against it, lest one blind person let himself be misled by another” (ed. Tappert, p. 12, emphasis added).

Such is the loving, pastoral purpose of close(d) Communion. Moments before the Sunday morning service is hardly an adequate time for the necessary indoctrination, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness of the erring. And without these there is only danger present for “even those who err ingenuously,” who do not discern the Lord’s body. Every minister of the Sacrament of the Altar must remember that that is the “extraordinary” situation and circumstance that requires a close(d) Communion, which overshadows every other situation begging for the inclusion of the adherents of false teachers at the Lord’s Supper.

WHEREAS, Oneness at the altar presupposes oneness in faith and doctrine (Acts 2:42), with the result that close(d) Communion

2019 Convention Workbook
requires that the pastors and congregations of the Synod commune individuals of only those synods which are now in altar and pulpit fellowship with us; and

WHEREAS, In the Holy Supper of Our Lord, in the blessed cup Jesus gives the communicant His own precious blood poured out for the forgiveness of all on the cross, which to receive in faith is to enter the very Holy of Holies of God but which to fail to discern brings judgment (Greek: krima) through the defiling touch of the Most Holy blood by which one was sanctified; and

WHEREAS, The opening up of the altar of the Lord among us to the adherents of false teachers on the Lord’s Supper even in “extraordinary situations and circumstances” fails to realize and proclaim the truly “extraordinary” blessing, on the one hand, and “extraordinary” judgment (krima), on the other, of partaking of Jesus’ true body and blood with faith and without faith, respectively, in Jesus’ Words of Institution as summarized in Luther’s Small Catechism; therefore be it

Resolved, That out of love and pastoral concern the pastors of the Synod warn the adherents of false teachers on the Eucharist by withholding Communion from them until they are instructed and unite with us (including Roman Catholics, Reformed, Presbyterian, Baptist, Methodist, Anglican Christians, etc. as well as members of erring Lutheran bodies such as the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America); and be it further

Resolved, That we recognize the necessity of both a professed and functional close(d) Communion practice, so that only communicant members of the host congregation and those visitors who are members of congregations in fellowship with the host congregation and who have on that basis received permission from the pastor to partake of the Supper should be admitted, realizing that

A church’s communion practice is functionally open when the determination of who is an appropriate recipient (and not merely a “worthy” recipient) is left exclusively in the hands of the individual contemplating eating and drinking, and when the church’s concern is limited to an individual’s worthiness without further consideration of that person’s confession. In other words, professed agreement with the idea of closed communion is irrelevant, if actual practice leaves it up to individuals to determine whether they should commune. (Joel Biermann, “Step Up to the Altar: Thinking about the Theology and Practice of the Lord’s Supper,” Concordia Theological Quarterly 72, No. 2 [2008] 153); (emphasis added).

and be it further

Resolved, That exceptions involving pastoral care be limited to those who come from or have been brought up in an orthodox Lutheran context, including: Lutheran “prodigals” returning to the true faith with repentant heart, members of other orthodox Lutheran bodies beyond our fellowship (including the Evangelical Lutheran Synod, Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod, and certain international orthodox Lutheran bodies), as well as other persons for whom the pastor has assumed pastoral responsibility and to whom he is ministering privately; and be it finally

Resolved, That to the glory of God in Christ Jesus such practice be publicly adhered to, taught and confessed by all in keeping with Constitution Article VI 2, Conditions of Membership, “Renunciation of unionism and syncretism of every description ...”

Trinity
Tryon, NC

Ov. 4-16

To Encourage the Study of the Doctrine of Closed Communion and Faithful Practice in All Congregations

WHEREAS, The issue of the practice of closed vs. open communion continues to be controversial among us in the Minnesota North District and the broader Synod; and

WHEREAS, The conventions of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod have addressed this issue in 2007 Resolution 3-09, “To Address Administration of the Lord’s Supper,” and in 2016 Resolution 5-15, “To Standardize Admission to the Lord’s Supper”; and

WHEREAS, Synod President Matthew C. Harrison and seminary professor John T. Pless have recently published a jointly edited book of essays titled Closed Communion? Admission to the Lord’s Supper in Biblical Lutheran Perspective (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2017) for the edification of the Synod; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Minnesota North District encourage all congregations to study these additional and encouraging essays; and be it further

Resolved, That the Minnesota North District memorialize the Synod to also encourage the study by all members of Synod with an eye to unified confession and practice with regard to the administration of the Lord’s Supper.

Minnesota North District

Ov. 4-17

To Care for the Members of the Body of Christ Through Fraternal Communication

WHEREAS, Though many members, we are all in body in Christ (Rom. 12:5); and

WHEREAS, We are gathered in over 6,000 congregations in our Synod; all of these congregations matter, and every member of the body of Christ matters; and

WHEREAS, An absent member is a missing member of the body of Christ and the loss is felt by all of those in the body; and

WHEREAS, For the sake of pastoral care, for good order, for church discipline, and as a matter of fraternity in the body of Christ, the shepherds called to serve each of these congregations need and ought to know when their absent members are regularly attending other congregations, or even have transferred to other congregations; and

WHEREAS, It sometimes happens that individuals fail to take the appropriate steps to transfer their membership from one congregation to another; therefore be it

Resolved, That as a matter of Christian love for the individual concerned, for the prior congregation and pastor, and for the receiving congregation, each pastor in the Synod seek to follow these practices in dealing with members of another congregation of the Synod who regularly attend services or seek pastoral care outside their home congregation:

1. To speak with the individual and ascertain why the individual is not attending services and seeking pastoral care within the body of the home congregation;
2. Promptly to notify the pastor of the home congregation to advise the home pastor of the situation and determine if any disciplinary or other spiritual care situation exists, giving due respect to the discipline of the home congregation if such exists;

3. Where the individual cannot adequately be cared for by the home congregation (e.g., the individual has moved a significant distance), to encourage the individual to transfer membership to the receiving congregation; and

4. If an individual seeks transfer of membership, to confirm that the individual is a member in good standing of the home congregation, and to ensure that the individual properly requests transfer from the home congregation prior to taking the individual into membership at the receiving congregation;

and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod President communicate the foregoing steps through appropriate resources throughout the Synod.

Saint John’s, Chicago, IL; St. Paul, Brookfield, IL

Ov. 4-18

To Publish Recommended Steps in, and to Study, Orderly Transfers

WHEREAS, The transfer of baptized and communicant members from one congregation to another does not have a standardized process or form to be used by the member congregations of the Synod in terms of who is to initiate a request for a transfer of membership or guidelines for the processes in member congregations (which may follow various protocols with varied infrastructure); and

WHEREAS, A rite for the transfer and reception of baptized and communicant members is included in the agenda reviewed and approved by the Synod; and

WHEREAS, It is good to do things decently and in order (1 Cor. 14:40); therefore be it

Resolved, That the Synod direct the Council of Presidents (COP) to publish recommended steps in the transfer process as well as printed and/or electronic forms for the orderly transfer of baptized and communicant members from one congregation to another; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod direct the COP to provide a study regarding such issues as:

- situations in which the transfer and reception of members might be a cause of offense between congregations and pastors if the understanding of “in good standing” and the exercise of church discipline is not held and practiced in concord, and
- the common misunderstanding regarding the difference between being a communicant member of a congregation of the Synod and being a member of the Synod.

Saint John’s, Chicago, IL; St. Paul, Brookfield, IL

Ov. 4-19

To Reaffirm the Use of the Names Lutheran and The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod by All Congregations and Missions of the Districts and/or Synod

WHEREAS, The Synod has in convention (1995 Resolution 3-13A, “To Use the Name Lutheran”) encouraged that all congregations and missions of the Synod use the names Lutheran and The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod in their official documents, names, and materials (bulletins, newsletters, etc.); and

WHEREAS, There continues to be a demonstrated reluctance by some congregations to identify their confession and membership in the Synod by use of these names and titles; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Minnesota North District reaffirm the use of the names Lutheran and The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod by all congregations and missions of the district and/or Synod; and be it further

Resolved, That the Minnesota North District memorialize the 2019 Synod convention to also reaffirm the use of the names Lutheran and The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod by all congregations and missions of its districts and/or Synod.

Minnesota North District

Ov. 4-20

To Work Together in Mission

WHEREAS, It is highly laudable that congregations of the South Wisconsin (SW) District are engaging in domestic and international opportunities to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ; and

WHEREAS, It is desirable and God-pleasing for God’s people to work in unity while carrying out the Lord’s commission in making disciples of all nations; and

WHEREAS, The Church’s response for the sharing of the Gospel of Jesus Christ is founded on the pure teachings of Holy Scripture and the leading in faith by the Holy Spirit; and

WHEREAS, It is good Christian stewardship for those who walk together in Synod to coordinate resources for maximum effect and efficiency as adopted in 2013 Resolution 1-08 of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS); and

WHEREAS, It is a condition of membership in the LCMS that its member congregations renounce unionism and syncretism of every description including not participating in “heterodox tract and missionary activities” (Constitution Article VI 2 c; CCM Opinion 14-2724); therefore be it

Resolved, That congregations and their pastors, circuits, commissioned church workers, ministries, and schools of the SW District support the Synod and district mission endeavors with their time, talent, and treasure; and be it further

Resolved, That congregations and their pastors, circuits, commissioned church workers, ministries, and schools of the SW District communicate any new domestic or international mission, church plant, or school start to the corresponding Synod and district offices and seek their support and guidance in these efforts; and be it further

Resolved, That in keeping with the conditions of membership in Synod, congregations and their pastors, circuits, commissioned church workers, ministries and schools of the SW District refrain
from mission activities with agencies, mission societies, or denomination organizations which are not Lutheran or not in fellowship with the LCMS; and be it further

Resolved, That this convention direct the district staff to work aggressively to increase awareness of its services and resources for congregations and their pastors, commissioned church workers, ministries and schools; and be it further

Resolved, That the mission efforts of the congregations of the SW District and the LCMS be publicized so that others may join the effort or sustain it with prayer, and financial support as well as mission engagement for the expansion of God’s Kingdom; and be it finally

Resolved, That the SW District in convention memorialize the 2019 Synod convention to adopt a similar resolution for all LCMS districts, congregations, and church workers.

South Wisconsin District

Ov. 4-21

To Uphold the Pastoral Office in the Electronic Age

WHEREAS, Those who hold the pastoral office are called to specific congregations to proclaim the Word of God and administer the Sacraments on behalf of those congregations (C.F.W. Walther, Church and Ministry [St. Louis: The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 1987], Ministry Theses VI–VII); and

WHEREAS, Those congregations serve particular geographic areas and not the whole world; and

WHEREAS, A pastor of one orthodox congregation has not been called to teach the Word of God to the members of another orthodox congregation (Augsburg Confession XIV); and

WHEREAS, Social media, self-publishing, e-mail list servers, and blogs are used extensively by many pastors and laity in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod; and

WHEREAS, Many laity do not understand that God has given them a particular pastor and not all pastors; and

WHEREAS, Pastors often give spiritual care and perform various forms of catechesis through these electronic platforms which cross congregational and geographic lines; therefore be it

Resolved, That the pastors of the Synod be encouraged to attend to their particular calls, giving the gifts of God to their sheep, and not those whom God has entrusted to the care of another pastor; and be it further

Resolved, That members of the congregations of the Synod be encouraged to receive pastoral care and catechesis from their pastors rather than those with whom they may be acquainted on the internet; and be it further

Resolved, That all be encouraged to rejoice in the fact that God sends particular pastors to serve particular flocks; and be it finally

Resolved, That the 2019 convention be memorialized to direct the Commission on Theology and Church Relations to study the challenges and problems posed by the way our clergy and laity use the internet for pastoral care and catechesis and provide guidelines to be considered at the next regular Synod convention.

Grace, Three Forks, MT; Holy Trinity, Belgrade, MT

Ov. 4-22

To Study How to Amend the Practice of Issuing Calls to Positions Not in the Direct Service of the Proclamation of the Gospel and the Administration of the Sacraments

WHEREAS, The Augsburg Confession (AC) V, “The Ministry,” states, “So that we may obtain this faith (that our sins are forgiven for Christ’s sake, in Article IV), the ministry of teaching the Gospel and administering the Sacraments was instituted” (all references from Concordia, The Lutheran Confessions, A Reader’s Edition of the Book of Concord, Second Edition [St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2006], 33); and

WHEREAS, AC XIV, “Order in the Church,” states, “Our churches teach that no one should publicly teach in the Church, or administer the Sacraments, without a rightly ordered call”; and

WHEREAS, “The Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope” (Tr 60), states, “The Gospel assigns those who preside over Churches the command to teach the Gospel [Matt. 28:19], to forgive sins [John 20:23], to administer the Sacraments, and also to exercise jurisdiction”; and

WHEREAS, The Smalcald Articles (III X) teach that “… [the bishops] do not even want to be true bishops, but worldly lords and princes, who will neither preach, nor teach, nor baptize, nor administer the Lord’s Supper, nor perform any work or office of the Church”; and

WHEREAS, The Constitution of the Synod accepts these Confessions as a true and unadulterated statement and exposition of the Word of God; and

WHEREAS, A number of called positions within Synod and its auxiliaries do not require teaching the Word or administering the Sacraments; and

WHEREAS, The practice of issuing calls to positions that are not in the direct service of the proclamation of the Gospel and administration of the Sacraments conflicts with the referenced portions of the Confessions, and creates confusion regarding the nature of the call; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Montana District convention memorialize The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) convention in 2019 to direct the President of Synod to appoint a committee consisting of at least one theological professor from each seminary and one district president to study how the practice of issuing calls (Bylaw 3.11.1) to positions without direct involvement in the proclamation of the Gospel and administration of the Sacraments may be amended to comply with The Confessions; and be it further

Resolved, That by July 30, 2020 this committee make its recommendations to the LCMS Board of Directors (BOD) regarding LCMS practice on the calls it issues; and be it finally

Resolved, That these recommendations, together with the BOD response to the recommendations, be reported to the LCMS convention in 2022.

Montana District
Ov. 4-23

To Provide Clergy for Word and Sacrament Ministry by Designating Synod Positions to Be Filled with Qualified Laity

WHEREAS, As of November 1, 2018 there were 412 pastoral vacancies in the Synod; and

WHEREAS, It is well understood that the Synod pastoral vacancies are increasing due to pastoral retirements and a shortage of graduates from master of divinity programs; and

WHEREAS, Congregations of the Synod need and desire a pastoral shepherd; and

WHEREAS, Acts 6:2 instructs that pastors should not neglect the ministry of the Word of God; and

WHEREAS, The Synod has been blessed with talented and qualified clergy and laity; and

WHEREAS, Only specific functions in the Synod, theologically or by Synod policy, require staffing by Synod clergy; therefore be it

Resolved, That the precious gift of Synod clergy be prioritized for the Word and Sacrament pastoral ministry, ideally in context of the congregation; and be it further

Resolved, That Synod in convention direct the President of the Synod, Board of Directors, and all Synod agencies to designate positions that can be served by laity with the specific intention that said positions be staffed with qualified laity.

Board of Directors
Iowa West District

Ov. 4-24

To Affirm and Celebrate 60 Years of DCE Ministry in the Synod

WHEREAS, Our church body approved Resolution 4-26 at its 1959 convention, which established the office of Director of Christian Education (DCE) in order to “provide additional leadership for the educational program of the congregation”; and

WHEREAS, DCEs comprise the third largest category of rostered workers in our Synod, with almost 1,000 certified DCEs serving in congregations, schools, districts, universities, and other Synod entities; and

WHEREAS, The Scriptures directs the church to teach God’s Word; and

WHEREAS, Research indicates that effective educational practices, like those promoted in the preparation of DCEs in our Synod schools, are significantly correlated to the development of characteristics of faith maturity; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Synod affirm the important work that has been done for our Synod and the church by certified DCEs for the past 60 years; and be it further

Resolved, That we continue to support and celebrate those individuals who are preparing to serve as DCEs and those who are currently serving as DCEs in our Synod.

Educators’ Conference
Kansas District

Ov. 4-26

To Continue the Celebration of the 500th Anniversary of the Reformation, including Commemoration of Events from 1519 through 1522

WHEREAS, 2020 is the 500th anniversary of the publication of Martin Luther’s The Freedom of a Christian, To the Christian Nobility of the German Nation, and On the Babylonian Captivity of the Church, and the contents of these writings that extol the freedom of Christians in the Gospel, the role of the priesthood of the baptized in the church, and the correct understanding of Baptism, the Lord’s Supper, and absolution are pertinent to Christians today; and

WHEREAS, 2021 is the 500th anniversary of Martin Luther’s appearance before the imperial diet of Worms, where he boldly confessed the truth of the Gospel before the emperor of the Holy Roman Empire and the princes thereof, and Martin Luther’s example to speak the truth of the Gospel to secular authorities can serve to “strengthen our faith” (Augsburg Confession XXI); and

WHEREAS, 2022 is the 500th anniversary of the publication of Martin Luther’s translation of the New Testament into German, and the translation of the Bible into the vernacular and the wide distribution of such translations made it possible for Christians to read the Word of God in their language; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Synod and its members give thanks to God that by “the Almighty’s special grace and mercy the teaching of the chief articles of our Christian religion (which had been hideously obscured by human teaching and regulation under the papacy) was purified and elucidated anew on the basis of God’s Word by Dr. Luther, of blessed and holy memory” (Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration, Introduction 1 [Book of Concord, ed. Kolb/Wengert, 524]); and be it further

Resolved, That pastors and congregations are encouraged to study the freedom of Christians in the Gospel, the role of the priesthood of the baptized in the church, and Baptism, the Lord’s Supper, and absolution, using the above-mentioned writings of Martin Luther; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod and its members give thanks to God that by “the Almighty’s special grace and mercy the teaching of the chief articles of our Christian religion (which had been hideously obscured by human teaching and regulation under the papacy) was purified and elucidated anew on the basis of God’s Word by Dr. Luther, of blessed and holy memory” (Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration, Introduction 1 [Book of Concord, ed. Kolb/Wengert, 524]); and be it further

Resolved, That pastors and congregations are encouraged to study the freedom of Christians in the Gospel, the role of the priesthood of the baptized in the church, and Baptism, the Lord’s Supper, and absolution, using the above-mentioned writings of Martin Luther; and be it further
Resolved, That the Synod in convention thanks Lutheran Bible Translators for their work in carrying on Dr. Luther’s precious work of translation and asks the members of Synod to support their work.

Faculty, Concordia Seminary;
Faculty, Concordia Theological Seminary

Ov. 4-27
To Declare April 18, 2021, as “Here I Stand” Sunday and Encourage Multi-Congregation Celebrations

WHEREAS, We are now in the midst of several important half-millennium anniversary dates of important events regarding the Protestant Reformation; and

WHEREAS, The first such event, the 500th anniversary of the nailing of the 95 Theses was a tremendous success, with many congregations of the district and the Synod gathering together for mass worship celebrations; and

WHEREAS, Scripture gives us encouragement with these words: “Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful” (Heb. 10:23); and

WHEREAS, Martin Luther made his “Here I stand” proclamation at the Diet of Worms before the emperor and leading Roman church officials on April 18, 1521; and

WHEREAS, April 18, 2021, is a Sunday and falls two weeks after the celebration of Easter that year; therefore be it

Resolved, That April 18, 2021, be declared “Here I Stand” Sunday throughout The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, its districts, circuits, and congregations; and be it further

Resolved, That these entities be encouraged to gather for worship celebrations to commemorate the event; and be it further

Resolved, That a Synodwide thank-offering be coordinated and collected for that day, to be used toward the continued proclamation of the Gospel throughout the world; and be it finally

Resolved, That our churches and people be encouraged to spend time in prayer, asking the Lord to continue to bless the proclamation of the Gospel.

Florida-Georgia District

Ov. 4-28
To Improve the Clarity of Written Communication

WHEREAS, The heretics, Martin Luther, and Martin Chemnitz have each had a significant impact on the life of the church; and

WHEREAS, Removing the Oxford comma in the paragraph above would identify Luther and Chemnitz as heretics (“the heretics, Martin Luther and Martin Chemnitz”); and

WHEREAS, The agencies of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) do not consistently use the Oxford comma; and

WHEREAS, The Oxford comma is necessary for clarity and precision in written language; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Synod in convention be memorialized to direct Concordia Publishing House, corporate Synod, and all agencies under their direct authority to utilize the Oxford comma in all their publications except when doing so would be a violation of law.

Grace, Three Forks, MT; Holy Trinity, Belgrade, MT

Ov. 4-29
To Thank and Praise God for Concordia Publishing House’s 150th Anniversary

WHEREAS, On September 11, 1869, the Board of Directors of the Synod’s newly created printery met in St. Louis, Missouri, for the very first time; and

WHEREAS, In 1878, the new printer was named Concordia-Verlag, Concordia Publishing House (CPH); and

WHEREAS, Dr. C. F. W. Walther, the first president of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS), dedicated CPH’s first building and prayed the following:

May the Lord always permit all who go in and out of our Concordia Publishing House to walk under His blessing and protection and may He guard it according to His almighty power and goodness from all misfortune and make it a place of blessing, in time and eternity, until the end of days, through Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God and Savior of the world of sinners. Amen.

and

WHEREAS, Over the past 150 years, CPH has served as the Synod’s “publishing arm,” as it is described in the Synod’s Constitution and Bylaws, for the purpose of providing resources that are faithful to the Holy Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions; and

WHEREAS, CPH is the largest confessional Lutheran publishing house in the world and its resources are being used throughout the world in support of the Gospel of Jesus Christ as it is preached, taught, and proclaimed in churches, schools, and homes around the globe; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Synod in convention commend the many resources of its publishing arm to the church workers, congregations, and laity of our church body, urging their widespread and diligent use across the Synod in its churches, schools, and homes; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod in convention recognize CPH as the Synod’s exclusive publishing arm and its provider of choice for all published materials; and be it finally

Resolved, That the convention chaplain lead the convention in the praying of the prayer of C.F.W. Walther at the dedication of CPH and following the Synod in convention rise and sing “Lord, Help us Ever to Retain” (LSB 865) in thanks and praise to almighty God for so richly blessing our Synod with CPH, and seeking His blessing and guidance on its further endeavors.

Board of Directors
Southern Illinois District

Ov. 4-30
To Thank and Praise God for the 10th Anniversary of the Publication of The Lutheran Study Bible

WHEREAS, The Lutheran Study Bible (TLSB) was published in 2009 by Concordia Publishing House; and

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WHEREAS, TLSB is the first study Bible in the English language using entirely new Lutheran notes, helps, and other resources in the history of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS); and

WHEREAS, Hundreds of thousands of copies of TLSB are in print and being used across the globe; and

WHEREAS, TLSB provides a genuine, confessionally faithful Lutheran presentation of the meaning of the Sacred Scriptures; and

WHEREAS, TLSB was developed after close consultation with and includes contributions by pastors, laypersons, and various Lutheran institutions and church bodies from across the world; and

WHEREAS, TLSB is unique in that, unlike any other study Bible available today, TLSB presents justification by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone as the chief teaching of Scripture; properly distinguishes and applies Law and Gospel; emphasizes God’s work through the Means of Grace; functions from a “Scripture alone” point of view and presents a “Scripture interprets Scripture” approach to using the Bible; equips the laity for works of service, with a particular focus on evangelism in their various vocations and callings in life; presents a uniquely Lutheran study Bible that features genuinely Lutheran notes and comments throughout; references to the Lutheran Confessions as contained in the Book of Concord, where appropriate, and provides a special focus on the Small Catechism for helps and explanations, with citations from Martin Luther and many other fathers of the Lutheran and Christian Church; and involved faithful scholars, pastors, teachers, and other church leaders from a wide variety of confessionally Lutheran church bodies worldwide; therefore be it

Resolved, That the LCMS in convention give all thanks and praise to God for the blessing of TLSB; and be it further

Resolved, That the LCMS recognize TLSB as the Synod’s study Bible of choice and therefore recommend it for use by Lutheran pastors, teachers, and other rostered church workers, along with their congregations, schools, and various agencies and entities, and particularly recommend it to Lutheran laity and commend it to them for their reading, study, and edification.

Board of Directors
Southern Illinois District
5. Theology and Church Relations

REPORTS
R1, R1.1, R1.2, R1.3, R10, R12, R15, R58, R59.1–13, R60, R65, R66

OVERTURES

Ov. 5-01

To Recognize Altar and Pulpit Fellowship with Evangelical Lutheran Church in Belgium

Preamble

The Lutheran Church in Belgium goes back to the very beginnings of the Reformation in the 16th century. Many writings of the Reformer Martin Luther were already printed and distributed in Antwerp as early as 1518. However, after the Diet of Worms, opposition to the Reformation gradually grew in Belgium. Persecutions began and many were taken prisoner to die at the stake, burned alive. In 1523 the first two martyrs of the Reformation were executed in Brussels. When Luther heard about this, he wrote his letter to the Christians in the Low Countries (Belgium and the Netherlands or Holland) “Eyn Brief an die Christen ym Nidderlande” and also the hymn “Ein neues Lied wir heben an.”

Just 40 years later, after Luther’s death and the peace of Augsburg, the Reformation became influential again in Belgium, particularly in Antwerp. In 1566 the first Lutheran congregation was organized and recognized by the city magistrates. This was the first Lutheran congregation in the entire region of the Low Countries. One of its pastors was not so unknown—Matthias Illyricus Flacius. Unfortunately, the period of religious freedom in Antwerp was short. In 1585, Antwerp fell to Roman Catholic Spaniards, who all but extinguished Lutheranism and Protestantism in Antwerp. This was one of many battles in the 80 years of religious war between the Dutch and the Spaniards, a war that eventually spread throughout Europe (the Thirty Years War) before its eventual end with the peace of Muenster/Westphalia in 1648. In this treaty almost half of the territory of the Low Countries, including Belgium and the southern part of the Netherlands, remained under a Roman Catholic government. The northern part of the Netherlands was finally free from Spanish dominion and established a Protestant government. After the Fall of Antwerp most of the Lutherans had fled to the north and established the first Lutheran congregations in Amsterdam and other cities. A Calvinistic environment prevailed, however, and Lutheranism would remain a minority church, supported mainly by German merchants.

In 1830, Belgium won its independence and crowned a Lutheran monarch, King Leopold I of Saxe-Coburg. Religious freedom was also guaranteed by the new constitution. Nonetheless, apart from some Scandinavian Seamans missions, it was not until 1939 that a Lutheran congregation would exist anew in Belgium, once again in Antwerp.

The origin of this Antwerp congregation is closely tied together with the life and work of Pastor Lambert Hellings (1889–1956). Reading the New Testament transformed his life. He studied theology and began to work as an evangelist in the suburbs of Antwerp in the early 1930s. Through his friendship with a Norwegian Seamans pastor he became aware of Lutheran theology. He also obtained the address of Concordia Seminary in St. Louis, resulting in other contacts with Lutheran churches in England and France. In 1939 the small free evangelical Lutheran congregation in Antwerp became a member of the French Synod, which later changed its name to the Evangelical Lutheran Church–Synod of France and Belgium.

In 1987 services in the Netherlands started. In 1992 English speaking services in Brussels began. Unfortunately, current work in the Netherlands is temporarily suspended, but the work in Brussels has led to the establishment of a Lutheran congregation: the All Lutheran Church of Brussels. Presently, only services in English are offered.

The desire for independence from the French Synod eventually took shape, since the Synod of France and Belgium was formed by churches in two different countries and contacts were nearly all administrative. In May 2002 the French and Belgium synods became separate entities, but at the same time formed a partnership in order to stress the good relationship that existed between the two churches. In 2004, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Belgium (ELKB), formed by the Antwerp and Brussels congregations, was established. The ELKB is a member of the International Lutheran Council (ILC).

WHEREAS, The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Belgium (ELKB, Evangelisch-Lutherse Kerk in België) has had a long-standing association with The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod dating back to the 1930s; and

WHEREAS, The ELKB was in altar and pulpit fellowship with the Synod when it was a part of the Evangelical Lutheran Church–Synod of France and Belgium; and

WHEREAS, The ELKB cordially separated from the Evangelical Lutheran Church—Synod of France (EEL—SF) in 2002 and became a self-governing church body which was legally recognized in 2004; and

WHEREAS, The ELKB has requested altar and pulpit fellowship with the Synod; and

WHEREAS, The ELKB is in altar and pulpit fellowship with many Synod partner churches; and

WHEREAS, The ELKB accepts all the canonical books of the sacred Scriptures of the Old and of the New Testaments as the infallible, revealed Word of God and the symbolic books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, compiled in the Book of Concord of 1580, as the correct exposition of the sacred Scriptures, and it will not admit any modification to this rule; and

WHEREAS, The 2016 Handbook, Bylaw 3.9.5.2.2(b) says, “When a church body applies for formal recognition of altar and pulpit fellowship with the Synod, such recognition shall be proposed at a convention of the Synod only after the approval of the commission”; and

WHEREAS, The Commission on Theology and Church Relations has examined and approved the doctrine and practice of the ELKB as faithful to Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions, and has proposed the recognition of fellowship between the Synod and the ELKB; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Synod formally recognize the existence of altar and pulpit fellowship between the ELKB and the Synod; and be it further
Resolved, That we acknowledge with gratitude the unity of confession that has been given to our churches under the guidance of the Holy Spirit; and be it further

Resolved, That we give thanks to God for the Lutheran confession of the Gospel, as the ELKB provides; and be it further

Resolved, That we encourage and walk with the ELKB as it proclaims the saving Gospel of Jesus Christ to a lost world; and be it further

Resolved, That we pray for God’s blessings in the coming years on this agreement in the confession of the Gospel that we enjoy as partner churches; and be it finally

Resolved, That in celebration and thanksgiving of this partnership in the Gospel, the convention assembly signify its approval by rising and singing the Doxology.

Commission on Theology and Church Relations

Ov. 5-02

To Endorse Altar and Pulpit Fellowship with Portuguese Evangelical Lutheran Church

Preamble

The Portuguese Evangelical Lutheran Church (IELP, Igreja Evangélica Luterana Portuguesa) was founded by the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Brazil (IELB, Igreja Evangélica Luterana do Brasil). In 1952 the President of the Brazilian District of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, Rev. Rodolpho Hasse, visited Portugal with the intention of introducing a radio program and to explore the possibility of conducting mission work there. The IELB’s 32nd National Convention in 1954 officially authorized the beginning of the mission in Portugal. On July 3, 1958, the first Lutheran congregation was organized in Lisbon. May 28, 1959 marked the foundation of the IELP. Initially, the activities of the IELP were concentrated in the region between Lisbon and Caldas da Rainha. In the 1970s mission efforts were expanded northward within the country of Portugal. At the beginning of the 1990s, the first parish in the region of Porto was established. The IELP currently maintains regular activities in four localities: Mercês (Lisbon), Maia (Porto), Ponte de Lima (North) and Angra do Heroísmo (Açores Island). In 2007 the IELP joined the European Lutheran Conference and the International Lutheran Council.

WHEREAS, The mission efforts of the Brazil District of the Synod and later, the IELB, have led to the establishment of the IELP; and

WHEREAS, The Synod and the IELB are partner church bodies; and

WHEREAS, The IELP is now an independent, self-governing church body; and

WHEREAS, In 2016, President Adalberto Hiller of the IELP recognized that even though the IELP began as the mission work of the Brazil District of the Synod and continued with the support of the IELB (after the IELB was recognized by the Synod as a self-governing partner church), the Synod and IELP had never entered into formal fellowship; and

WHEREAS, President Hiller of the IELP contacted the Synod and requested formal recognition of altar and pulpit fellowship; and

WHEREAS, The IELP accepts all the canonical books of the Sacred Scriptures of the Old and of the New Testaments as the infallible, revealed Word of God and the symbolic books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, compiled in the Book of Concord of 1580 as a correct exposition of the Sacred Scriptures, and it will not admit any modification to this rule; and

WHEREAS, The IELP is in altar and pulpit fellowship with other partner church bodies of the Synod such as the IELB and the Independent Evangelical-Lutheran Church in Europe; and

WHEREAS, The Handbook says, “When a small, formative, emerging confessional Lutheran church body (identified as such by the President of the Synod as chief ecumenical officer) requests recognition of altar and pulpit fellowship with the Synod, after consultation with the Praesidium and approval by the commission, such recognition may be declared by the President of the Synod subject to endorsement of the subsequent Synod convention” (Bylaw 3.9.5.2.2[c]); and

WHEREAS, The Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR) has examined pertinent theological and organizational documents of the IELP and found these documents to be faithful to Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions; and

WHEREAS, Church fellowship has been recognized by the President of the Synod after consultation with the Praesidium and approval by CTCR; therefore be it

Resolved, That we acknowledge with gratitude the unity of confession that has been given to our churches under the guidance of the Holy Spirit; and be it further

Resolved, That we give thanks to God for the Lutheran confession of the Gospel the IELP provides to its country; and be it further

Resolved, That this convention endorse the President of Synod’s recognition of altar and pulpit fellowship between the Synod and the IELP; and be it further

Resolved, That we encourage and walk with the IELP as they proclaim the saving Gospel of Jesus Christ to a lost world; and be it further

Resolved, That we pray for God’s blessings in the coming years on this agreement in the confession of the Gospel that we enjoy as partner churches; and be it finally

Resolved, That in celebration and thanksgiving of this partnership in the Gospel, the convention assembly signify its approval by rising and singing the common doxology.

Commission on Theology and Church Relations

Ov. 5-03

To Recognize Altar and Pulpit Fellowship with Confessional Lutheran Church of South Africa

Preamble

The Confessional Lutheran Church of South Africa (CLCSA) was established as an independent church body in 1989. The church is primarily located in Middelburg, South Africa. The church reports ten congregations and six preaching stations with a total of about 15,000 members. The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod has had a long relationship with this church body and its founding pastor and bishop, Mandla Khumalo, via St. Peter Lutheran Church in Arlington Heights, IL, and more recently through the Michigan District. In 1988 St. Peter Lutheran Church in Arlington Heights, in cooperation with Dr. Robert Preus of Concordia Theological Seminary in Fort Wayne, provided Rev. Khumalo with a Synod seminary education.

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The Synod is in altar and pulpit fellowship with two other church bodies in southern Africa. The first of those churches, the Free Evangelical Lutheran Synod in South Africa (FELSSA) was founded in 1892 to avoid unionistic practices found in Germany. The Synod also is in altar and pulpit fellowship with the Lutheran Church in Southern Africa (LCSA) which was founded as an independent church in 1967 with roots in the missionary work of FELSSA. These two church bodies have maintained friendly relations with the LCSA over the years. It is our prayer that the three church bodies will grow closer to one another.

In 2018, the International Lutheran Council (ILC) welcomed the LCSA into membership.

WHEREAS, The CLCSA formally requested altar and pulpit fellowship with the LCMS in October 2015; and

WHEREAS, The CLCSA accepts all the canonical books of the Sacred Scriptures of the Old and of the New Testaments as the infallible, revealed Word of God. As a correct exposition of the Sacred Scriptures, the CLCSA accepts the symbolic books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, compiled in the Book of Concord of 1580, and it will not admit any modification to this rule; and

WHEREAS, The 2016 Handbook, Bylaw 3.9.5.2.2(b), says, “When a church body applies for formal recognition of altar and pulpit fellowship with the Synod, such recognition shall be proposed at a convention of the Synod only after the approval of the commission”; and

WHEREAS, The Commission on Theology and Church Relations has examined pertinent theological and organizational documents of the CLCSA and found these documents to be faithful to Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions; therefore be it

Resolved, That we acknowledge with gratitude the unity of confession that has been given to our churches under the guidance of the Holy Spirit; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod formally recognize the existence of altar and pulpit fellowship between the CLCSA and the Synod; and be it further

Resolved, That we encourage and walk with the CLCSA as they proclaim the saving Gospel of Jesus Christ to a lost world; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod renew its commitment to work together and cooperate in the mission of the Gospel in South Africa with the CLCSA, FELSSA, and LCSA; and be it further

Resolved, That we pray for God’s blessings in the coming years on this agreement in the confession of the Gospel that the CLCSA and Synod enjoy as partner churches; and be it finally

Resolved, That in celebration and thanksgiving of this partnership in the Gospel, the convention assembly signify its approval by rising and singing the common doxology.

Commission on Theology and Church Relations

Ov. 5-04

To Clarify Status of LCMS Relationships in Sri Lanka

Preamble

The Lanka Lutheran Church was a mission start of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod beginning in 1927, achieving recognition as a self-governing church by the Synod in 2001. In 2001 the Lanka Lutheran Church also became a member of the International Lutheran Council (ILC) and the Lutheran World Federation. The Lanka Lutheran Church was declared defunct by the Sri Lankan government in 2007. The Synod continued to work in Sri Lanka, and the former Lanka Lutheran Church was reconstituted as the legally registered Ceylon Evangelical Lutheran Church (CELC) in 2017. The CELC was inducted as a member of the ILC in 2018 at the same time that the defunct Lanka Lutheran Church was removed from membership. Although not yet ready to be recognized as a self-governing church body, it is expected that, in the years to come, the CELC will apply to be recognized by the Synod as a self-governing partner church body.

WHEREAS, The Lanka Lutheran Church was recognized in 2001 as being in altar and pulpit fellowship with the Synod; and

WHEREAS, The Lanka Lutheran Church ceased to exist as a legal entity in 2007; and

WHEREAS, The Synod has continued its mission work in Sri Lanka that began in 1927 and has assisted in the reorganization of the former Lanka Lutheran Church as the new and legal CELC; and

WHEREAS, The ILC in 2018 removed the Lanka Lutheran Church from its membership and welcomed the CELC into membership; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Synod formally recognize that it is no longer in altar and pulpit fellowship with the now-defunct Lanka Lutheran Church and that it has removed the Lanka Lutheran Church from the roster of church bodies with whom it is in altar and pulpit fellowship; and be it further

Resolved, That the convention give thanks for the Synod’s mission work and the work of the Office of International Mission (OIM) in Sri Lanka; and be it further

Resolved, That the convention and the Synod will continue to pray to the Lord of the harvest for the work being done in Sri Lanka by the CELC; and be it finally

Resolved, That the Synod will continue to support and pray for the work being done by the OIM in Sri Lanka and by the CELC.

Commission on Theology and Church Relations

Ov. 5-05

To Revise Paragraph 3(a) of the Operating Agreement Between the Lutheran Church—Canada and The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

WHEREAS, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) in convention at Indianapolis, Indiana, July 1986, unanimously approved the formation of an autonomous Lutheran Church—Canada (LCC) out of the previous three Synod districts of the LCMS in Canada, namely: The Ontario District, the Manitoba-Saskatchewan District and the Alberta-British Columbia District; and

WHEREAS, A protocol document, titled, “Operating Agreement between Lutheran Church—Canada and The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod,” signed May 1987, was to provide a path for the two separate but interdependent church bodies to govern their relationships going forward; and

WHEREAS, That Operating Agreement has worked fairly well over the thirty years it has been in place, allowing the LCC to become established and standing on its own feet apart from the mothering church. For example, it has been able to graduate from
its two seminaries most if not all the pastors needed to fill its vacancies; and

WHEREAS, In that Operating Agreement, Section 3, Membership Matters, paragraph (a), Congregations, states:

“However, all congregations in Canada shall be regularly encouraged by The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod to join Lutheran Church—Canada as soon as possible, and thereupon to sever their membership in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod… Both church bodies acknowledge that except as set forth in this paragraph, they will neither accept new member congregations located in the country of the other, nor establish or recognize mission or preaching stations in the country of the other, without the mutual consent of the two church bodies.”; and

WHEREAS, Given this wording, the agreement could be understood to restrict LCMS congregations and pastors not only from planting daughter congregations, college/university campus ministry, or even chaplaincy (hospital, police, fire, military), the very ways a congregation of Lutheran Christians would want to be involved locally in mission in Canada; and

WHEREAS, In order to support the new synod and not be in competition with LCC congregations attempting to plant daughter congregations or begin other local efforts at outreach, LCMS congregations in Canada voluntarily agreed to restrict their outreach efforts in accord with the operating agreement. Now that the LCC has been established over these three decades, the time seems to have come for this voluntary restriction to be removed so that LCMS congregations in Canada are able to act locally in such mission efforts in accord with the Scriptures, especially as stifling such mission vision now would seem to be contrary to Scripture even if it works bureaucratically; and

WHEREAS, The only point of discussion that has caused debate between the two Synod presidents over the years has really revolved around a handful of pastors and congregations who have wanted to leave LCC and join English District of the LCMS. This has been interpreted as a violation of paragraph 3(a); LCMS congregations can and are encouraged to join the LCC but it is not allowed for an LCC congregation to go the other way; and

WHEREAS, Those few congregations in Canada that have joined the English District after the formation of the LCC have had a variety of reasons for this change in membership, and have only done so after due process in their voters’ assemblies; and

WHEREAS, This has not radically undermined the Operating Agreement, nor the stability of the LCC, and the East District in particular; and

WHEREAS, The fact that the Operating Agreement paragraph 3(a) specifically mentions that “mutual agreement is required” to “accept new member congregations located in the country of the other” means the two church bodies recognize that such cases might come up as an English District congregation in Canada expanding its ministry with a satellite church; or a mission plant that wants to remain in the English District when it is recognized as a congregation independent of its mother congregation; or an LCC congregation for other than doctrinal reasons decides it wants to join the LCMS. It seems logical that for the incidental happening of these events, partner church bodies as close as the LCMS and LCC should be able to work through this; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Synod in Convention instruct the President of Synod to draft a new paragraph 3(a) with the President of Lutheran Church—Canada, also including in these discussions the East Regional Pastor of LCC and the Presidents of the English District and the SELC District, as well as appropriate staff members. We ask that particular attention be given to these two issues in regard to the current Operating Agreement: the free movement of congregations and pastors between LCMS and LCC in both directions including those now in process, and the ability to plant daughter congregations or other ministries such as chaplaincies freely by LCMS churches; and be it further

Resolved, That this be done in a timely manner and that the LCMS Synod President report to the 2022 Synod convention on progress in this revision; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod in convention reaffirm our desire to seek to continue good fraternal cooperation between our two synods, supporting each other in times of need as well as celebration as we have done over these past 32; and be it finally

Resolved, That the Synod in convention encourage LCMS congregations in Canada to do the same, through such activities as preaching for one another in times of sickness or vacancy and sharing educational opportunities, as together we seek to proclaim Christ Crucified and Risen for a fallen world.

Gethsemane, Windsor, ON; Peace, Windsor, ON; Saint Luke, North York, ON; Circuit 7 (Canada East), English District; Circuit 8 (Canada West), English District

Ov. 5-06

To Amend Bylaw 3.9.5.2.2 Regarding Altar and Pulpit Fellowship with New Church Bodies Formed by Partner Churches

WHEREAS, The first objective of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) is to: “Conserve and Promote the unity of the true faith (Eph. 4:3-6; 1 Cor. 1:10), work through its official structure toward fellowship with other Christian church bodies, and provide a united defense against schism, sectarianism (Rom. 16:17), and heresy”; and

WHEREAS, The President of the Synod is its chief ecumenical officer (Bylaw 3.3.1.1.2) and the Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR) has the responsibility to “assist the President of the Synod at his request in discharging his constitutional responsibilities for maintaining doctrinal integrity as he relates to other church bodies” (Bylaws 3.9.5.2.2); and

WHEREAS, This bylaw requires CTCR approval before a church body may apply “for formal recognition of altar and pulpit fellowship with the Synod” at a Synod convention (Bylaw 3.9.5.2.2 [b]); and

WHEREAS, The President of Synod may declare fellowship with a small, formative emerging confessional Lutheran church body that requests recognition of altar and pulpit fellowship with Synod, after consultation with the Praesidium and approval by the commission, subject to the endorsement of subsequent Synod convention (Bylaw 3.9.5.2.2 [c]); and

WHEREAS, The Board for International Mission may propose at convention a recognition of fellowship with a mission of the Synod that becomes a self-governing church body with the approval of the commission (Bylaw 3.9.5.2.2 [d]); and

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The Commission on Theology and Church Relations shall
assist the President of the Synod at his request in discharging his
constitutio nal responsibilities for maintaining doctrinal integrity as
he relates to other church bodies.

(a) It shall address itself to and evaluate existing fellowship
relations for the purpose of mutual admonition and
encouragement.

(b) When a church body applies for formal recognition of altar
and pulpit fellowship with the Synod, such recognition shall be
proposed at a convention of the Synod only after the approval of
the commission.

(c) When a small, formative, emerging confessional Lutheran
church body (identified as such by the President of the Synod as
chief ecumenical officer) requests recognition of altar and pulpit
fellowship with the Synod, after consultation with the Praesidium
and approval by the commission, such recognition may be
declared by the President of the Synod subject to the endorsement
of the subsequent Synod convention.

(d) When a mission of the Synod applies for formal recognition
as a self-governing partner church, such recognition shall be
proposed at convention of the Synod by the Board for
International Mission with the approval of the commission.

(e) When an entity (e.g., a district, mission, group of
congregations, etc.) of a self-governing partner church is
established as an independent church body in altar and pulpit
fellowship with that partner church body, and subsequently
requests recognition of altar and pulpit fellowship with Synod,
such recognition may be declared by the President of Synod, after
consultation with the Praesidium and approval by the
commission, subject to the endorsement of the subsequent Synod
convention.

Whereas, Partner churches of the Synod may on occasion
amicably reorganize, divide, or release a mission or group of
congregations to become a self-governing, independent
confessional Lutheran church body which, in turn, requests a
recognition of church fellowship with the Synod; therefore be it

Resolved, That the President of Synod, upon the
recommendation of the CTCR, may be empowered to declare
fellowship with a self-governing, confessional Lutheran church
body that is established as a result of the mission efforts or the
reorganization of a confessional Lutheran partner church of the
LCMS; and be it further

Resolved, That Bylaw 3.9.5.2.2 be amended as follows:

Present/Proposed wording

3.9.5.2.2 The Commission on Theology and Church Relations shall
assist the President of the Synod at his request in discharging his
constitutional responsibilities for maintaining doctrinal integrity as
he relates to other church bodies.

(a) It shall address itself to and evaluate existing fellowship
relations for the purpose of mutual admonition and
encouragement.

(b) When a church body applies for formal recognition of altar
and pulpit fellowship with the Synod, such recognition shall be
proposed at a convention of the Synod only after the approval of
the commission.

(c) When a small, formative, emerging confessional Lutheran
church body (identified as such by the President of the Synod as
chief ecumenical officer) requests recognition of altar and pulpit
fellowship with the Synod, after consultation with the Praesidium
and approval by the commission, such recognition may be
declared by the President of the Synod subject to the endorsement
of the subsequent Synod convention.

(d) When a mission of the Synod applies for formal recognition
as a self-governing partner church, such recognition shall be
proposed at convention of the Synod by the Board for
International Mission with the approval of the commission.

(e) When an entity (e.g., a district, mission, group of
congregations, etc.) of a self-governing partner church is
established as an independent church body in altar and pulpit
fellowship with that partner church body, and subsequently
requests recognition of altar and pulpit fellowship with Synod,
such recognition may be declared by the President of Synod, after
consultation with the Praesidium and approval by the
commission, subject to the endorsement of the subsequent Synod
convention.

Commission on Theology and Church Relations

Ov. 5-07

To Exhort LCMS Partner Churches to Leave the
Lutheran World Federation

Preamble

The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) ―is a global communion of
145 churches in the Lutheran tradition, representing over 74 million
Christians in 98 countries.‖ And it declares of itself that its member
churches ―share a vision, purpose, and values. We work to
strengthen our relationships and build an inclusive, respectful
communion. We are on a common journey of renewal shaped and
enriched by the different contexts within which we live‖ (www.lutheranworld.org/content/about-lwf). Article III of the LWF
Constitution states, ―The Lutheran World Federation is a
communion of churches which confess the triune God, agree in the
proclamation of the Word of God and are united in pulpit and altar
fellowship.‖ The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) is not
a member of the LWF. The LCMS is a member of the International
Lutheran Council (ILC), which is not a communion fellowship.
However, the majority of ILC member churches are partner
churches of the LCMS with whom we share altar and pulpit
fellowship.

The July 7, 2017, Reporter article ―Boards and Business:
International, National Mission‖ states:

The Rev. Dr. Al Collver, director of Church Relations for the
Synod, provided an overview of two kinds of Lutheranism
evident worldwide. He described the differences between church
bodies affiliated with the International Lutheran Council (ILC)
and the more liberal Lutheran World Federation ―with its focus
on women’s ordination, acceptance of the LGBT lifestyle and
using a higher critical approach to interpreting Scripture. Collver
explained that the ILC exists to encourage, strengthen and
promote confessional Lutheran theology and practice. Increasingly, he said, Lutheran church bodies in the Global
South are seeking closer ties with the ILC and the LCMS. He
pointed out that the LCMS has 36 official partner churches and
25 ―allied church bodies,‖ which have some degree of
partnership but do not yet have altar and pulpit fellowship. An
additional 14 ―emerging church bodies‖ have made contact with
the LCMS to learn more about its doctrine and practice. Collver
also noted that many large, established church bodies are seeking
a more equal partnership with the Synod and desire theological
education, financial expertise to better manage growing ministry
institutions and help with mercy work. ―There is no time like the
present to have a significant impact on world Lutheranism,‖ said
Collver. https://blogs.lcms.org/2017/international-national-

mission

The LCMS has remained faithful and continues to confess the truth
of God’s Word as its members subscribe unconditionally to the
Book of Concord. As a result of its confessional subscription
(Article II of the LCMS Constitution) the LCMS has not joined
the LWF. Sadly, the following LCMS partner churches with whom we
are in full altar and pulpit fellowship are members of the LWF. They
are as follows with the year they joined the LWF:

- Evangelical Lutheran Church of Ghana—2004
- Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya—1970
- The Lutheran Church of Nigeria—1973
- India Evangelical Lutheran Church—1970
- Japan Lutheran Church (Associate Member)—1999
- Lutheran Church in Korea—1972
- Gutnius Lutheran Church (Papua New Guinea)—1979
- Lutheran Church in the Philippines—1973
- Evangelical Lutheran Church of Latvia—1963
- Evangelical Lutheran Church of Lithuania—1967
- Evangelical Lutheran Church of Ingria in Russia—1994

For the sake of our common confession with our partner churches
and in faithfulness and love for the True God and His Word, the
LCMS should exhort its partner churches leave the fellowship of
the LWF.

Whereas, The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) has as its
focus women’s ordination, acceptance of the LGBT lifestyle, and
using a higher critical approach to interpreting Scripture; and

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WHEREAS, The LWF is a global communion of 145 churches in the Lutheran tradition, representing over 74 million Christians in 98 countries.” Article III of the LWF constitution states, “The Lutheran World Federation is a communion of churches which confess the triune God, agree in the proclamation of the Word of God and are united in pulpit and altar fellowship.” It declares of itself that its member churches “share a vision, purpose and values. We work to strengthen our relationships and build an inclusive, respectful communion. We are on a common journey of renewal shaped and enriched by the different contexts within which we live.” (www.lutheranworld.org/content/about-lwf); and

WHEREAS, Eleven partner churches of the LCMS are members of the LWF, namely:

- Evangelical Lutheran Church of Ghana
- Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya
- The Lutheran Church of Nigeria
- India Evangelical Lutheran Church
- Japan Lutheran Church (Associate LWF Member)
- Lutheran Church in Korea
- Gutnius Lutheran Church (Papua New Guinea)
- Lutheran Church in the Philippines
- Evangelical Lutheran Church of Latvia
- Evangelical Lutheran Church of Lithuania
- Evangelical Lutheran Church of Ingria in Russia

and as partner churches we are in full altar and pulpit fellowship; and

WHEREAS, The Word of God says, “Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?” (2 Cor. 6:14) and, “Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them” (Rom. 16:17); therefore be it

Resolved, That the Southern Illinois District submit this overture to the 2019 Synod convention; and be it further

Resolved, That in Christian love, and faithfulness to our common confession, the LCMS exhort the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Ghana, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya, The Lutheran Church of Nigeria, India Evangelical Lutheran Church, Japan Lutheran Church, Lutheran Church in Korea, Gutnius Lutheran Church (Papua New Guinea), Lutheran Church in the Philippines, Evangelical Lutheran Church of Latvia, Evangelical Lutheran Church of Lithuania and Evangelical Lutheran Church of Ingria in Russia to leave the membership of the Lutheran World Federation as soon as possible; and be it finally

Resolved, That the Commission on Theology and Church Relations report to the Synod regarding the results of this exhortation one year prior to the opening of the 2022 Synod convention for further action.

Southern Illinois District

Ov. 5-08

To Exhort LCMS Partner Churches to Leave the Lutheran World Federation

Preamble

The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) “is a global communion of 145 churches in the Lutheran tradition, representing over 74 million

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For the sake of our common confession with our partner churches and in love for the true God and His Word, the LCMS should exhort its partner churches to leave the fellowship of the LWF.

Whereas, The Lutheran World Federation (LWF), has as its focus women’s ordination, acceptance of the LGBT [Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender] lifestyle and using a higher critical approach to interpreting Scripture; and

Whereas, The LWF “is a global communion of 145 churches in the Lutheran tradition, representing over 74 million Christians in 98 countries,” and it declares that its member churches “share a vision, purpose, and values. We work to strengthen our relationships and build an inclusive, respectful communion. We are on a common journey of renewal shaped and enriched by the different contexts within which we live.” (www.lutheranworld.org/content/about-lwf); and

Whereas, Twelve partner churches of the LCMS are members of the LWF, namely:

- Evangelical Lutheran Church of Ghana
- Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya
- The Lutheran Church of Nigeria
- India Evangelical Lutheran Church
- Japan Lutheran Church
- Lutheran Church in Korea
- Gutnius Lutheran Church (Papua New Guinea)
- Lutheran Church in the Philippines
- Lanka Lutheran Church (Sri Lanka)
- Evangelical Lutheran Church of Latvia
- Evangelical Lutheran Church of Lithuania
- Evangelical Lutheran Church of Ingria in Russia

and as partner churches we are in full altar and pulpit fellowship, therefore be it

Resolved, That in Christian love, and faithfulness to our common confession of faith, the LCMS exhort the above-named partner churches to leave the LWF as soon as possible; and be it further

Resolved, That the Commission on Theology and Church Relations report on the results of this exhortation one year prior to the opening of the 2022 Synod convention for further continued action; and be it finally

Resolved, That the Wyoming District submit this overture to the 2019 convention of the LCMS.

Wyoming District

Ov. 5-09

To Embrace Our Ecumenical Duty

Whereas, As Lutherans we have been entrusted with the full riches of God’s gifts, namely, that He gives us security in our Baptism, speaks to us in His Word and in the Divine Service, and gives us His flesh and blood in the Sacrament; and

Whereas, The body of Christ includes many who may not know these full riches; and

Whereas, Dr. Francis Pieper, speaking in an address to the Synod in 1908, laid out this very obligation we owe to other Christians, identified as “our ecumenical duty” by President Harrison, but one that recognizes this is a pure gift taken with a humility that readily admits “we are nothing, and that God’s grace and God’s Word are everything” (“Contending for the Truth for All Christianity: The Difficult Task of Missouri”, 1908 Synodical Address, in Matthew Harrison, ed., At Home In the House of our Fathers [Lutheran Legacy, 2009], 639–42); and

Whereas, Knowledge and study of our Lutheran Confessions will help us appreciate further what we have been given enabling us to speak of it to others; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Minnesota South District in convention encourage individuals and congregations to formally and informally study our Lutheran symbols with an eye toward our ecumenical duty toward our Christian brothers and sisters; and be it further

Resolved, That the pastors and laity of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod be encouraged to actively seek formal and informal dialog with Christians of other beliefs to share the full riches of God’s grace as revealed in the Lutheran Confessions; and be it further

Resolved, That the district president and staff develop resources to facilitate discussions with Christians of other beliefs; and be it further

Resolved, That the district memorialize the Synod in convention in 2019 to do similarly using all the resources at its disposal to help our congregations meet this ecumenical duty; and be it finally

Resolved, That the district memorialize the Synod in convention in 2019 to task the Commission on Theology and Church Relations with developing guidelines for ecumenical discussions.

Minnesota South District

Ov. 5-10

To Commend and Support the International Lutheran Council (ILC)

Whereas, The International Lutheran Council (ILC) is a growing worldwide association of established confessional Lutheran church bodies, among them The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS), which proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ on the basis of an unconditional commitment to the Holy Scriptures as the inspired and infallible Word of God and to the Lutheran Confessions contained in the Book of Concord as the true and faithful exposition of the Word of God; and

Whereas, The ILC is not a church body nor does it carry out churchly functions. It does not intend to prescribe any course of action for its members, but rather seeks to assist and strengthen them in their confessional witness and mission. It exists to encourage, strengthen, and promote confessional Lutheran theology and practice centering in Jesus Christ, both among member churches and throughout the world:

- by furthering a united witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ and strengthen its member churches in preaching the Gospel to the entire world;
- by furthering united diaconic action through intentional acts and programs of mercy in response to human need and suffering;
- by furthering theological study and the formation of qualified, orthodox, Lutheran pastors;
- by furthering peace and unity by mediating member disputes;

and

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deas, the ILC has become a beacon to worldwide Lutheranism by upholding the Holy Scriptures as the infallible Word of God and the Lutheran Confessions; in 2018, the ILC received 17 new members bringing its total membership to 54 Lutheran churches; and

Whereas, In his 1956 President's Report, Dr. Behnken reported that the conferences held in Europe afforded, "opportunities to exert a real influence for Scriptural Lutheranism ... Some great theologians, not of our Synod, have stated that our Synod and those in fellowship, are the last hope of true Lutheranism. Many are praying fervently for us," and these conferences and prayers led to the formation of the ILC which provides hope for true Lutheranism; and

Whereas, In 1995, the Synod in convention (Resolution 3-03A) resolved "that we state our sincere hope that the International Lutheran Council may carry on the task it has assigned to itself, and to that end ask the Lord to grant His greatest blessings so that the witness of the ILC churches may glorify Him and be heard throughout the world; and be it finally resolved, that ... the LCMS declare that it is a member of the ILC"; therefore be it

Resolved, That the LCMS gives thanks to God for more than 25 years of membership in and for the expansion of the ILC; and be it further

Resolved, That the ILC be commended for its work to provide a place for worldwide Lutheran churches to be strengthened in the Holy Scriptures and in Lutheran identity as it bears witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ throughout the world; and be it finally

Resolved, That the LCMS encourage its members to learn more about the work of the ILC, continue its involvement in the ILC, and support the ILC so that Lutheran churches worldwide will have a place to be encouraged, strengthened, and encouraged to remain faithful and bold witnesses.

Whereas, The ILC resolved in its 2015 world conference in Buenos Aires “to strengthen the reach of the ILC” in time for its 25th anniversary celebrated in Antwerp, Belgium, on Sept. 25–28, 2018:

- by adopting revised bylaws to meet the challenges and opportunities of the 21st century;
- by legally incorporating as a non-profit;
- by developing programs that benefit its members; and

Whereas, Darwinian evolution presupposes death before and apart from sin which conflicts with the Scriptures’ clear teaching that death came as result of Adam’s sin (Rom 5:12; 1 Cor.15:21); and

Whereas, St. Paul commands us to hold every human thought captive to Christ (2 Cor. 10:5); therefore be it

Resolved, That the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) in convention to reaffirm the scriptural doctrine of Creation from nothing in six ordinary 24-hour days in conformity with the natural reading of Genesis; and be it further

Resolved, That the LCMS in convention reaffirm the age of the earth in terms of thousands of years rather than in terms of millions or billions of years, so as to reject the erroneous doctrine of Darwinism and all related positions.

Rocky Mountain District

Ov. 5-12

To Reaffirm the Scriptural Teaching concerning the Age of the Earth

Whereas, The Scripture of the Old and New Testaments, which is God’s Word, is the only rule and norm of faith and life (Ps. 119:105; John 17:17; 2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:21; Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration, Binding Summary 3); and

Whereas, Christ’s words presuppose the inspiration and veracity of the five books of Moses (Matt. 17:3; 19:4–5; Mark 12:26; Luke 16:31; 24:44; John 5:46; etc.); and

Whereas, The first two chapters of Genesis teach that the world was made from nothing in six days; and

Whereas, There is no reason to believe from the context or some subtlety of meaning that “day” refers to a span of time longer than 24 hours (see Joel Heck, In the Beginning, God [St. Louis; Concordia Publishing House, 2011], 39–47); and

Whereas, The testimony of the Scriptures, given the genealogical witness of Genesis 5 and 10, indicates the age of the earth being near 6000 years; and

Whereas, Darwinian evolution presupposes death before and apart from sin which conflicts with the Scriptures’ clear teaching that death came as result of Adam’s sin (Rom. 5:12; 1 Cor.15:21); and

Whereas, St. Paul commands us to hold every human thought captive to Christ (2 Cor. 10:5); therefore be it

Resolved, That the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) in convention to reaffirm the scriptural doctrine of Creation from nothing in six ordinary 24-hour days in conformity with the natural reading of Genesis; and be it further

Resolved, That the LCMS in convention reaffirm the age of the earth in terms of thousands of years rather than in terms of millions or billions of years, so as to reject the erroneous doctrine of Darwinism and all related positions.

Indiana District

Ov. 5-11

To Reaffirm the Scriptural Teaching concerning the Age of the Earth

Whereas, The Scripture of the Old and New Testaments, which is God’s Word, is the only rule and norm of faith and life (Ps. 119:105; John 17:17; 2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Peter 1:21; Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration, Binding Summary 3); and

Whereas, Christ’s words presuppose the inspiration and veracity of the five books of Moses (Matt. 17:3; 19:4–5; Mark 12:26; Luke 16:31; 24:44; John 5:46; etc.); and

Whereas, The first two chapters of Genesis teach that the world was made from nothing in six days; and

Whereas, The ILC resolved in its 2015 world conference in Buenos Aires “to strengthen the reach of the ILC” in time for its 25th anniversary celebrated in Antwerp, Belgium, on Sept. 25–28, 2018:

- by adopting revised bylaws to meet the challenges and opportunities of the 21st century;
- by legally incorporating as a non-profit;
- by developing programs that benefit its members; and
Ov. 5-13

To Reaffirm the Scriptural Teaching concerning the Age of the Earth

WHEREAS, The Scripture of the Old and New Testaments, which is God’s Word, is the only rule and norm of faith and life (Ps. 119:105; John 17:17; 2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Peter 1:21; Formula of Concord Solid Declaration Binding Summary 3); and

WHEREAS, Christ’s words presuppose the inspiration and veracity of the five books of Moses (Matt. 17:3; 19:4–5; Mark 12:26; Luke 16:31; 24:44; John 5:46; etc.); and

WHEREAS, The first two chapters of Genesis teach that the world was made from nothing in six days; and

WHEREAS, There is no reason to believe from the context or some subtlety of meaning that “day” refers to a span of time longer than 24 hours (see Joel Heck, In the Beginning, God [St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2011], 39–47); and

WHEREAS, Rev. Dr. Francis Pieper also wrote the following in his Christian Dogmatics ([St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1950], 1:468):

The time in which creation was completed was six days, as Gen. 1:31 and Gen. 2:2 expressly state (hexaemeron). These six days are neither to be shortened, for pious reasons (to set forth God’s omnipotence), to a moment (Athanasius, Augustine, Hilary), nor are they to be extended, for impious reasons (to bring Scripture into agreement with the ‘assured results’ of science), to six periods of indefinite length (thus almost all modern theologians). Scripture forbids us to interpret the days as periods, for it divides these days into evening and morning. That forces us to accept the days as days of twenty-four hours;

and

WHEREAS, Darwinian evolution presupposes death before and apart from sin which conflicts with the Scriptures’ clear teaching that death came as a result of Adam’s sin (Rom. 5:12; 1 Cor. 15:21); and

WHEREAS, St. Paul commands us to hold every thought captive to Christ (2 Cor. 10:5); and

WHEREAS, The genealogies from the book of Genesis do not leave room for millions or billions of years, but rather thousands of years in the history of the world; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Iowa District East memorialize The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) in convention to reaffirm the scriptural doctrine of creation from nothing in six days in conformity with the natural reading of Genesis; and be it further

Resolved, That the Iowa District East memorialize the LCMS in convention to reaffirm the age of the earth in terms of thousands of years rather than in terms of millions or billions of years.

Iowa East District

Ov. 5-14

To Study and Respond to “Young” and “Old” Earth Creationist Teachings

WHEREAS, Many varieties of “old-earth” and “young-earth” creationist models have been proposed by Christians who reject that naturalistic evolutionary explanations explain the origin of the world, life, and human beings; and

WHEREAS, Most of these explanations have been developed outside The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) and therefore reflect thought processes and associations with heterodox church bodies; and

WHEREAS, Within the Synod, both proponents and opponents of “day-age” creationism have erroneously equated that view with the broader category of views that can be described as “old-earth” creationism; therefore be it

Resolved, That the South Wisconsin District in convention memorialize the LCMS in convention 2019, to request the Commission on Theology and Church Relations to consider the range of views regarding the age of the earth, and to prepare a report, including any recommendations they deem appropriate for adoption by the Synod in convention.

South Wisconsin District

Ov. 5-15

To Encourage Scriptural Teaching concerning Creation

WHEREAS, The Scripture of the Old and New Testaments, which is God’s Word, is the only rule and norm of faith and life (Ps. 119:105; John 17:17; 2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Peter 1:21; Formula of Concord (FC) Solid Declaration (SD) Binding Summary 3); and

WHEREAS, Christ’s words presuppose the inspiration and veracity of the five books of Moses (Matt. 17:3; 19:4–5; Mark 12:26; Luke 16:31; 24:44; John 5:46; etc.); and

WHEREAS, The first two chapters of Genesis teach that the world was spoken into existence by God ex nihilo in six days (“and there was evening and there was morning,” Genesis 1) as cited in A Brief Statement of the Doctrinal Position of The Missouri Synod (adopted 1932), “Of Creation”; and

WHEREAS, The Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR) has spoken clearly about the creation account in Genesis in “Creation a Biblical Perspective” (LCMS CTCR [adopted 1970]) and “The Creator’s Tapestry” (LCMS CTCR [adopted December 2009]); and

WHEREAS, Macroevolution presupposes death before and apart from sin, which is in conflict with the Scripture, which teaches that death came as result of Adam’s fall into sin (Rom. 5:12; 1 Cor. 15:21); and

WHEREAS, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod adheres to and upholds these scriptural and confessional teachings concerning Creation (FC SD Binding Summary 3); therefore be it

Resolved, That the Mid-South District memorialize the Synod in convention to reaffirm the Scriptural doctrine of creation from nothing in six days in conformity with the reading of Genesis; and be it further

Resolved, That the Mid-South District memorialize the Synod to include in their evangelism, outreach, and educational resources an emphasis on the importance of the narrative and doctrine of Creation (First Article gifts), as an appropriate apologetic against non-biblical worldviews.
Ov. 5-16
To Confess and Reaffirm Six-Day Creation and the Official Position of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

WHEREAS, The Holy Scriptures teach that God is the Creator of all that exists (Gen. 1:1; Ps. 33:6, 9; Heb. 11:3; Col. 1:16; John 1:1– 4); and

WHEREAS, Genesis 1 and 2 detail the creation of the world by God in six days, with a seventh day for rest, each day consisting of 24 hours; and

WHEREAS, Holy Scripture in its entirety is inspired by God, the Holy Spirit and is without error and infallible (John 10:35; 2 Tim. 3:16–17; 2 Peter 1:21); and

WHEREAS, Holy Scripture teaches the historical event of the creation of the first man, Adam, who was in the image of God, and it is as consequence of his sin that death has come into the world (Rom. 5:12–19); and

WHEREAS, Theistic evolution, or old earth creationism, which teaches that God used an evolutionary process to create mankind, is in direct contradiction to the teaching of Holy Scripture; and

WHEREAS, Theistic evolution, or old earth creationism, which teaches that death is a natural occurrence, present before the fall, not the result of Adam’s sin, is also thereby in direct contradiction to the teaching of Holy Scripture; and

WHEREAS, The official position of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) regarding creation is, “We teach that God has created heaven and earth, and that in the manner and in the space of time recorded in the Holy Scriptures, especially Genesis 1 and 2, namely, by His almighty creative word, and in six days. We reject every doctrine which denies or limits the work of creation as taught in Scripture. In our days it is denied or limited by those who assert, ostensibly in deference to science, that the world came into existence through a process of evolution; that is, that it has, in immense periods of time, developed more or less of itself. Since no man was present when it pleased God to create the world, we must look for a reliable account of creation to God’s own record, found in God’s own book, the Bible. We accept God’s own record with full confidence and confess with Luther’s Catechism: ‘I believe that God has made me and all creatures.’” (Brief Statement of the Doctrinal Position of the Missouri Synod [1932], 2); therefore be it

Resolved, That the Minnesota South District confess and reaffirm that God created the world in six days, with a seventh day for rest, each day consisting of 24 hours; and be it further

Resolved, That the Minnesota South District reaffirm that Holy Scripture teaches the historical event of the creation of the first man, Adam, who was made in the image of God, and that death came in the world as the consequence of his sin; and be it further

Resolved, That the district reaffirm the theistic evolution, or old earth creationism, is in direct contradiction to the teaching of Holy Scripture; and be it further

Resolved, That the district reaffirm the official position of the LCMS regarding creation as stated in the Brief Statement; and be it finally

Resolved, That the district send this resolution as an overture to the 2019 Synod convention.

Minnesota South District

Ov. 5-17
To Ask Circuit and District Pastors Conferences to Study Our Synod’s Statements Dealing with Creation and Explore Ways to Help Congregations Discuss Issues Related to the Intersections of Faith and Science

WHEREAS, Issues related to the intersection of faith and science continue to top the list of concerns by young people not only in the wider American church (see, David Kinnaman, You Lost Me: Why Young Christians Are Leaving Church… and Rethinking Faith [Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2011]) but also in our own church (see, Mark Kiessling, “The Search for Young People: 2017 Research of Millennials and the LCMS,” Concordia Journal, vol. 44, no. 1 [Fall 2018]: 19–32); and

WHEREAS, One of the most popular sessions at the National Youth Gathering in past years has centered on the question of whether or not one can be a Christian and take up a career in science; and

WHEREAS, The number of new discoveries (e.g., in genetics and paleontology) and technologies (e.g., artificial intelligence) continues to increase at an exponential pace; and

WHEREAS, Many pastors and other church workers may not be familiar with what the Synod has stated publicly over the course of the past century regarding the Scriptural teaching on creation and our place within that creation; therefore be it

Resolved, That pastors and other church workers be encouraged to uphold in their teaching the Synod’s publicly stated positions as set forth in A Brief Statement of the Doctrinal Position of the Missouri Synod (adopted 1932, Article 5):

We teach that God has created heaven and earth, and that in the manner and in the space of time recorded in the Holy Scriptures, especially Gen. 1 and 2, namely, by His almighty creative word, and in six days. We reject every doctrine which denies or limits the work of creation as taught in Scripture. In our days it is denied or limited by those who assert, ostensibly in deference to science, that the world came into existence through a process of evolution; that is, that it has, in immense periods of time, developed more or less of itself. Since no man was present when it pleased God to create the world, we must look for a reliable account of creation to God’s own record, found in God’s own book, the Bible. We accept God’s own record with full confidence and confess with Luther’s Catechism: “I believe that God has made me and all creatures.”

and A Statement of Scriptural and Confessional Principles (adopted 1973, Article V):

We believe, teach and confess that God, by the almighty power of His Word, created all things. We also believe that man, as the principal creature of God, was specially created in the image of God, that is, in a state of righteousness, innocence and blessedness.

We affirm that Adam and Eve were real historical human beings, the first two people in the world, and that their fall was a historical occurrence which brought sin into the world so that “since the fall of Adam all men who are propagated according to nature are born in sin” (Augsburg Confession II 1). We confess that man’s fall necessitated the gracious redemptive work of Jesus Christ and that fallen man’s only hope for salvation from his sin lies in Jesus Christ, his Redeemer and Lord.
We therefore reject the following:

1. All world views, philosophical theories and exegetical interpretations that pervert these Biblical teachings and thus obscure the Gospel.

2. The notion that man did not come into being through the direct creative action of God, but through a process of evolution from lower forms of life, which in turn developed from matter that is either eternal, autonomous or self-generating.

3. The opinion that the image of God in which Adam and Eve were created did not consist of concreated righteousness, that is, a perfect relationship to God.

4. The notion that Adam and Eve were not real historical persons and that their fall was not a real historical event which brought sin and death into the world.

5. The opinion that original sin does not deprive all men of their spiritual powers and make it impossible for them to be in the right relationship to God apart from faith in Jesus Christ.

Resolved, That pastors be encouraged to study and discuss within their circuit meetings and as opportunity arises the Commission on Theology and Church Relations reports: Creation in Biblical Perspective (1970), Together with All Creatures: Caring for God’s Living Earth (adopted 2010), and All things Hold Together in Christ: The Intersection of Science and Christian Theology (adopted 2015); and be it further

Resolved, That pastors take seriously their people who are wrestling with issues related to the intersection of faith and science by providing opportunities for thoughtful discussions that (a) help them remain faithful to our confession (as set forth in the Scriptures and witnessed to in our Confessions and the Synod’s publicly stated positions) and (b) address accurately and honestly the assumptions, theories, and findings of scientists along with the challenges that they raise for Christian thought; and be it finally

Resolved, That pastors equip their people to engage teachers and scientists in respectful and thoughtful conversations and to be able to give a Christian witness as opportunities arise.

Faculty, Concordia Seminary;
Faculty, Concordia Theological Seminary

Ov. 5-18

To Confess and Affirm Six-Day Creation and the Official Position of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

WHEREAS, The Holy Scriptures teach that God is the Creator of all that exists (Gen. 1:1; Ps. 33:6, 9; Heb. 11:3; Col. 1:16; John 1:1–4); and

WHEREAS, The Holy Scriptures are inspired by God, the Holy Spirit, are without error and infallible (John 10:35; 2 Tim. 3:16–17; 2 Peter 1:21); and

WHEREAS, Genesis 1 details the creation of the world by God in six 24-hour days, each identified as one evening and one morning; and

WHEREAS, The Hebrew word for day, yom, consisting of evening and morning used in Genesis 1 is to be understood through its usage in Ex. 20:8–11, where the six days of creation and the seventh day of rest are days just as the days of week were known by the children of Israel, that is, seven 24-hour days, a day being the amount of time of one rotation of the earth; and

WHEREAS, The Scripture teaches that Adam was a real man and it is the consequence of his sin that death has come into the world (Rom. 5:12–19); therefore be it

Resolved, That the Southern Illinois District confess and affirm the official position of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) regarding creation: “We teach that God has created heaven and earth, and that in the manner and in the space of time recorded in the Holy Scriptures, especially Genesis 1 and 2, namely, by His almighty creative word, and in six days. We reject every doctrine which denies or limits the work of creation as taught in Scripture. In our days it is denied or limited by those who assert, ostensibly in deference to science, that the world came into existence through a process of evolution; that is, that it has, in immense periods of time, developed more or less of itself. Since no man was present when it pleased God to create the world, we must look for a reliable account of creation to God’s own record, found in God’s own book, the Bible. We accept God’s own record with full confidence and confess with Luther’s Catechism: ‘I believe that God has made me and all creatures’” (A Brief Statement of the Doctrinal Position of the Missouri Synod, 1932); and be it further

Resolved, That the Southern Illinois District confess and affirm that God created the world in six days, each consisting of one evening and one morning of approximately 24 hours in time; and be it further

Resolved, That the Southern Illinois District confess and affirm that Adam was a real man and that it is the consequence of his sin that death has come into the world; and be it further

Resolved, That the Southern Illinois District confess and affirm that theories teaching that God used an evolutionary process to create mankind and that death is a natural occurrence, not the result of Adam’s sin, are in direct contradiction to the teaching of the Holy Scripture; and be it further

Resolved, That the Southern Illinois District memorialize the 2019 convention of the LCMS to confess and affirm its official position regarding creation, as expressed in the Brief Statement; and be it further

Resolved, That the Southern Illinois District memorialize the 2019 convention of the LCMS to direct the presidents of Concordia Seminary and Concordia Theological Seminary to exercise their spiritual oversight by actively discussing the Brief Statement with their respective faculties and procuring written subscription to this statement from each current or new faculty member, as well as by ensuring that all publications of the seminaries clearly uphold and promote these biblical teachings; and be it finally

Resolved, That the Southern Illinois District memorialize the 2019 convention of the LCMS to direct the presidents of the colleges and universities of the Concordia University System to exercise their spiritual oversight by actively discussing the Brief Statement, with their respective faculties and procuring written subscription to this statement from each current or new faculty member, as well as by ensuring that all publications of the colleges and universities clearly uphold and promote these biblical teachings.

Southern Illinois District
Ov. 5-19
To Reaffirm and Clarify the Article "Of Creation" of *A Brief Statement of the Doctrinal Position of the LCMS, 1932*

*Resolved*, That the district also affirm and clarify that “six days” in paragraph 5 of the *Brief Statement* means six literal, ordinary days, each consisting of evening and morning as we regularly experience them, and that this thereby excludes other theories, which interpret “day” symbolically either by shortening them to an instant or by extending them to ages or eons in an attempt to reconcile the sacred text with human philosophies and theories, since this undermines the plain meaning of the sacred text; and be it further

*Resolved*, That the district call on the Synod in convention to make this same affirmation and clarification about paragraph 5 of the *Brief Statement*; and be it finally

*Resolved*, That the pastors and teachers of this district and the Synod instruct those given to their care with all patience, bearing with the weak, and praying to God for an increased knowledge and confidence in his revealed Word of Holy Scripture through the merits of his Son, Jesus Christ.

Iowa East District

Ov. 5-20
To Confess and Reaffirm Six-Day Creation and the Official Position of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

*Resolved*, That the district also affirm and clarify that “six days” in paragraph 5 of the *Brief Statement* means six literal, ordinary days, each consisting of evening and morning as we regularly experience them, and that this thereby excludes other theories, which interpret “day” symbolically either by shortening them to an instant or by extending them to ages or eons in an attempt to reconcile the sacred text with human philosophies and theories, since this undermines the plain meaning of the sacred text; and be it further

To Confess and Reaffirm Six-Day Creation and the Official Position of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

*Resolved*, That the district also affirm and clarify that “six days” in paragraph 5 of the *Brief Statement* means six literal, ordinary days, each consisting of evening and morning as we regularly experience them, and that this thereby excludes other theories, which interpret “day” symbolically either by shortening them to an instant or by extending them to ages or eons in an attempt to reconcile the sacred text with human philosophies and theories, since this undermines the plain meaning of the sacred text; and be it further
Resolved, That the Central Illinois District confess and reaffirm that God created the world in six days, the same length as the days after creation (Ex. 20:9–11) and not according to so-called, “Day-Age” theories; and be it further

Resolved, That the district confess and reaffirm that Adam was a real man and that it is the consequence of his sin that death has come into the world; and be it further

Resolved, That the district confess and reaffirm that theistic evolution or old earth creationism which teaches that God used an evolutionary process to create mankind and that death is a natural occurrence, not the result of Adam’s sin, and is in direct contradiction to the teaching of Holy Scripture; and be it further

Resolved, That the district confess and reaffirm the official position of the LCMS regarding creation as stated in the Brief Statement (supra); and be it finally

Resolved, That the district send this resolution as an overture to the 2019 Synod convention.

Central Illinois District

Ov. 5-21

To Reaffirm the Biblical Witness of a Six-Day Creation

WHEREAS, The LORD created the universe in six days (Genesis 1 and 2); and

WHEREAS, The issue of creation as contrasted to the theory of evolution continues to arise in the church; and

WHEREAS, A Brief Statement of the Doctrinal Position of the Missouri Synod (Adopted 1932) states:

We teach that God has created heaven and earth, and that in the manner and in the space of time recorded in the Holy Scriptures, especially Genesis 1 and 2, namely, by His almighty creative word, and in six days. We reject every doctrine which denies or limits the work of creation taught in Scripture. In our days it is denied or limited by those who assert, ostensibly in deference to science, that the world came into existence through a process of evolution; that is, that it has, in immense periods of time, developed more or less of itself. Since no man was present when it pleased God to create the world, we must look for a reliable account of creation to God’s own record, found in God’s own book, the Bible. We accept God’s own record with full confidence and confess with Luther’s Catechism: “I believe that God has made me and all creatures.”; and

WHEREAS, The Synod has instructed its educational agencies and teachers to reaffirm the biblical message of creation; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Minnesota North District reaffirm the biblical witness to a six-day creation and memorialize the 2019 Synod convention to do the same.

Minnesota North District

Ov. 5-22

To Humbly Confess the Six Twenty-Four Hour Day Creation as Being in Accordance with Holy Scripture

WHEREAS, All Scripture is “God-breathed” (2 Tim. 3:16 NIV) and “truth” (John 17:17 KJV) to guide us in the way of righteousness and faith during our pilgrimage here on earth; and

WHEREAS, We are called as children of God to confess the faith as opportunity presents itself as Peter encourages, “always being ready to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you” (1 Peter 3:15); and

WHEREAS, Many within and without Christian churches have adopted evolution based on an old earth chronology over the last 159 years to explain the origin of the universe; and

WHEREAS, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) has faithfully confessed the historicity of Genesis 1–3, which describe God creating the heavens and the earth in six days (six 24-hour days is the most natural reading of the text as also indicated in Ex. 31:17), the creation of Adam and Eve, and the fall into sin; and

WHEREAS, The temptation is always around to harmonize the Bible and science, by for example making the six days of creation six indeterminate periods of time as theistic evolution does; therefore be it

Resolved, That the LCMS confess and reaffirm their official position regarding creation:

We teach that God has created heaven and earth, and that in the manner and in the space of time recorded in the Holy Scriptures, especially Gen. 1 and 2, namely, by His almighty creative word, and in six days. We reject every doctrine which denies or limits the work of creation taught in Scripture. In our days it is denied or limited by those who assert, ostensibly in deference to science, that the world came into existence through a process of evolution; that is, that it has, in immense periods of time, developed more or less of itself. Since no man was present when it pleased God to create the world, we must look for a reliable account of creation to God’s own record, found in God’s own book, the Bible. We accept God’s own record with full confidence and confess with Luther’s Catechism: “I believe that God has made me and all creatures.” (A Brief Statement of the Doctrinal Position of the Missouri Synod [St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1932]); and be it further

Resolved, That the North Wisconsin District Circuit 3 Forum send this overture to the 2019 Synod convention.

Circuit 3 North Wisconsin District

Ov. 5-23

To Confess and Reaffirm the Six Days of Creation Are Six Ordinary/Normal Days

WHEREAS, The 2017 South Wisconsin District Pastoral Fall Conference adopted unanimously the resolution “To Confess and Reaffirm Six-Day Creation and the Official Position of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod”; and

WHEREAS, Synod in convention has never formally defined Day (Yom)’ used in context to creation; and

WHEREAS, Day (Yom)’ is defined and limited by the addition of “And there was evening and there was morning, the first day” (Gen.1:5; 8, 13, 19, 23, 31); and

WHEREAS, The days in Genesis 1 are consecutively numbered and comprised of an “evening and morning”; and

WHEREAS, Ex. 20:8–11 commands a literal week of six days of work and one day of rest based on God’s original creation/rest week. The two weeks (Genesis 1 and Ex. 20:8–11) would imply equal duration; and

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WHEREAS, Grammatically the word day (יוֹם Yom’) is undeniably used in Hebrew as in English in a variety of ways, yet in the context of Genesis 1, the most natural sense is understood as an ordinary/normal evening and morning day; and

WHEREAS, The official position of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) regarding creation is, “We teach that God has created heaven and earth, and that in the manner and in the space of time recorded in the Holy Scriptures, especially Genesis 1 and 2, namely, by His almighty creative word, and in six days. We reject every doctrine which denies or limits the work of creation as taught in Scripture. In our days it is denied or limited by those who assert, ostensibly in deference to scientific criticism, that God made the universe (the cosmos or heavens) and the earth in six solar days when He wrote this interpretation into stone on Mount Sinai, or heavens or earth, the sea, and everything in it in six days, to be understood as six literal ordinary/normal days as defined by evening and morning; and be it further

Resolved, That the south Wisconsin District in convention, 2018, confess and reaffirm that God created the world and everything in it in six days, and is to be understood as six literal ordinary/normal days as defined by evening and morning; and be it further

Resolved, That the South Wisconsin District in convention encourage the Synod in convention 2019, to confess, reaffirm, and formally make the Synod’s official position, that God created the world and everything in it in six days, to be understood in the natural sense of the Genesis 1, as ordinary/normal, sequential days.

South Wisconsin District

Ov. 5-24

To Require the Teachings of Creation and the Fall as God Has Revealed Them in Holy Scriptures in all Congregations, Schools, and Synod Institutions

WHEREAS, The Holy Scriptures clearly teach in Genesis 1 and 2 that God created the universe (the cosmos or heavens and the earth in English) out of nothing by His Almighty Word of command; and

WHEREAS, God Himself defined the days of Genesis 1 and 2 as solar days when He wrote this interpretation into stone on Mount Sinai, saying, “Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates. For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore, the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy” (Ex. 20:9–11); and

WHEREAS, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) confessed God’s inspired and inerrant divine exegesis of Genesis 1 and 2 in its Brief Statement (1932) when it said, “We teach that God has created heaven and earth, and that in the manner and in the space of time recorded in the Holy Scriptures, especially Genesis 1 and 2, namely, by His almighty creative word, and in six days”; and

WHEREAS, Those who attack the plain sense of Genesis 1–3 usually do so in order to defend a macro-evolutionary view of the origin of life; and

WHEREAS, Every form of macro-evolutionary theory requires millions of generations of death before the dawn of humanity while the Holy Scriptures teach that death came into the world through the sin of Adam (Rom. 5:12f); and

WHEREAS, If sin is not the cause of death, then the death of Jesus Christ in our place is also not the end of death; and

WHEREAS, Any form of macroevolutionary theory is an attack not only on the nature of the Holy Scriptures but upon the redemptive work of Jesus Christ on the cross itself; and

WHEREAS, Recent controversy has made it clear that some within the LCMS are confused about what the Word of God teaches regarding these issues; therefore be it

Resolved, That we memorialize the Synod in convention to reaffirm that all who teach in congregations, schools, colleges, universities and seminaries of Synod are to teach and use doctrinally sound materials that are available regarding the creation of the universe (the cosmos or heavens and the earth in English) and the fall of man, specifically that the universe (the cosmos or heavens and the earth in English) was created in six solar days by God’s command and that all death is a result of sin; and be it further

Resolved, That we memorialize the Synod in convention to direct the LCMS President’s office to conduct a review and report within the next triennium of how the theory of evolution is being addressed at each of our colleges, universities and seminaries; and be it finally

Resolved, That we memorialize the Synod to direct each district president to review and report within the next triennium how the theory of evolution is being addressed in the respective congregations and schools of his district.

Montana District

Ov. 5-25

To Preserve the Authority and Clarity of the New Testament Scriptures

WHEREAS, “The object of all textual criticism is to recover as far as possible the actual words written by the author” (Kirsopp Lake, Text of the New Testament [London 1913]); and

WHEREAS, The standard critical edition of the Greek New Testament is Novum Testamentum Graece, often called Nestle-Aland, abbreviated NA followed by the number of the relevant edition; and

WHEREAS, Decisions in Nestle-Aland have sometimes been based on erroneous historical-critical ideology, not faithful textual criticism; therefore be it

Resolved, That Synod in convention establish a task force to study the need and means of providing the resources to properly evaluate new editions of the New Testament text; and be it further

Resolved, That the goal be the recovery as far as possible of the actual words written by the New Testament authors and inspired by the Holy Ghost and the methodology be the faithful traditional textual criticism found in the New Testament and the classical studies since the reformation; and be it finally

Resolved, That the task force report to the 2022 Synod convention on the progress of its work.

Rocky Mountain District
Ov. 5-26

To Give Thanks for God’s Holy Word

Rationale

For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. (Heb. 4:12)

But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work. (2 Tim. 3:14–17)

Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path. (Ps. 119:105)

Therefore be it

Resolved, That the Wyoming District of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod give thanks to God that He has given to us “[t]he Scriptures of the Old and the New Testament as the written Word of God and the only rule and norm of faith and of practice” (Constitution Article II 1); and be it further

Resolved, That we give thanks that “Holy Scripture possesses divine authority, that is, in all that it says it is entitled to the same faith and obedience that is due God,” and that this divine authority is “not founded on the personal repute of the holy writers nor on the endorsement of Scripture by individuals, or any number of men, or even by the Church Universal” (Francis Pieper, Christian Dogmatics [St Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1950], 1:307) but on its nature as God-breathed; and be it further

Resolved, That we give thanks that the Holy “Scriptures alone, among all the books of the world, are God’s Word out and out, they alone have the vis vera divina (truly divine power) outright”, and that “[w]hat the Church proclaims (the “Word of the Church”) also has divine power and efficacy, but always only insofar as the Church remains true to its commission and proclaims only God’s Word” (Pieper, 1:315); and be it further

Resolved, That we give thanks to God that Holy Scripture is sufficient for our salvation, that is “Scripture teaches perfectly whatever we need to know to obtain eternal life” (Pieper, 1:318); and be it further

Resolved, That we give thanks to God not that “men illumine Scripture, but Scripture illumines men,” that Scripture “presents, in language that can be understood by all, whatever men must know to be saved,” that “all Christians are to read the Scriptures, are to believe on the basis of Scripture and to judge truth and error on the same basis,” that “[Scripture] most emphatically protests against ever regarding Scripture as an obscure book, as do ... unbelievers” (Pieper, 1:320); and be it further

Resolved, That we pray God would protect us from listening to “those who do not care to learn from the Scriptures, but aim to set Scripture right and criticize it with their own human notions,” (Pieper, 1:321) as our Lord warns in Matt. 11:25, “you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children”; and be it finally

Resolved, That the Wyoming District, in convention, memorialize the Synod to join us in giving thanks to God for the gift of his Holy Word in the Sacred Scriptures, and that we pray that this Word be taught faithfully in our congregations, schools, universities and seminaries.

Wyoming District

Ov. 5-27

To Reaffirm Our Historic Stand of a Church that Believes and Practices Ministry “By Scripture Alone”

WHEREAS, The foundation of the Reformation and our confession is found in the three “Solas”: “Sola Fide, Sola Gratia, and Sola Scriptura” (by Scripture alone); and

WHEREAS, This historic belief that God’s Word alone is true and trustworthy is found in our Lutheran Confessions, for example in the Introduction to the Epitome of the Formula of Concord:

…the distinction between the Holy Scriptures of the Old and of the New Testament and all other writings is preserved, and the Holy Scriptures alone remain the only judge, rule, and standard, according to which, as the only test-stone, all dogmas shall and must be discerned and judged, as to whether they are good or evil, right or wrong.

But the other symbols and writings cited are not judges, as are the Holy Scriptures, but only a testimony and declaration of the faith, as to how at any time the Holy Scriptures have been understood and explained in the articles in controversy in the Church of God by those then living, and how the opposite dogma was rejected and condemned [by what arguments the dogmas conflicting with the Holy Scripture were rejected and condemned]. (FC Ep, Introduction, 7–8)

and

WHEREAS, In this time of diversity in our culture, the voice of God is often lost, and God’s Church must even more clearly share His power, His glory, His wisdom, and His salvation in Jesus found in Holy Scripture; therefore be it

Resolved, That we give thanks to God for the blessings of God’s saving truth to guide our lives found in Scripture; and be it further

Resolved, That workers and congregations continue study of Holy Scripture as the primary source of God’s truth and the Lutheran confessions as its faithful exposition; and be it finally

Resolved, That the Northwest District of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) reaffirm its historic stand of “Sola Scriptura” and emphasize God’s Word as the only source of teaching and doctrine and move the LCMS in convention to also reaffirm this historic, faithful stance.

Northwest District

Ov. 5-28

To Encourage Our Pastors to Preach and Teach in a Very Clear Way the Promise of Everlasting Life

WHEREAS, “God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16); and

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WHEREAS, The Apostles’ Creed ends with the words “and the life everlasting. Amen”; and

WHEREAS, In discussing “The Life Everlasting,” the 1991 Explanation of the Small Catechism (Luther’s Small Catechism with Explanation [St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1991], 166) reads, “God gives eternal life to me and all believers in Christ”; and

WHEREAS, The explanation goes on to make three important subpoints (ibid., 166–67):

• Eternal life is a present possession (John 17:3; 3:36);
• At the time of death, the soul of a believer is immediately with Christ in heaven (Luke 23:43; Phil. 1:23–24);
• At the last day the believers, in both body and soul, will begin the full enjoyment of being with Christ forever (Matt. 25:34; 1 John 3:2); and

WHEREAS, Each one of these three is distinct and yet inseparable from the other two. We could even say that the first is a promise, the second is a promise, the third is a promise; and yet there are not three promises, but one promise; and

WHEREAS, We are concerned that some pastors may emphasize the second at the expense of the third, and that others may emphasize the third at the expense of the second; and

WHEREAS, The Lutheran Study Bible (Edward Engelbrecht, ed. [St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2009], 1750) and the Lutheran Witness (Joel Biermann, “Waiting for the Resurrection,” June/July 2017, 6–7) discuss “soul sleep” (“view that the soul of a dead person exists in a state of sleep” [Erwin L. Lueker, Lutheran Cyclopedia, (St. Louis, Concordia Publishing House, 1975) 727]) without clearly and completely rejecting it; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Synod in convention encourage its pastors to preach and teach in a very clear way that the promise of everlasting life is one great promise and yet has three parts; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod in convention encourage its pastors to guard against preaching and teaching the second part in such a way that it obscures or diminishes the third, and to guard against preaching and teaching the third part in such a way that it obscures or diminishes the second; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod in convention encourage its pastors to clarify for their congregations, if necessary, that Scripture does not speak of soul sleep, but of souls after death in a state of awareness (Rev. 6:10; cf. Luke 16:22–31; ‘rest’ in Rev 14:13; cf. Heb 4:9–11 does not imply sleep). When we speak of the dead as sleeping, this refers to the body (Lutheran Cyclopedia, 727); and be it finally

Resolved, That the Synod in convention encourage its pastors to preach and teach in a very clear way that the souls of the faithful departed are with Christ in heaven, and Christ is with us on earth, resulting in a “blest communion, fellowship divine,” which is an unending source of comfort and joy, courage and strength (Heb. 12:1)—until “there breaks a yet more glorious day: …!” (“For All the Saints, LSB 677).

Faith, Mount Vernon, IL; Our Savior, Carmi, IL; Suburban Bethlehem, Fort Wayne, IN

Ov. 5-29

To Give a Clear Confession of the Resurrection in Our Funeral Practices

WHEREAS, In Luther’s Small Catechism explanation of the First Article of the creed, we confess, “I believe that God has made me and all creatures; that He has given me my body…”; we are called to preserve our bodies as living sacrifices; and there is no reason we would want to destroy willfully that which God has created in His image and given to us; and

WHEREAS, When Holy Scripture speaks of the burning of bodies by fire (a practice that historically, and currently, is observed in pagan societies), it does so in a negative context, including specific words of condemnation in Amos 2; and

WHEREAS, By contrast, the burial of the bodies of God’s people is described as occurring with reverent care, as witnessed by Christ Himself whose body was anointed for burial; and many other examples; and

WHEREAS, Neither cremation nor burial nor any other funeral practice has any impact on the salvation of the deceased, nor does it impact the bodily resurrection we confess in the creed; nonetheless, the funeral service is the last rite given to each of us as members of the Body of Christ until we are transformed at the Last Day, and is a witness to the faith of the deceased; thus, we should strive in these as in all things to give a clear confession of the teaching of Holy Scripture, rather than use Christian liberty to minimize it; and

WHEREAS, For these reasons the Church has opposed cremation of bodies; our funeral rites speak of the committal of the body to the grave, and we are to consider the coffin as a bed in which the dead in Christ sleep until they reawaken at Christ’s appearing; and

WHEREAS, At the present time some oppose the process of embalming for various reasons; although spoken of without condemnation in Gen. 50:2 (Israel) and Gen. 50:26 (Joseph), nonetheless embalming is not necessary for a funeral service with the body present, which may be held with a closed casket, or promptly after death, without need for embalming, so that “embalming or cremation” is a false choice; and

WHEREAS, A funeral service with the body present is a vivid reminder of the wages of sin that we have all earned, yet simultaneously an opportunity for the proclamation of the Gospel and Christ’s triumph over death and the grave in which the deceased shares through Holy Baptism; and

WHEREAS, In our modern culture that embraces youth and pleasure, and rejects the concepts of sin and death, we should also take every opportunity to use funeral services to proclaim Law and Gospel: our sin and resulting death, requiring Christ’s vicarious atonement, and the victory we have in Christ; never to engage in eulogies, sentimentality, and other practices that distract from the theology of the cross; and

WHEREAS, The process of cremation requires the burning of the flesh and the physical crushing of bones to create “ashes” and although many treat the resulting remains in a dignified manner and do inter them, it is also the case that some engage in careless or even frivolous practices in the handling thereof, such as scattering to the heedless winds to achieve “oneness with nature,” or at a favorite location of the deceased such as Disneyland, which is not the case with physical burials; and

WHEREAS, For all these reasons, the Synod ought to teach that the best practice regarding last rites is a physical burial of the body, because that gives the clearest confession of our faith regarding our body as a creation of God, our death as the wages of sin, and our sure and certain hope of our bodily resurrection through Christ’s own death and resurrection; therefore be it
Resolved, That the Synod in convention direct the Commission on Theology and Church Relations, by July 31, 2020, to issue a final report affirming the burial of the body as the best practice for last rites, not as a burden of conscience but as a joyful confession of the eternal life and bodily resurrection won for us by Christ, while acknowledging God’s mercy for those situations where such is not possible, e.g., a plane crash or loss at sea, or the like; and that our seminaries and official publications teach likewise.

Saint John’s, Chicago, IL; St. Paul, Brookfield, IL

Ov. 5-30

To Adopt the Conclusions of the Lutheran Church—Canada’s CTCR Document, “Cremation and the Christian”

WHEREAS, Many pastors of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) seek guidance with respect to the practice of cremating the dead for the purpose of providing counsel to their congregation members; and

WHEREAS, The LCMS conventions of 2013 and 2016 were presented with overtures requesting the study of cremation with the hope of providing a statement of belief and recommendations for practice; and

WHEREAS, The LCMS conventions of 2013 and 2016 did not bring such an overture to the convention floor, but provided a recommendation following the 2016 convention that LCMS pastors use, as a guide, the Lutheran Church—Canada’s (LCC) Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR) 2011 study, “Cremation and the Christian” (lutheranchurch-canada.ca/theological.php); and

WHEREAS, The LCC CTCR document offers the following conclusions:

1. While not the case in Canada, there are places in the world where, because of the scarcity of land, it has become virtually impossible to purchase land for cemeteries and for burial plots. If cremation has become the only option in certain lands, Christians need to find ways to make clear witness for our faith in the resurrection of the body. (p. 6)

2. The pastor should not offend the consciences of those who have chosen cremation. In the case of one who is dying and who has made up one’s mind on the subject, using the law to convince them to do otherwise could create spiritual doubt regarding their relationship to God. (p. 6)

3. The pastor should discourage thoughts of having the ashes of the departed scattered, for this practice indeed arises from a pagan denial of the importance of the body and creates the impression that the spirit’s survival is all that matters. (p. 6)

4. Families of Christians who have been cremated should be encouraged to have the remains of their loved ones placed in a columbarium or kept together in some other way. The name of the deceased should be noted on the urn and/or on the niche in memory of the one who has died and who awaits the resurrection. (p. 6)

5. Though ashes cannot be committed to the earth in the same way that a body may be committed, a clear message of hope in the resurrection of the body needs take place even as the ashes are commended into the hands of God in the hope of the resurrection. (p. 7)

6. As is always the case, the clear message given at the funeral/memorial of all Christians is the hope of the resurrection of the dead, not merely the survival of the individual in heaven. Our creeds confess the resurrection of the body (indeed, of the flesh!), not merely the survival of the soul. (p. 7)

7. In sermons and Bible studies throughout the church year, especially when dealing with lessons that cover the subject, the Christian teaching on the resurrection of the dead must be stressed, and the blessings confessed by the traditional practice of burial over against cremation must be noted. Burial should be encouraged over against cremation as the means by which the church best confesses before the world the return of Christ and the resurrection of the body (p. 7); therefore be it

Resolved, That the English District memorialize the 2019 Synod convention to adopt the LCC CTCR study’s conclusions.

English District

Ov. 5-31

To Affirm the Relationship Between Unity in Theology and Mission and Diversity in Practice

WHEREAS, St. Paul affirms the need for the Gospel to remain unaltered and uncompromised in 1 Corinthians 15 and Gal. 1:9; and

WHEREAS, Our church body was organized around the common confession of faith from Scripture as it has been articulated in the unaltered Book of Concord; and

WHEREAS, St. Paul reminds us that faith comes from hearing the Word of the Lord (Rom. 10:17); and

WHEREAS, St. Paul teaches us by his example to proclaim the Word of the Lord in a manner consistent with the cultural context of the lost, saying in 1 Cor. 9:19–23:

For though I am free from all, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win more of them. To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though not being myself under the law) that I might win those under the law. To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (not being outside the law of God but under the law of Christ) that I might win those outside the law. To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some. I do it all for the sake of the Gospel, that I may share with them in its blessings;

and

WHEREAS, Our Lutheran Confessions affirmed true unity in theology is not dependent upon unity in practice:

It is sufficient for the true unity of the Christian church that the Gospel be preached in conformity with a pure understanding of it and that the sacraments be administered in accordance with the divine Word. It is not necessary for the true unity of the Christian church that ceremonies, instituted by men, should be observed uniformly in all places (Augsburg Confession VII); and
WHEREAS, Our Lutheran Confessions also affirm the congregation’s right to adapt its practices “as at any time may seem to be most profitable, beneficial, and salutary for good order, Christian discipline, evangelical decorum, and the edification of the church” (Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration X 9); and

WHEREAS, Our church body has debated numerous resolutions in convention that have sought to reconcile the tension between maintaining purity of doctrine and Christian freedom of practice; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Synod in convention affirm the value of living in a healthy relationship between maintaining purity of doctrine and Christian freedom of practice; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod in convention affirm the importance of maintaining unity among us by being diligent to hold steadfast to Scriptures and the Confessions; and be it further

Resolved, That we affirm the need and right for each congregation and school to adapt outreach techniques and teaching styles to most effectively communicate the unchanging Gospel message within its cultural context without compromising purity of doctrine; and be it further

Resolved, That we affirm the 2016 Resolution 4-04A, which states the following:

Resolved, That the LCMS in convention appeal to the congregations of the Synod for love’s sake (Philémon 9), when celebrating the Lord’s Supper, to regularly use these basic components of the Order of Service (Ordo): to gather in the triune name, confess our sins and receive Absolution, praise the blessed Trinity, attend to the reading and the proclamation of God’s Holy Word, confess our faith using the historic creeds, offer prayers for all people according to their needs including praying the Lord’s Prayer, celebrate the Lord’s Supper with Christ’s own words, and then depart with God’s blessing to send us forth as His forgiven children and witnesses to His grace (Proceedings, 147);

and be it further

Resolved, That we affirm the freedom that is ours in Christ for each congregation to adapt the music and liturgy in worship without compromising purity of doctrine to fit the culture of the saints who gather for worship; and be it finally

Resolved, That we celebrate the unity that is ours by the Holy Spirit through a common confession and encourage, support, and celebrate the freedom in practice that is ours in Christ Jesus.

Michigan District

Ov. 5-32

To Affirm the Tension Between Unity in Theology and Mission and Diversity in Practice

WHEREAS, St. Paul affirms the need for the Gospel to remain unaltered and uncompromised in 1 Corinthians 15 and Gal. 1:9; and

WHEREAS, Our church body was organized around the common confession of faith from Scripture as it has been articulated in the unaltered Book of Concord of 1580; and

WHEREAS, St. Paul reminds us that faith comes from hearing the Word of the Lord (Rom. 10:17); and

WHEREAS, St. Paul teaches us by his example to proclaim the Word of the Lord in a manner consistent with the cultural context of the lost, saying in 1 Cor. 9:19–23:

For though I am free from all, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win more of them. To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though not being myself under the law) that I might win those under the law. To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (not being outside the law of God but under the law of Christ) that I might win those outside the law. To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some. I do it all for the sake of the Gospel, that I may share with them in its blessings.

and

WHEREAS, Our Lutheran Confessions affirmed true unity in theology is not dependent upon unity in practice:

It is sufficient for the true unity of the Christian church that the Gospel be preached in conformity with a pure understanding of it and that the sacraments be administered in accordance with the divine Word.” It is not necessary for the true unity of the Christian church that ceremonies, instituted by men, should be observed uniformly in all places. (Augsburg Confession VII);

and

WHEREAS, The Solid Declaration in Article X affirmed the congregation’s right to adapt its practices “as at any time may seem to be most profitable, beneficial, and salutary for good order, Christian discipline, evangelical decorum, and the edification of the church” (Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration X 9); therefore be it

Resolved, That the 2019 Synod convention in Tampa affirm the importance of maintaining unity among us by being diligent to hold steadfast to Scriptures and the Confessions; and be it further

Resolved, That we affirm the need and right for each congregation and school to adapt outreach techniques and teaching styles, to most effectively communicate the unchanging Gospel message within its cultural context; and be it further

Resolved, That we affirm the freedom that is ours in Christ for each congregation to adapt the music and liturgy in worship to fit the culture of the saints who gather for worship; and be it finally

Resolved, That we celebrate the unity that is ours by the Holy Spirit through a common confession and encourage, support, and celebrate the freedom in practice that is ours in Christ Jesus.

Trinity Roselle, IL

Ov. 5-33

To Affirm the Validity of the Word and Sacraments

WHEREAS, For 30 years concerns have been voiced over the service of Licensed Lay Deacons (LLD), whether the Sacrament of the Altar or the public administration of the Sacrament of Baptism administered by a LLD (non-ordained) was “valid”; and

WHEREAS, 2016 Resolution 6-02 defined a “regular call,” Augsburg Confession XIV, as examination, call, and ordination; and

WHEREAS, 2016 Res. 13-02A authorized LLDs to consecrate and to distribute the Lord’s Supper under the authority of the royal priesthood (1 Peter 2:9) in the local congregation; and
WHEREAS, LLDe are authorized at the request of the local congregation through the office of the district president and sanctioned by the Council of Presidents; and

WHEREAS, The hearts of some believers have been burdened by the false belief that the validity of the Sacraments depends on the ordination of the celebrant; therefore be it

Resolved, That we affirm the validity of the Sacraments when administered by LLDe, under the supervision of an ordained pastor at the request of the congregation; and be it further

Resolved, That we affirm the validity of God’s Word and Sacraments because they are the Means of God’s grace among us through which His Spirit alone works saving faith and the forgiveness of sins through Christ Jesus, quite apart from the character or position of the man administering them so long as they have been called or appointed to do so by the gathered saints of God in Christ; and be it further

Resolved, That in the instances when the administration of the Word and Sacraments is not done by an ordained pastor, for the sake of good order in the church, communication and counsel should be made with the district president and the circuit visitor; and be it finally

Resolved, That we affirm and give thanks for the divine institution of the office of the holy ministry and give hearty thanks and honor for those who have been ordained (set apart) to serve in that holy office.

Michigan District

Ov. 5-34

To Affirm the Efficacy of the Word and Sacraments Apart from Ordination

WHEREAS, Recent conversations regarding the service of Licensed Lay Deacons (LLD) have referenced a concern whether the Sacrament of the Altar or the Sacrament of Baptism administered by an LLD (non-ordained) was really “valid” or efficacious; and

WHEREAS, There is still much disagreement whether Augsburg Confession (AC) XIV and its reference to “regular call” inherently assumes ordination; and

WHEREAS, Ordination is not a divine institution (C. F. W. Walther, Church and Ministry, Ministry Thesis VI [St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1987], 219), but rather an apostolic custom for good order and is to be encouraged in the church; and

WHEREAS, Walther writes: “Now that forgiveness has been procured, as stated, not only has a minister a special commission to proclaim it, but every Christian, male or female, adult or child, is commissioned to do this. Even a child’s absolution is just as certain as the absolution of St. Peter, yea, as the absolution of Christ would be, were He again to stand visibly before men and say: ‘Thy sins are forgiven thee.’ There is no difference; for mark you! it is not a question of what man must do, but what has been done by Christ” (C. F. W. Walther, Law and Gospel [St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2010], 187). And again, “Making the power and validity of the divine means of grace itself dependent on the right ordination is doubly abominable, since ordination is only a human, namely, a church [ordination], not however a divine ordinance. By making God’s business dependent on human institutions one nullifies God’s commandment through man’s commandment, [and] therefore places the latter above the former.” (C.F.W. Walther, “The Congregation’s Right to Choose Its Pastor,” Der Lutheraner, Aug. 1861); and

WHEREAS, AC XV states that, with regard to church usages that have been established by men, “it is taught among us that those usages are to be observed which may be observed without sin and which contribute to peace and good order in the church” (in this instance ordination). “Yet we accompany these observances with instruction so that consciences may not be burdened by the notion that such things are necessary for salvation. Moreover, it is taught that all ordinances and traditions” (e.g., ordination) “instituted by men for the purpose of propitiating God and earning grace are contrary to the Gospel and the teaching about faith in Christ;” and

WHEREAS, AC VIII states that “the Sacraments are efficacious even if the priests who administer them are wicked men, for as Christ himself indicated, ‘The Pharisees sit on Moses’ seat’ (Matt. 23:2);” and

WHEREAS, Some among us have even discouraged our laity from witnessing to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, but rather to leave that to the ordained, thereby hindering the royal priesthood of God from carrying out their divine mandate and privilege (Matt. 28:19; 1 Peter 2:4–10); and

WHEREAS, Many hearts of faithful believers have been burdened or held hostage by the false teaching that ordination adds anything to the preached Word or the Sacraments; therefore be it

Resolved, That we affirm the efficacy of God’s Word and Sacraments because they are the means of God’s grace among us through which His Spirit alone works saving faith and the forgiveness of sins through Christ Jesus, quite apart from the character or position of the individual administering them, so long as they have been appointed (called) to do so by the gathered saints of God in Christ—it is God who acts in the Sacrament; and be it further

Resolved, That in the rare instances when the administration of the Word and Sacraments is not done by an ordained pastor, for the sake of good order in the church, communication and counsel should be made with the district president and the circuit visitor; and be it further

Resolved, That we affirm and give thanks for the divine institution of the Office of the Holy Ministry and give hearty thanks and honor for those who have been ordained (set apart) to serve in that Holy Office; and be it finally

Resolved, That every believer in Christ faithfully, boldly, and confidently proclaim the saving Gospel of the crucified and risen Jesus Christ, knowing that God’s Word through them “will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I [He] desire[s] and achieve the purpose for which I [He] sent it” (Isaiah 55:11 [NIV]), namely, the salvation of souls for whom Christ died.

Trinity Roselle, IL

Ov. 5-35

To Affirm the Priesthood of All Believers in Christ and Therefore their Call as Missionaries

WHEREAS, Luther’s Small Catechism affirms that no one can “by their own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, or come to Him,” but rather “the Holy Spirit calls (each) through the Gospel,
WHEREAS, The Commission on Theology and Church Relations’ opinion (LCMS CTCR, *Is the Gospel Effective When Spoken by a Layperson*, [adopted 2016]) is that “The Scriptures are replete with examples of Christian men and women—lay people—who share the saving truths of God’s Word with others”; and

WHEREAS, Our Lutheran Confessions (Apology of the Augsburg Confession [Ap] XIII), when speaking about the Sacraments, also affirm that the priesthood of the Church is not a ministry of “sacrifice” but rather of “proclamation” (Apology of the Augsburg Confession [Ap] XIII 7–9), and further states that the “Priesthood of the New Testament is a ministry of the Spirit” (Ap XXIV 59); and

WHEREAS, The stated purpose of the “royal priesthood” is “… that you [we] may declare the praises of Him who called you [us] out of darkness into his marvelous light” (1 Pet. 2:9); therefore be it

Resolved, That every baptized believer in Christ be encouraged to fulfill his priestly office and mission of prayer for others and proclamation of the Gospel in their own context; and be it further

Resolved, That those uniquely called to the Office of the Holy Ministry, who serve as pastors in their respective congregations, tirelessly seek to train, equip, encourage, and motivate the entire “priesthood” under their care to more effectively and eagerly serve as a “kingdom of priests” in their community and world; and be it further

Resolved, That our lay people, congregations, and church workers be encouraged to share strategies and best practices of evangelism and contextualized “kingdom expressions” of the Gospel through God’s priests in order to encourage and train others; and be it finally

Resolved, That our congregations and church workers be encouraged to share strategies and best practices of evangelism and contextualized Kingdom expressions of the Gospel through God’s priests (e.g., through submissions to the Michigan District’s “Story Bucket”), in order to encourage and train others. Michigan District

Ov. 5-36

To Affirm the Priesthood of All Believers in Christ and Therefore Their Call as Missionaries

WHEREAS, Luther’s *Small Catechism* affirms that no one can “by their own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, or come to Him,” but rather “the Holy Spirit calls (each) through the Gospel, enlightens (each) with His gifts, sanctifies and keeps (each) in the true faith” (SC II 6); and

WHEREAS, The Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope states (Tr 68), “Here the words of Christ apply which testify that the keys were given to the church and not merely to certain individuals: ‘Where two or three are gathered in my name, there I am in their midst’ [Matt. 18:20]”; and

WHEREAS, The Holy Spirit through St. Peter in 1 Peter 2:9 states that all true believers in Christ are “a royal priesthood,” and again through St. John in Rev. 5:9–10 that “He [Christ] purchased men [people] for God from every nation and made them a kingdom and priests to serve our God,” in fulfillment of His intent as stated in Ex. 19:5–6 (NIV), “Although the whole earth is mine, you will become a kingdom of priests and a holy nation”; and

WHEREAS, Our Lutheran Confessions, when speaking about the Sacraments, also affirm that the priesthood of the church is not a ministry of “sacrifice” but rather of “proclamation” (Apology of the Augsburg Confession [Ap] XIII 7–9), and further states that the “Priesthood of the New Testament is a ministry of the Spirit” (Ap XXIV 59); and

WHEREAS, The stated purpose of the “royal priesthood” is “… that you [we] may declare the praises of Him who called you [us] out of darkness into his marvelous light” (1 Pet. 2:9); therefore be it

Resolved, That every baptized believer in Christ be encouraged to fulfill his priestly office and mission of prayer for others and proclamation of the Gospel in their own context; and be it further

Resolved, That those uniquely called to the Office of the Holy Ministry, who serve as pastors in their respective congregations, tirelessly seek to train, equip, encourage, and motivate the entire “priesthood” under their care to more effectively and eagerly serve as a “kingdom of priests” in their community and world; and be it further

Resolved, That our lay people, congregations, and church workers be encouraged to share strategies and best practices of evangelism and contextualized “kingdom expressions” of the Gospel through God’s priests in order to encourage and train others; and be it finally

Resolved, That our congregations and church workers be encouraged to share strategies and best practices of evangelism and contextualized Kingdom expressions of the Gospel through God’s priests (e.g., through submissions to the Michigan District’s “Story Bucket”), in order to encourage and train others. Michigan District

Ov. 5-37

To Affirm the Biblical Teaching of the Reading of Scriptures in the Public Worship Service as a Function of the Pastoral Office

WHEREAS, God created man first and then the woman (Gen 2; 1 Tim. 2:13); and

WHEREAS, On the basis of this order of creation God commands women not to teach or to exercise authority over men in the churches, but to remain silent and learn in quietness and all submission, which St. Paul explains as follows:

Let a woman learn quietly with all submissiveness. I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet. For Adam was formed first, then Eve; and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived

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and became a transgressor. Yet she will be saved through childbearing—if they continue in faith and love and holiness, with self-control (1 Tim. 2:11–15);
and as follows:

For God is not a God of confusion but of peace. As in all the churches of the saints, the women should keep silent in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be in submission, as the Law also says (1 Cor. 14:33–35);

WHEREAS, Many congregations in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod have accepted the practice of women speaking the Scripture lessons to the congregation; and

WHEREAS, The Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR) document of 1985, titled “Women in the Church: Scriptural Principles and Ecclesial Practice” by claiming on page 45 that there is no Apostolic prohibition of women reading the lessons in the public service directly contradicts St. Paul who says, “the women should keep silent in the churches”; and

WHEREAS, The public reading of Scripture is listed by St. Paul as one of Timothy’s official duties as pastor (1 Tim. 4:13); and

WHEREAS, Our sinful culture is working mightily to confuse or outright deny the clear distinctions between male and female as established and ordered by our Creator; and

WHEREAS, The Church, trusting that God is “not a God of confusion,” does well to stand firm in the face of this world’s lies with respect to the differences and distinct responsibilities given to men and women, particularly concerning the pastoral office and the worship life of the congregation; therefore be it

Resolved, That the South Wisconsin District encourage the Synod in convention to commission the CTCR to revisit the 1985 CTCR document “Women in the Church: Scriptural Principles and Ecclesial Practice,” specifically regarding the practice of women reading the Holy Scriptures publicly before the congregation, and be it further

Resolved, That the CTCR revisit the issue of whether the public reading before the congregation constitutes an official duty and authoritative act of the pastoral office in view of 1 Tim. 4:13, and be it finally

Resolved, That the South Wisconsin District call on its president and pastors to study together and teach their congregations what the Scriptures teach about the roles of men and women in the home and the church, that we might gain a better understanding and stronger agreement on what God’s Word says concerning our various stations in life.

South Wisconsin District

Ov. 5-38

To Rejoice in the Proclamation of God’s Word by His Called and Ordained Servants

WHEREAS, We come to the Divine Service not to serve, but to be served by God through His called and ordained servants, as we confess our sins, hear His words of Absolution spoken by the pastor in the stead and by the command of our Lord Jesus Christ, hear Law and Gospel rightly divided, and receive the sacrament of Christ’s body and blood; and

WHEREAS, When we hear the words of forgiveness of our sins spoken by the pastor at Christ’s command, we are to rejoice and to believe them as surely and certainly as if spoken by Christ Himself; and

WHEREAS, In the orientation of the service the words spoken from the altar, pulpit, and lectern are the words of God spoken for our benefit, whereas the congregation faces the altar and speaks back the words God has said to us; and

WHEREAS, It is a great blessing for all those in the congregation to hear the Word of God spoken by our pastors, who are our servants (Mark 9:35), and it is meet, right, and salutary that we should accept their service to us; and

WHEREAS, Faith comes by hearing (Rom. 10:17), and the use of lay readers for Scripture lessons denies those persons the comfort and benefit of hearing the Word of God spoken directly to and for them by their pastors; and

WHEREAS, No one should publicly preach and teach in the church without a rightly ordered call (Augsburg Confession XIV); there can be no clearer public teaching of the Word of God than reading it in the Divine Service; and thus the use of lay readers can confuse the vocations of the called and ordained pastor as servant of the Word, and of the congregation as hearers of the Word; and

WHEREAS, The use of lay readers can be understood wrongly as an individual “participating” in the conduct of the service, as though greater meaning, benefit, or stature is thereby obtained (and by implication, that those who do not read are taking a lesser role), and we ought not burden mis-trained consciences in such manner, in contrast to the right understanding that the whole congregation benefits on an equal basis as it is served by the pastor; and

WHEREAS, As a practical matter the pastor is best suited to read the text without disruption or delay to the flow of the service, and with due emphasis on the pronunciation and salient points of the text, particularly if it forms a portion of the sermon text; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Synod in convention give thanks and rejoice in the proclamation of the Word by God’s called and ordained servants; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod President disseminate appropriate resources throughout the Synod (such as the Lutheran Witness and electronic publications) to assist pastors in catechizing their congregations to understand the great blessing of the role of the pastor in the Divine Service, so that rather than giving offense, laity who have been accustomed to read Scripture lessons may rather understand and appreciate the service of the pastor for their benefit, and hear with great joy God’s Word as it is read for them; and be it further

Resolved, That all district presidents and circuit visitors give emphasis in their visitations of all congregations in the next triennium to a right understanding of the role of the congregation in the Divine Service and other worship services, specifically toward following the practice of having Holy Scripture read by the pastor in all worship services, that all congregations may walk together in doctrine and practice; and be it finally

Resolved, That the Synod in convention adopt appropriate resolutions for a right understanding of the role of the congregation in the Divine Service and other worship services, specifically toward following the practice of having Holy Scripture read by the pastor in all worship services, that all Synod congregations may walk together in doctrine and practice.

St. Paul
Brookfield, IL

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Ov. 5-39

To Request that the CTCR Revisit the 1985 CTCR Document “Women in the Church: Scriptural Principles and Ecclesial Practice” regarding Lay Lectors

WHEREAS, God created the man first and then the woman (Genesis 2: 1 Tim. 2:13); and

WHEREAS, On the basis of this order of creation God commands women not to teach or to exercise authority over men in the churches, but to remain silent and learn in quietness and all submission, which St. Paul explains as follows:

Let a woman learn in silence with all submission. And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence. For Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression. Nevertheless, she will be saved in childbirth if they continue in faith, love, and holiness, with self-control. (1 Tim. 2:11–15 NKJV)

and as follows:

Let your women keep silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak; but they are to be submissive, as the law also says. And if they want to learn something, let them ask their own husbands at home; for it is shameful for women to speak in church. (1 Cor. 14:34–35 NKJV); and

WHEREAS, “Learn in quietness and all submission” and “they are not permitted to speak” explicitly excludes women from speaking the Scripture lessons to the whole congregation in the divine service; and

WHEREAS, Many congregations in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) have accepted the practice of women speaking the Scripture lesson to the congregation; and

WHEREAS, The Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR) document of 1985, entitled “Women in the Church: Scriptural Principles and Ecclesial Practice,” by claiming on page 45 that “there is no apostolic prohibition of such reading by women,” directly contradicts St. Paul who says, “Let your women keep silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak” (1 Cor. 14:34 NKJV); and

WHEREAS, This practice, being contrary to the Word of God, is thereby destructive to the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace which we as Christians are to pursue; and

WHEREAS, The public reading of Scripture is listed by St. Paul as one of Bishop Timothy’s official duties as pastor (1 Tim. 4:13; cf. Acts 13:15); and

WHEREAS, While circumstances may arise when laymen may or even must read the lessons before the congregation in place of the pastor, the Scriptures specifically prohibit women from this task based on the order of creation; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Iowa District East of the LCMS call on its president and pastors to study together and teach their congregations what the Scriptures teach about the roles of men and women in the home and the church, that we might gain a better understanding and stronger agreement on what God’s Word says concerning our various stations in life.

Iowa East District

Ov. 5-40

To Conform to God’s Will Regarding the Roles of Men and Women in Church Leadership

WHEREAS, God has instructed in 1 Tim. 2:11–13, “Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence. For Adam was first formed, then Eve”.; and

WHEREAS, God has also instructed in 1 Cor. 14:33–35, “For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints. Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience as also saith the law. And if they will learn anything, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church.”; and

WHEREAS, 2004 Resolution 3-08A: “To Affirm the Conclusions of the 1994 CTCR Report: The Service of Women in Congregational and Synodical Offices” did not specifically and clearly address the congregational offices of chairman and vice-chairman; and

WHEREAS, Such ambiguity has led to inconsistent practices within congregations of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, practices that are not wholly consistent with Holy Scripture and the godly intent of the 2004 Res. 3-08A; therefore be it

Resolved, That Res. 3-08A be amended to add the following clarification: “Resolved, That the Synod affirm that women on the basis of the clear teaching of Scripture may not serve in the office of congregational chairman or vice-chairman, since these positions necessarily exercise authority that resides within and flows from the office of pastor.”

Trinity
Bridgeton, MO

Ov. 5-41

To Direct the CTCR to Address the Signing of Public Interfaith and Interdenominational Statements by Members of Synod

WHEREAS, All public confessions and statements signed by pastors in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) must conform to biblical truth and the Lutheran Confessions; and

WHEREAS, LCMS pastors voluntarily subscribe the Lutheran Confessions, by which we bind ourselves not to depart in substance or in words from the doctrine set forth in them; and

WHEREAS, Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions teach that there is only one God, the Holy Trinity, all other gods of all other religions and secular philosophies being false and the figments of man’s imagination; and

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WHEREAS, A public statement made by LCMS members with non-Christians must avoid any indication that we acknowledge the same God as they; and

WHEREAS, Two members of the LCMS, President Matthew Harrison and Dr. Gregory Seltz, joined with a Muslim in signing the December 17, 2017 open letter of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops entitled, “Created Male and Female,” in which the signers state, “We come together to join our voices…” and then proceed to confess “as leaders of various communities of faith” that “God” created man and woman, thereby giving the false confession that we in some way acknowledge the same “God” as a denier of the Holy Trinity, (“We acknowledge and affirm that all human beings are created by God and thereby have an inherent dignity. We also believe that God created each person male or female; therefore, sexual difference is not an accident or a flaw—it is a gift from God that helps draw us closer to each other and to God. What God has created is good. ‘God created mankind in his image; in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them’ [Gen. 1:27]); and

WHEREAS, Scripture clearly teaches that Christ’s body and blood is bodily present in the Sacrament; and

WHEREAS, The Lutheran Confessions give us the proper, biblical, and clear confession of the Bible concerning the Lord’s Supper in unambiguous terminology and specific antitheses; and

WHEREAS, A public statement signed by LCMS members with Protestants must avoid any indication that we agree with them on the doctrine of Baptism or the Lord’s Supper; and

WHEREAS, At least three members of the LCMS, Dr. Robert Kolb, Dr. Erik Herrmann, and Dr. Gilbert Meilaender, joined with many Protestants in publicly signing a “Reforming Catholic Confession,” a “Mere Protestant” statement, which sets forth the Reformed view of Baptism and the Lord’s Supper, and describes them as “tangible expressions of the gospel insofar as they vividly depict our dying, rising, and incorporation into Jesus’ body,” and fails both to confess the true and real bodily presence of Christ in the Supper and to condemn the rejection of this true bodily presence; and

WHEREAS, These signatures of public documents are contrary to the ordination vows of Lutheran pastors in the LCMS and their voluntary subscription of the Lutheran Confessions; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Pastors’ Conference of the Wyoming District of the LCMS call on President Harrison, Dr. Seltz, Dr. Kolb, Dr. Herrmann, and Dr. Meilaender to repent and publicly withdraw their names from these public documents, and be it further

Resolved, That the Pastors’ Conference of the Wyoming District of the LCMS formally memorialize Synod in its 2019 convention to direct the Commission on Theology and Church Relations to address the signing of public interfaith and interdenominational statements by members of Synod.

Pastors’ Conference
Wyoming District
6. Pastoral Ministry and Seminaries

REPORTS
R1, R1.1, R1.2, R2, R2.1, R4, R4.1–2, R12, R58, R59.1–13, R65, R66

OVERTURES

Ov. 6-01
To Direct a Review of Admission and Certification for Routes to Ordination

WHEREAS, Jesus said “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore, pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.” (Matt. 9:37–38); and

WHEREAS, “The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task.” (1 Tim. 3:1); and

WHEREAS, The Holy Scriptures define the personal qualifications of men who are able to serve in the Office of the Holy Ministry:

Therefore, an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God’s church? He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil. (1 Tim. 3:2–7)

And the Lord’s servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, after being captured by him to do his will. (2 Tim. 2:24–26)

This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you—if anyone is above reproach, the husband of one wife, and his children are believers and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination. For an overseer, as God’s steward, must be above reproach. He must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or a drunkard or violent or greedy for gain, but hospitable, a lover of good, self-controlled, upright, holy, and disciplined. He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to Rebuke those who contradict it. (Titus 1:5–9); and

WHEREAS, The Constitution of the Synod states that “[t]he Synod, under Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions, shall ... recruit and train pastors” (Const. Art. III 3); and

WHEREAS, The Synod has resolved in 2016 Resolution 6-02:

Resolved, That the seminaries in consultation with the Council of Presidents review their admissions and certification standards to ensure that all those admitted to or certified through any of the routes to the Office of the Holy Ministry conform to the personal qualifications outlined in Holy Scriptures (1 Tim. 3:1–7; 2 Tim. 2:24–26; Titus 1:5–9), including that they be a biological male (Gen. 1:26; Matt. 19:4; Acts 1:21; 1 Tim. 3:2), the husband of only one wife if married (1 Tim. 3:2, Titus 1:6; see also Apology of the Augsburg Confession XXIII); and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod in convention uphold these scriptural and confessional qualifications of the holy ministry by directing the seminaries and district presidents to ensure that (1) the candidate for office be examined by a seminary faculty or the colloquy committee to certify his fitness in life, doctrine, and confessional commitment; (2) he be called by the church to a particular field of service in the public teaching of God’s Word and administration of the Holy Sacraments; and (3) he be ordained into this office by the appropriate district president or his representative according to the order of the church” (2016 Res. 6-02, emphasis added); and

WHEREAS, There may be men who seek admission or certification to the Office of the Holy Ministry in the Synod who admit to having homosexual attraction or desire toward other men; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Synod in convention direct the seminaries in consultation with the Council of Presidents to review their admissions and certification standards, so that no man who admits to having homosexual attraction or desire be admitted or certified through any of the routes to the Office of the Holy Ministry.

Circuit 3
Southern Illinois District

Ov. 6-02
To Restore Both Biblical Languages to the Education of Future Pastors

WHEREAS, One of the major qualifications for a man aspiring to the Office of the Holy/Public Ministry is his ability to teach (1 Tim. 3:2); and

WHEREAS, “We believe, teach and confess that the only rule and norm according to which all teachings, together with all teachers, should be evaluated and judged (2 Tim. 3:15–17) are the prophetic and apostolic Scriptures of the Old and New Testament alone” (Formula of Concord, Summary Content, Rule, and Norm 1); and

WHEREAS, To teach, a man in the Office of the Holy/Public Ministry should be able to understand the Scripture as God breathed it out (2 Tim. 3:16); and

WHEREAS, The Old Testament was initially “breathed out” in Biblical Hebrew (small portions of the Old Testament, most notably of Daniel, are written in Aramaic), and the New Testament in Koine Greek; and

WHEREAS, Much in the Scriptures that points to Christ and him crucified is embedded in the nuances of both Biblical languages and can be lost in translation; and

WHEREAS, Of the routes approved by Synod through which men are prepared for the Office of the Holy/Public Ministry, only the residential Masters of Divinity route requires training in both Hebrew and Greek, while the remainder of the routes to “general pastor” require either Greek only or neither Biblical language, and the Specific Ministry Pastor program requires neither Biblical language (2016 Convention Report R5-14A, Workbook, pp. 270–
Resolved, That the English District in convention call upon the LCMS to require instruction in both Biblical Hebrew and Koine Greek as prerequisites for admission to the Office of the Holy/Public Ministry; and be it further

Resolved, That the English District in convention encourage our seminaries, with Synod funding, to include Biblical Hebrew and Koine Greek in the curricula for all of the pathways to the Office of the Holy/Public Ministry; and be it finally

Resolved, That the English District in convention urge our seminaries to develop continuing education opportunities for all pastors to obtain and review such training.

English District

Ov. 6-03

To Increase the Academic Standards of the Synod’s “Specific Ministry Pastor” (SMP) Program

WHEREAS, Jesus sets an example of the importance of a robust theological education by teaching his disciples for nearly three uninterrupted years during which time he warns them to “beware the leaven of the Pharisees” (Matt. 16:6), along with many other admonitions to watch, pray, guard and then to baptize and teach all nations “to observe all that I have commanded you” (Matt. 28:20); and

WHEREAS, After his conversion on the road to Damascus, Paul goes away into Arabia to learn the Scriptures anew in light of the death and resurrection of Jesus and after three years goes up to Jerusalem to present himself to Peter and to the other Apostles to be recognized as one called by God to preach and teach (Acts 9; Gal. 1:17–18); and

WHEREAS, After he had preached and taught for many years, Paul says to pastor Timothy, “Command and teach these things … set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity … devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching … keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching” (1 Tim. 4:11–13, 16). Paul also challenges Timothy to “do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the Word of Truth” (2 Tim. 2:15), and to “preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching …” (2 Tim. 4:2–3a); and

WHEREAS, “Handling the Word of Truth” rightly requires diligent study of God’s Word and our Lutheran Confessions, basic understanding of the original Biblical languages, of the dogmatics and historical texts of the church, of the many heresies that the devil continues to promote, of hermeneutical principles and homiletical approaches as well as a good grasp of the entirety of God’s Word coupled with an aptitude to teach; and

WHEREAS, “Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour” (1 Peter 5:8), so too does he desire to destroy the teacher and the pure teaching of God’s Word of Truth; and

WHEREAS, Due to the importance of the work and the challenges of the vocation, the church is cautioned by Jesus’ brother James, “Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness” (James 3:1); and

WHEREAS, A teacher who teaches falsely, even from ignorance, leads many astray from the Truth (Matt. 5:19–20; 18:6); and

WHEREAS, We desire to protect hearers of the Word from false teaching as well as those who preach the Word from being unprepared for their divinely given task; and

WHEREAS, Our congregations need well-trained pastors and the men who dedicate themselves to this high calling need to be well-prepared to succeed in the task for which they are sent; and

WHEREAS, World Lutheranism continues to look to our seminaries to send teachers and to receive students so that their church bodies may benefit from greater theological education; and

WHEREAS, Both of our seminaries have recently undergone adjustments and improvements to their curricula to better serve the residential students; and

WHEREAS, The education of pastors remains one of the matters of primary importance, and is one of the reasons the Synod exists; and

WHEREAS, The Specific Ministry Pastor (SMP) program of Concordia Seminary, Saint Louis (CSL), requires only a total of 16 online courses that are taught over four years. Each class being only “an 11-week class,” and each course is “counted as two-semester credit-hour courses.” For a total of 32 credit-hours. After the ninth course is completed, the man in the SMP program is called by and ordained into the congregation that at the outset signed an agreement with him to be their vicar and enter this program, he is rostered as an SMP pastor and is permitted to administer the Sacraments as any general pastor (“Specific Ministry Pastor,” Concordia Seminary, csl.edu/academics/programs/specific-ministry-pastor-smp/); and

WHEREAS, Though the SMP program of Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne (CTSFW), offers a slightly different curriculum, the number of online courses and credit-hours are the same as CSL’s program (“Specific Ministry Pastor,” Concordia Theological Seminary, ctsfw.edu/future-students/pastoral/smp/program-structure/); and

WHEREAS, In dramatic contrast to the SMP program, the alternate route program of CSL requires a total of 77 semester credit-hours, distributed over two years of on-campus education plus a year of vicarage, prior to Completion of the program, certification, and ordination with no guarantee of a calling congregation and placement. In addition, the Alternate Route program of CTSFW requires 95 quarter credit-hours during two years of on-campus education plus a year of vicarage and a theological interview prior to completion of the program, certification, and ordination, also with no guarantee of a calling congregation and placement (“About the Alternate Route Program” Concordia Theological Seminary, ctsfw.edu/future-students/pastoral/ar/); therefore be it

Resolved, That the Montana District in convention memorialize the Synod and her two seminaries, to immediately begin work to bring the academic standards of the SMP program up to the standards of the residential alternate route program by the start of the academic year 2021 so that even though the time spent on
campus will be significantly less than in the residential program, still the academic competence of the two programs will be equivalent; and be it further

Resolved, That when the man in the SMP program completes all of his course work and has undergone a final theological competency interview (known also as a “theological interview”) by the institution administering the SMP program in which he is participating, the SMP pastor would then be called, ordained, and rostered as an alternate route pastor; and be it further

Resolved, That additional costs incurred by the seminaries to make all of their residential classes suitable for distance education as well as all additional costs incurred by adding necessary staff to cover the teaching of these classes be included in the tuition of the program and be borne primarily by the district that requested the man to pursue ordination through this course of study; and be it finally

Resolved, That the Montana District memorialize the Synod in convention to adopt this resolution as its own.

Montana District

Ov. 6-04

To Revise the Specific Ministry Pastor Limitations

WHEREAS, Service as an ordained member of a district board encompasses the context of the specific ministry pastor’s call; and

WHEREAS, The gifts, talents, and insights of specific ministry pastors can bring blessing to the decision-making processes of district boards; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Atlantic District in convention memorialize the Synod in convention to revise Bylaw 2.13.1 (b) to read:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

2.13.1 A “specific ministry pastor” is a minister of religion—ordained who has completed...

... (b) A specific ministry pastor is not eligible to

(1) serve as a voting delegate to a national convention of the Synod—but may serve as an advisory delegate to national conventions and as a pastoral delegate to district conventions;

(2) hold any elected or appointed office on the district or national Synod level that is assigned by the Bylaws of the Synod to “a pastor” or “an ordained minister” (although specific ministry pastors may serve in all other capacities, especially representing the ministerial contexts in which they serve), carries the responsibilities of ecclesiastical supervision, explicitly the office of District President; or

(3) supervise vicars; or

(4) serve as a circuit visitor.

... Atlantic District

Ov. 6-05

To Improve the Specific Ministry Pastor Program

WHEREAS, The 2007 Synod convention established the Specific Ministry Pastor (SMP) program to help congregations unable to support a pastor; and

WHEREAS, The SMP program was intended to further meet the needs of the church for pastors to serve in specific ministry contexts as determined by congregations and districts; and

WHEREAS, The SMP program was established to ensure commitment to the biblical and confessional understanding of The Office of the Holy Ministry, and, specifically, Article XIV of the Augsburg Confession; and

WHEREAS, Both Synod seminaries operate SMP programs which provide academic training to candidates while serving concurrently in a specific ministry setting; and

WHEREAS, The graduates of the SMP program have been a blessing to the Synod and its congregations, including congregations of the English District (EN); and

WHEREAS, 2016 Resolution 13-02A encourages Licensed Lay Deacons engaged in Word and Sacrament ministry to either colloquize as an SMP or enter the SMP program, thus affirming that the SMP program will continue to be a distinct recognized route to the ministry in the The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS); and

WHEREAS, These positive intentions and benefits of the SMP route have been diminished or weakened by various factors, including:

• That men admitted to the SMP become ordained before completing their academic program, with some administering the Word and the Sacraments prior to ordination;

• That SMPs are not required to learn a biblical language;

• That there are men serving as SMPs in settings which could reasonably support a general pastor, in direct conflict with the stated purpose of the SMP program and in contradiction to 2013 LCMS Res. 5-04B;

• That the Constitution and Bylaws of the LCMS are not clear as to what might constitute or limit specific ministry contexts;

therefore be it

Resolved, That the English District give thanks to God for the faithful service of SMPs within congregations of the district; and be it further

Resolved, That the district memorialize the Synod to improve the SMP program in the following ways:

• That ordination be deferred until all SMP course work has been completed, in faithfulness to Article XIV of the Augsburg Confession;

• That all SMPs be required to complete a prescribed continuing education program which includes the study of the biblical languages;

• That district presidents do not authorize SMPs to serve in settings which could reasonably support a general pastor;

• That the Synod in convention establish parameters for specific ministry contexts;

and be it finally

Resolved, That the president of the district be encouraged to implement these improvements already at the district level.

English District
To Upgrade and Limit the SMP Program

WHEREAS, Holy Scripture sets high standards for the theological aptitude of pastors, that they be “able to teach” (1 Tim. 3:2) and “able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it” (Titus 1:9), and that “Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers” (James 3:1); and

WHEREAS, The curriculum and standards for the Specific Ministry Pastor (SMP) program are significantly lower than they are for the Master of Divinity program at our two residential seminaries; and

WHEREAS, A more thoroughly trained pastor ought to be sought, if at all possible; therefore be it

Resolved, That the President of Synod and the two seminaries work together to upgrade the curriculum and standards of the SMP program, bringing them more in line with the curriculum and standards of the residential seminaries, including the requirement of ability in New Testament Greek; and be it further

Resolved, That admission to the SMP program be limited to cases only where a more thoroughly trained pastor would not be available and thus not be open to congregations that already have a pastor.

St. Matthew
Bonne Terre, MO

To Request Synod to Move Ordination Upon Completion of SMP Four-Year Program

WHEREAS, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, in convention in 2001 passed Resolution 3-08B, “To Address Needs and Opportunities for Pastoral Ministry in Specialized Situations”; and

WHEREAS, 2001 Res. 3-08B provided for Licensed Lay Deacons (LLD) to continue to be trained under supervision (1989 Wichita Res. 3-05B); and

WHEREAS, 2016 Synod Res. 13-02A “To Regularize Status of Licensed Lay Deacons Involved in Word and Sacrament Ministry” regularized ministries toward ordination consistent with the Book of Concord (Augsburg Confession XIV and Apology of the Augsburg Confession XIV); and

WHEREAS, Scripture exhorts the Church “do not be hasty in the laying on of hands” (1 Tim. 5:22); and

WHEREAS, Res.13-02A provides several options toward ordination of existing LLD, including:

- Colloquy as a Specific Ministry Pastor (SMP),
- Colloquy as a “General” Pastor of Synod,
- SMP (seminary track, sixteen courses),
- Alternate Route (seminary training), and
- General Ministry (seminary track); and

WHEREAS, The Synod in convention in 2007 passed Res. 5-01B “To Establish Specific Ministry Pastor Program”; and

WHEREAS, Res. 5-01B provided for SMP candidates to receive “preordination curriculum, and post-ordination curriculum,” covering two two-year segments of the seminary education; and

WHEREAS, Steps 3 and 4 of the six-step process of the SMP program, as approved by Res. 5-01B, provided that a certification, call, and ordination be allowed after successful completion of two years of preordination studies; and

WHEREAS, Step 5 of the process approved by Res. 5-01B provided that the post-ordination curriculum include “OT content and theology, NT content and theology, gifts of Christ, body of Christ, Church history and the history of Lutheranism, Christian education, pastoral theology, and theology of missions…residential seminars [including] pastoral formation, issues in pastoral ministry, team ministry, urban ministry, and spiritual formation…field seminars [including] basic mission planting, edge gathering, and advanced mission planter training.” (2007 Proceedings, 134); and

WHEREAS, Step 4 also included the caveat that “Refusal to complete the Specific Ministry Pastor Program would result in the pastor’s removal from the Synod roster, at which point he is not eligible for a call”; and

WHEREAS, The provision of ordination after two years, with the proviso that the rostered worker complete two more years of formal, required education, has led to men being removed from the Synod roster, and created confusion about the Office of the Holy Ministry; therefore be it

Resolved, That currently enrolled SMP students (preordination and post-ordination) continue in the SMP track of two years toward ordination and two years of required post-ordination requirements; and be it further

Resolved, That the Board of Directors of the Mid-South District of the Synod memorialize the Synod 2019 convention to modify the provisions of the SMP program as outlined in 2007 Res. 5-01B to require students enrolling in the SMP program after the 2020 academic year to finish all academic requirements of the SMP program before ordination and placement on the minister of religion—ordained roster of the Synod; and be it further

Resolved, That the Council of Presidents and the Pastoral Formation Committee would consider requiring students enrolled in the SMP programs to finish all academic requirements of the SMP program before ordination and placement on the minister of religion—ordained roster of the Synod; and be it further

Resolved, That the Council of Presidents and the Pastoral Formation Committee would report on these recommended improvements and submit any corresponding proposed bylaw amendments to the 2022 convention of the Synod for consideration; and be it further

Resolved, That students who have completed the first academic year be designated as vicars, and may conduct services under supervision of their local pastor, and approval of the respective seminary program director and district president; and be it further

Resolved, That SMP vicars will remain in that role as long as they are enrolled and actively pursuing SMP ordination; and be it further

Resolved, That if a student for any reason is no longer enrolled in the SMP program the vicar designation is removed until or unless he again becomes actively enrolled in the SMP program; and be it further

Resolved, That any delays or postponements of a student’s progress must be approved by the respective seminary program director and the district president, while delayed or postponed the vicar designation will be removed; and be it further

2019 Convention Workbook
Resolved, That a separate SMP vicar designation be considered for purposes of Synod and district salary guidelines; and be it finally

Resolved, That the SMP vicar may receive compensation under the vicarage agreement with the congregation and seminary program, but without admission to the roster of the Synod.

Mid-South District; Board of Directors, Mid-South District

Ov. 6-08

To Support the SMP Program

WHEREAS, There is a severe shortage of pastors and church workers anticipated in the near future; and

WHEREAS, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS), gathered in convention in 2007, created another path to ordination with the specific ministry pastor (SMP) program, thus enabling more men to become ordained as specific ministry pastors; and

WHEREAS, The SMP program has already enabled three congregations of Circuit 15 of the Southeastern District to benefit from the SMP program (one congregation has an ordained SMP pastor, another has an SMP vicar, and a third has a person entering the SMP program in 2019); and

WHEREAS, There are not enough eligible students preparing for church work in the current seminary program to meet the current, much less future needs, of the church; and

WHEREAS, Many congregations are currently without pastors or other needed church workers; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Circuit 15 pastors of the Southeastern District of the LCMS petition the 2019 Synod convention to reaffirm the importance and value of the SMP program in providing ordained SMP pastors for the future needs of its member congregations and other ministries; and be it further

Resolved, That the 2019 Synod convention encourage the districts to provide additional funding for SMP students as needed, so that no one will be deprived of entering or completing the SMP program due to financial hardships; and be it finally

Resolved, That the LCMS form a strategic partnership with the districts to meet the future needs of its congregations and ministries with the church workers that will be needed.

Grace
Concord, NC

Ov. 6-09

To Support the Synod’s Specific Ministry Pastor Program

WHEREAS, There is a severe shortage of pastors and church workers anticipated in the near future; and

WHEREAS, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS), gathered in convention in 2007, created another path to ordination with the specific ministry pastor (SMP) program, thus enabling more men to become ordained as specific ministry pastors; and

WHEREAS, The SMP program has already enabled four congregations of Circuit 15 of the Southeastern District to benefit from the SMP program (one congregation has an ordained SMP sole pastor, another will soon have an ordained SMP assistant pastor, another has an SMP vicar and a fourth has a person entering the SMP program in February 2019); and

WHEREAS, There are not enough eligible students preparing for church work in the current seminary program to meet the current, much less future needs of the church; and

WHEREAS, Many congregations are currently without pastors or other needed church workers; therefore be it

Resolved, That the 2019 Synod convention encourage the districts to provide additional funding for SMP students as needed, so that no one will be deprived of entering or completing the SMP program due to financial hardships; and be it further

Resolved, That the LCMS form a strategic partnership with the districts to meet the future needs of its congregations and ministries with the church workers that will be needed.

Circuit 15
Southeastern District

Ov. 6-10

To Colloquize Specific Ministry Pastors for the “Regular” Ministers of Religion—Ordained Pastoral Ministry Status

WHEREAS, According to Bylaw 2.13.1, “Specific Ministry Pastor Status and Limitations”:

2.13.1 A “specific ministry pastor” is a minister of religion—ordained who has completed the requirements for service as a specific ministry pastor and has been examined by one of the Synod’s seminaries, has received a regular call, and has been placed by the Council of Presidents into a specific Word and Sacrament ministry context. He is eligible to serve only in that specific ministry context for which he has been trained and may not be offered or accept a call for ministry for which he has not been certified as determined by his district president. He shall serve under the supervision of his district president and another pastor who is not a specific ministry pastor.

(a) Because he is under supervision of another pastor and because a specific ministry pastor’s theological education has been formed in part by and for a specific ministry context, he may not be placed or called into ecclesiastical roles that exercise pastoral oversight outside the context of his call.

(b) A specific ministry pastor is not eligible to

1. serve as a voting delegate to a national convention of the Synod—but may serve as an advisory delegate to national conventions and as a pastoral delegate to district conventions;
2. hold any elected or appointed office on the district or national Synod level that is assigned by the Bylaws of the Synod to “a pastor” or “an ordained minister” (although specific ministry pastors may serve in all other capacities, especially representing the ministerial contexts in which they serve);
3. supervise vicars; or
4. serve as a circuit visitor.

and

WHEREAS, Constitution Article VI requires conditions for acquiring and holding membership in the Synod which include the following:

3. Regular call of pastors, teachers, directors of Christian education, directors of Christian outreach, directors of family life ministry, directors of parish music, deaconesses, certified lay ministers, and parish assistants and regular election of lay delegates by the congregations, as also the blamelessness of the life of such.

2019 Convention Workbook
6. Pastors, teachers, directors of Christian education, directors of Christian outreach, directors of family life ministry, directors of parish music, deaconesses, certified lay ministers, or candidates for these offices not coming from recognized orthodox church bodies must submit to a colloquium before being received.

7. Congregations and individuals shall be received into membership at such time and manner, and according to such procedures, as shall be set forth in the bylaws to this Constitution.

WHEREAS, Bylaw 2.5, “Calling of Ministers of Religion by Congregations” states, “Congregations that are members of the Synod shall call and be served only by (1) ordained ministers who have been admitted to their respective ministries in accordance with the rules and regulations set forth in these Bylaws and have thereby become members of the Synod…” (Bylaw 2.5.2); and

WHEREAS, According to Augsburg Confession Article XIV, “Concerning church order they teach that no one should teach publicly in the church or administer the sacraments unless properly called” (Rite vocatus means called in a regular manner by a proper public authority—Kolb, ed., 47n81); and

WHEREAS, The doctrinal statement adopted by the Synod in 1851 and re-affirmed by the 2001 Synod convention in Resolution 7-17A, Ministry Thesis VII, “Church and Ministry,” states: “The holy ministry is the authority conferred by God through the congregation, as holder of the priesthood and of all church power, to administer in public office the common rights of the spiritual priesthood in behalf of all”; and

WHEREAS, The Brief Statement of the Doctrinal Position of the Missouri Synod in Thesis 30 clearly states the rights and privileges of the royal priests: “The Original and True Possessors of All Christian Rights and Privileges – Since the Christians are the Church, it is self-evident that they alone originally possess the spiritual gifts and rights which Christ has gained for, and given to, His Church” and Thesis #31 states: “By the public ministry we mean the office by which the Word of God is preached and the Sacraments are administered by order and in the name of a Christian congregation” (emphasis added); and

WHEREAS, Currently in the Synod, under Bylaw 3.10 (d), “The Pastoral Formation Committee shall be responsible for ensuring that the Synod’s objective of training pastors is fulfilled consistently (Constitution Art. III 3)” (Bylaw 3.10.4) and “shall monitor and receive reports from all directors and committees charged with oversight of all routes to ordination (e.g., Specific Ministry Pastor Committee) and shall foster coordination and collaboration among them” (Bylaw 3.10.4.4); and

WHEREAS, There is coordination and collaboration between the Colloquy Committee, the seminaries, Specific Ministry Pastor (SMP) Committee and the Pastoral Formation Committee; and

WHEREAS, “The Colloquy Committee for the Pastoral Ministry shall be responsible for the reception and processing of applications for individual membership in the Synod through colloquy” (Bylaw 3.10.2), and “The Colloquy Committee for the Pastoral Ministry shall establish and monitor academic, theological, and personal standards for admission to the office of the pastoral ministry by colloquy after consultation with the faculties of the seminaries” (Bylaw 3.10.2.2), and “In consultation with the President of the Synod, it shall develop all necessary policies to govern eligibility and the process to be followed to determine qualifications and suitability for pastoral service in the Synod” (Bylaw 3.10.2.2 [a]); and

WHEREAS, “Applicants for the ordained ministry recommended by the respective district president who are eligible for colloquy under the Colloquy Committee’s published policies may make application to the committee. Other applicants for the ordained ministry, such as ministers of religion—commissioned, laymen of a special ethnic or linguistic group, and laymen who have fulfilled at least ten years of significant service in a congregation, may make application to a seminary for the Residential Alternate Route or any other appropriate program” (Bylaw 3.10.2.3); and

WHEREAS, In the history of the Synod those applicants who were considered eligible for admission to the pastoral colloquy program included “graduates of the Synod’s teachers colleges who have had at least five years of teaching experience and are in good standing” (1969, 1971, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1979 Handbooks), changed to ten years in 1981 (1981, 1983, 1986 Handbooks) and in addition “members in good standing of synodical congregations who are graduates of an established non-synodical seminary; members in good standing of synodical congregations who are over the age of 40, are college graduates, and have had considerable experience in church work; members in good standing of a synodical congregation who belong to a special ethnic or linguistic group, who have a college-level education, and who have had considerable experience in church work” (1975, 1977, 1979, 1981 Handbooks), and minor changes with omitting college graduate members over 40 in the 1983 and 1986 Handbooks; and

WHEREAS, The 2001 Handbook declared the following as eligible to apply for colloquy: “in exceptional cases, laymen who have carried out the full responsibilities of the pastoral ministry for at least 10 years, who are currently licensed for such ministry by a District President, and who have been recommended by a congregation holding membership in the Synod on the basis of that congregation’s observation and experience, and with the stated assurance that such congregation will extend a divine call asking the recommended individual to serve as their pastor; men who are graduates of programs of study leading to ordination of no less than 60 semester hours or the equivalent thereof, in length, and who have been communicant members in good standing of synodical congregations for at least two years; Other applicants for the ministry, such as commissioned ministers of religion, laymen of a special ethnic or linguistic group, and laymen who have fulfilled at least 10 years of significant service in a congregation, will participate in special theological education (alternate routes) under the direction of the seminaries” (emphasis added); therefore be it

Resolved, That the SMP be commended for their service to the Savior, the congregations and the Synod, and that the seminaries, the districts, district presidents, SMP Committee and the Pastoral Formation Committee be commended for faithfully carrying out their respective responsibilities by order and in the name of the congregations of the Synod for the sake of the mission; and be it further

Resolved, That after seven years of service as a SMP he be eligible to apply for admission to the pastoral colloquy (non-SMP and no limitations as a “General Pastor”) program as set forth in the bylaws resulting in a “General Pastor” minister of religion—ordained pastoral ministry status for the sake of the mission; and be it further

Resolved, That Bylaw 2.13.1 be amended as follows:
Present/Proposed Wording

Specific Ministry Pastor Status and Limitations

2.13.1 A “specific ministry pastor” is a minister of religion—ordained who has completed the requirements for service as a specific ministry pastor and has been examined by one of the Synod’s seminaries, has received a regular call, and has been placed by the Council of Presidents into a specific Word and Sacrament ministry context. He is eligible to serve only in that specific ministry context for which he has been trained and may not be offered or accept a call for ministry for which he has not been certified as determined by his district president. He shall serve under the supervision of his district president and another pastor who is not a specific ministry pastor.

... (d) A specific ministry pastor who is in good standing and has the recommendation of the congregation and the district president is eligible to apply for admission to the pastoral colloquy program after seven complete years of service in a congregation.

and be it finally

Resolved, That the Commission on Handbook, in consultation with the SMP Committee, the Pastoral Formation Committee and the Colloquy Committee, revise any other pertinent and relevant bylaw to be in harmony with new Bylaw 2.13.1 (d).

Mount Calvary, North Olmsted, OH; Redeemer, Fort Collins, CO

Ov. 6-11

To Develop a Worker Training Plan

WHEREAS, Recent analysis of pastors within The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) reveals that, over the next 10 years, roughly two-thirds of today’s pastors will have reached or passed the age of retirement; and

WHEREAS, Additionally, seminary graduation rates over the past decade have been well below retirement rates; and

WHEREAS, Similar shortages exist for commissioned ministers; and

WHEREAS, This analysis makes it clear that our church body has a worker supply and demand problem; and

WHEREAS, Unless these trends are reversed, before the year 2027 our church body will not have enough church workers to serve our church body; and

WHEREAS, The LCMS gathered in convention in 2016 limited Word and Sacrament ministry to ordained pastors, limiting the use of other designated servants; and

WHEREAS, Concordia Seminary, Concordia Theological Seminary, and the Concordia University System (CUS) are not currently supplying sufficient quantity of theologically trained workers to resource the mission initiatives of the Church; and

WHEREAS, These mission initiatives will be ongoing, requiring workers to be recruited, trained, and released into ministry over the coming decades; and

WHEREAS, Districts have utilized programs to provide formal theological training for potential workers, including the current Specific Ministry Program, the Ethnic Immigrant Institute of Theology, the Center for Hispanic Studies, Mission Training Center at Concordia University, Portland, and the Certified Lay Deacon Program at Concordia College—New York; and

WHEREAS, The Southeastern District of the LCMS resolved in convention to petition the 2019 convention of the LCMS to develop a worker training plan to supply pastors, ordained and commissioned ministers, and other church workers to serve the mission and congregations of the Synod, with examination of strategies and strategic partnerships for training and deploying church workers throughout the Synod; and

WHEREAS, Article XIV of the Augsburg Confession states that “no one should publicly teach in the Church or administer the Sacraments unless he be regularly called”; therefore be it

Resolved, That the LCMS, working with the Council of Presidents (COP), the seminaries, and the CUS develop a worker training plan to supply pastors, ordained and commissioned ministers, and lay deacons and other church workers working under the supervision of a pastor to serve the mission and congregations of the districts, working with our partner institutions when appropriate; and be it further

Resolved, That the LCMS complete this training plan and after authorization through the COP, present it to districts by 2021 district convention cycle.

Board of Directors
Southeastern District

Ov. 6-12

To Restore Supervision of Licensed Lay Deacon Ministry to the Districts

WHEREAS, Licensed Lay Deacons (LLD) have served faithfully under the supervision of ordained pastors, often with no compensation, to bring God’s Word and Sacraments to congregations which are not able to secure ordained pastors to lead worship either due to financial, geographic, or language/cultural challenges; and

WHEREAS, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod in its 2016 convention Resolution 13-02A resolved to end the regular use of LLDs for Word and Sacrament ministry in such situations with deadlines in 2018 for these LLDs to either end their ministry or commit to a route toward ordination by colloquy or seminary education; and

WHEREAS, More congregations will inevitably find themselves in such situations without access to ordained pastors to conduct ministry on their behalf; and

WHEREAS, To prevent congregations from having to close, 2016 convention Res. 13-02A allowed for exceptional cases to be brought to the plenary of the Council of Presidents and the Colloquy Committee for Pastoral Ministry in order that a deacon may continue in Word and Sacrament ministry in a given situation “only during times of emergency or extraordinary need” and on a “temporary or occasional basis”; and

WHEREAS, Obtaining approval by a plenary session of the Council of Presidents and the Colloquy Committee for Pastoral Ministry (some forty-plus people from across the Synod) is a cumbersome process and burden to lay on a handful of people gathering in a small congregation in a remote area of the country, all so that they may have the weekly blessing of God’s Means of Grace; and

WHEREAS, The only other option for such congregations who are not able financially to sustain a pastor, or are not able to arrange for a multi-point parish, or to find a retired pastor willing to serve, will be to languish without regular worship; and
Whereas, Weekly worship is always a need, as the Scriptures admonish us not to neglect “to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the day drawing near,” Heb.10:25, and this need is not by nature temporary, nor are the financial crises and/or remoteness of location of these congregations; and

Whereas, “A district is the Synod itself performing the functions of the Synod” (Bylaw 4.1.1.1); therefore be it

Resolved, That the Northwest District memorialize the Synod in its 2019 convention to restore to the district president working in consultation with his circuit visitors, who are familiar with needs of each local context, the authority over approving cases of exceptional need in which deacons may be licensed to continue in Word and Sacrament ministry as LLDs; and be it further

Resolved, That the colloquy program outlined in Res. 13-02A continue to exist for LLDs in long term service in Word and Sacrament; and be it further

Resolved, That congregations be continually encouraged to seek to fill the Office of the Ministry in their midst with an ordained pastor whenever possible; and be it finally

Resolved, That the Synod in convention recognize and appreciate the contribution that LLDs have made to extend the ministry of the Gospel in a variety of extraordinary contexts around the nation.

Northwest District

Ov. 6-13

To Revoke the Requirement that District Presidents Acquire Approval of the Council of Presidents to License New Licensed Lay Deacons

Whereas, 2016 Resolution 13-02A enabled many Licensed Lay Deacons (LLD) to become Specific Ministry Pastors (SMP) by colloquy, removed the LLD designation from many who did not fit the description, and allowed LLDs to continue to be licensed and deployed when the needs of congregations and availability of men to serve them requires it; and

Whereas, Res. 13-02A requires that district presidents license men as LLDs only with the approval of the national body of the Council of Presidents (COP); and

Whereas, This new requirement adds an unnecessary layer of bureaucracy and increases the volume of paperwork and meeting time for individual district presidents as well as the COP; and

Whereas, This requirement moves ministry decisions further from local congregation ministry than necessary or desirable; therefore be it

Resolved, That the 2019 convention revoke the 2016 Res. 13-02A requirement that district presidents must acquire the approval of the COP to license new LLDs.

Michigan District

Ov. 6-14

To Revoke the Requirement the District Presidents Acquire Approval of the Council of Presidents to Retain Licensed Lay Deacons in Exceptional Circumstances

Whereas, The 2016 Resolution 13-02A of the 2016 Synod convention enabled many Licensed Lay Deacons (LLD) to become specific ministry pastors by colloquy, revoked the LLD designation from many who did not qualify, and allowed LLDs designation to continue to be licensed and deployed in exceptional circumstances when the needs of congregations require it; and

Whereas, 2016 Res. 13-02A requires that district presidents retain LLDs only with the approval of the national body of the Council of Presidents (COP); and

Whereas, The new requirement adds a layer of bureaucracy and increases the administrative workload for both individual district presidents as well as the COP; and

Whereas, This requirement transfers ministry decisions from individual district presidents, who know the needs of local congregations and the availability regional ministry resources to a larger, distant group may not; and

Whereas, This requirement can add to an atmosphere of distrust within the Synod; and

Whereas, This requirement may have the effect of reducing the number of LLDs available to serve congregations in need, thereby increasing the numbers of congregations which many be able to find approved workers; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Pacific Southwest District in convention memorialize the 2019 Synod convention to revoke the requirement of 2016 Res. 13-02A that district presidents must acquire the approval of the COP to retain licensure of LLDs in exceptional circumstances.

Pacific Southwest District

Ov. 6-15

To Thank Those Involved in Rostering Licensed Lay Deacons

Whereas, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) in its 66th convention in Milwaukee in 2016 passed Resolution 12-02A “To Regularize Status of Licensed Lay Deacons Involved in Word and Sacrament Ministry”; and

Whereas, This resolution and the subsequent colloquy process for Licensed Lay Deacons (LLD) have served to help resolve a long-standing theological debate in the Synod; and

Whereas, The resolution enables LLDs who were involved in Word and Sacrament ministry to be called and ordained to the Office of the Holy Ministry through the Specific Ministry Pastors (SMP) or colloquy; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Synod in convention thank First Vice-President Herbert Mueller and the members of the Council of Presidents who drafted the policies and procedures for the colloquy to the SMP roster for LLDs; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod in convention thank all those who have served and are serving on the LCMS Colloquy Committee and regional colloquy committees established by Res. 12-02A and commend their work to completion; and be it finally

Resolved, That the Synod in convention thank for their service all LLDs who through SMP or colloquy have joined or will be joining the ministerium of the LCMS.

Faculty, Concordia Seminary;
Faculty, Concordia Theological Seminary

2019 Convention Workbook
Ov. 6-16
To Authorize the Council of Presidents (Acting as the Board of Assignments) to Create a System for the Placement of Inactive—Candidate Members

WHEREAS, There is an increasing deficit in the number of graduating candidates required to meet the requests of congregations and other calling entities to fill vacant ordained and commissioned positions; and

WHEREAS, There is an extensive pool of both ordained and commissioned church workers on inactive—candidate status, many of whom are desiring a call; and

WHEREAS, There is currently no system in place for directly placing these educated, examined, called, and ordained/commissioned candidates into congregations who are seeking a candidate to fill a vacancy; therefore be it

Resolved, That in accordance with Bylaw 3.10.1.3, the 2019 Synod convention authorize the Council of Presidents (COP), acting as the Board of Assignments, to develop a system whereby any congregation or other calling entity that requests a graduating candidate (either ordained or commissioned) for a vacant position, but does not receive a graduating candidate might then be able to receive a member on inactive—candidate status from the Synod roster placed into that vacant position instead; and be it further

Resolved, That this system shall not be used in lieu of the placement of candidates from the seminaries, universities, and colleges of the Synod, but rather that this system may be used only after such placements have been made in an effort to fill any remaining vacations for which there were no graduating candidates available.

Board of Directors
Southeastern District

Ov. 6-18
To Fund a Synod Program of Support to Promote Increased Enrollment at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, and Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne

WHEREAS, The declaration of Jesus, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest” (Luke 10:2), is as true today as when it was spoken some 2,000 years ago; and

WHEREAS, Despite the best efforts of the seminaries, overall enrollments have declined in recent years; and

WHEREAS, The current enrollments will not support graduating classes sufficient to meet the needs of the church in terms of filling upcoming vacancies for ordained clergy and Lutheran deaconesses; and

WHEREAS, Additional trained church workers will continue to be needed for specialized ministries, such as military chaplaincy, hospital chaplaincy, missions, faith-based ministry, and other specialized ministries; and

WHEREAS, For the sake of the Gospel in our sinful world it is essential that more laborers be prepared; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Synod fund and execute a program to promote pastoral and diaconal ministry as God-pleasing vocations, as well as seminary enrollment in pursuit of those vocations to the people of the Synod, and to identify potential candidates for ministerial training at various stages of life, but particularly younger people; and be it further

In the Concordia Theological Seminary version:
Resolved, That as part of this program, all of these identified individuals be referred to both the respective seminary recruitment departments for contact and communication.

In the Concordia Seminary version:
Resolved, That as part of this program, these identified individuals all be referred to both the respective seminary recruitment departments for follow up.

Faculty, Concordia Seminary;
Faculty, Concordia Theological Seminary
Ov. 6-19

To Create a Pastor Training Program for Currently Serving Christian Pastors to Become LCMS Pastors

WHEREAS, There is a need for more pastors in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) to continue to spread the Gospel; and

WHEREAS, There is a need to recruit for the LCMS, academically trained and spiritually mature Christian pastors that are currently serving a Christian congregation (1 Tim. 3:1–7; 4:16; 6:3; 2 Tim. 2:2; 3:15–17; Titus 1:9); and

WHEREAS, There is a need for LCMS pastors to assist in identifying and training the next generation of LCMS pastors; and

WHEREAS, Local and qualified LCMS pastors may be available to assist in training the next generation of LCMS pastors; and

WHEREAS, It is necessary that the congregational/pastoral relationship continues with the candidate during the training; and

WHEREAS, There is a need for the candidate to verbalize and live out his training along with other LCMS pastors to promote unity within the body; and

WHEREAS, There is a need for the pastor to attain a graduate degree to signify the successful accomplishment of the program and attain rostered status to serve as an LCMS pastor; and

WHEREAS, God will be glorified through the addition of servants to the LCMS; therefore be it

Resolved, That a program be created to train and roster new LCMS pastors; and be it further

Resolved, That the program be created to recruit pastors who hold at least a bachelor’s degree and who are currently pastoring a congregation for at least two years; and be it further

Resolved, That the applicants to the program be recommended by at least two rostered LCMS pastors and interviewed by the district president having jurisdiction; and be it further

Resolved, That upon acceptance to the program the candidate be assigned a currently rostered LCMS pastor as a mentor for the duration of the program; and be it further

Resolved, That the candidate begin with immediate vicarage upon acceptance to the program; and be it further

Resolved, That the program consist of up to 40 credit hours of distance learning; and be it further

Resolved, That the candidate successfully accomplish a graduation interview conducted by the district president and any two rostered LCMS pastors of his choice; and be it further

Resolved, That at the successful completion of the program the pastor receive a master’s degree in religion and a rostered status as an LCMS pastor; and be it finally

Resolved, That the LCMS will add servants to glorify God through the creation of this program.

Trinity
Delray Beach, FL

Ov. 6-20

To Support and Utilize Preach the Word

WHEREAS, The pastor is chiefly called “to administer the Word of God in its full truth and purity as contained in the sacred scriptures of the Old and New Testaments and as set forth in the confessional writings of the Evangelical Lutheran Church as found in the Book of Concord” (Supplement to the Diploma of Vocation for Pastor); and

WHEREAS, St. Paul was inspired to write, “…And how are they to hear without someone preaching? … So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ” (Rom. 10:14,17) and “I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus … preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching.” (2 Tim. 4:1,2); and

WHEREAS, Luther writes, “To preach Christ means to feed the soul, make it righteous, set it free, and save it” (Luther’s Work [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1957, 31:346]), and “Here we also see the power of this preaching of the Gospel. Beyond all the might and power of the world and of all creatures, Christ proves His ability to draw the hearts of men to Himself through the Word alone and to bring them to His obedience without any compulsion or external force at all. Apart from Christ, all men are everywhere and in the power of the devil, of sin, and of death; but He rescues them for an eternal, divine freedom, righteousness, and life. This great and marvelous thing is accomplished entirely through the office of preaching the gospel. Viewed superficially, this looks like a trifling thing, without any power, like any ordinary man’s speech and word. But when such preaching is heard, his invisible, divine power is at work in the hearts of men through the Holy Spirit.” (Augsburg Confession XIII 291); and

WHEREAS, The President’s Office initiated Preach the Word as an ongoing project in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) in honor of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation (1517–2017) to help pastors work together to improve their preaching through video modules and by interacting with seminary professors and fellow preachers; and

WHEREAS, Both seminaries and the Council of Presidents energetically support preaching excellence, the Preach the Word project, and the Synod’s increasing emphasis on continuing education for all pastors; and

WHEREAS, The 2016 Synod convention endorsed and encouraged the use of Preach the Word by 94 percent; and

WHEREAS, Six modules have been completed to date: (1) The Use of Story in Preaching by Dr. David Schmitt, (2) The Use of Biblical Text in Sermon Preparation by Dr. Dean Nadasdy, (3) Delivering the Gospel Live and in Person by Dr. Carl Fickenscher, (4) Applying God’s Word into People’s Lives by Dr. Glenn Nielsen, (5) The Use of Technology in Preaching by Rev. Matt Peeples, and (6) Sacramental Preaching by Dr. David Peterson; and

WHEREAS, Additional modules in production for future release include: (1) Preaching the Baptismal Life by Dr. Reed Lessing, (2) Preaching and Mission by Dr. Douglas Rutt, (3) Preaching in a Post-Christian Context by Dr. Gregory Seltz, (4) Sermon Structure by Dr. Carl Fickenscher, (5) Catechetical Preaching by Rev. Peter Bender, and (6) Law and Gospel Preaching by Dr. Steven Mueller; and
WHEREAS, Preach the Word usage continues to accelerate with over 5,243 video plays, 1,587 downloads, and 1,134 finishes (LCMS Communications); therefore be it

Resolved, That the 2019 Synod convention joyfully and vigorously encourage pastors and congregations to participate in the Preach the Word project in the continued spirit of the historic event of the Reformation and remembrance of the 500th Anniversary of the Reformation (1517–2017); and be it further

Resolved, That every district president and circuit visitor strongly encourage the pastors under his ecclesiastical supervision to make use of Preach the Word for their continued education in crafting their skill in the excellence of preaching; and be it finally

Resolved, That every hearer of the preached Word “fear and love God so that we do not despise preaching and His Word, but hold it sacred and gladly hear and learn it” (Small Catechism I, Third Commandment).

Faculty, Concordia Seminary;
Faculty, Concordia Theological Seminary

Ov. 6-21

To Support the Role of Our Seminaries in Ongoing Pastoral Education

WHEREAS, The third objective of our Synod in Constitution Article III is to “Recruit and train pastors, teachers, and other professional church workers and provide opportunity for their continuing growth”; and

WHEREAS, Our Synod is blessed with two seminaries that are dedicated to the formation of servants in Christ who will faithfully carry out the Great Commission of Christ, Matt. 28:19–20, to teach “all things whatsoever” taught in the Holy Scriptures and (as stated in the ordination vows of every pastor) in our Lutheran Confessions as the faithful exposition thereof; and

WHEREAS, Consistent with the Great Commission, our seminaries are reaching out to, and their expertise is sought by, those members of Lutheran churches in all the world who seek theological education consistent with the affirmation of the inerrancy of Scripture and joyful adherence in doctrine and practice to confessional Lutheranism in the face of the rejection of God’s Word and truth by the world; and

WHEREAS, Our seminaries not only form workers for their initial ordination or commissioning, but provide advanced degrees, postgraduate study, and other ongoing educational programs, which benefits our called workers and the Church at large by providing instruction at the highest academic level through skilled and seasoned faculty, as an “opportunity for continuing growth”; and

WHEREAS, The Synod in convention has recognized the need for pastoral continuing education at every convention since at least 1998, most recently in 2016 Resolution 17-01, “To Enhance Clergy Continuing Education” (adopted [Yes: 802; No:123]), which provides in relevant part:

WHEREAS, Our Synod is blessed with excellent seminaries where the foundation for pastoral formation is properly laid and the theological grounding so necessary for pastoral ministry is established. In the tradition of Luther, however, our Synod also recognizes that pastoral formation is a lifelong endeavor and that the early years of ministry are a critical time in that learning process and a time of significant and critical transition for them and for the congregations they serve; and

WHEREAS, The Post-Seminary Applied Learning and Support (PALS) initiative was designed as a collaborative partnership between The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) districts and the Synod to support new pastors and their wives in their first few years in the ministry, facilitating the transition from seminary life to parish ministry and offering opportunities for new pastors to apply their seminary education as they begin ministry with a unique flock in a specific place; and

WHEREAS, During the PALS meetings, the new pastors worship, study, and discuss new ministry experiences in the company of an experienced pastor. They choose topics to study and ministry skills to hone that are most pertinent to their and their congregation’s specific needs; and

WHEREAS, Our culture and society have become increasingly secularized and hostile to the faith. Our pastors need more than ever to be engaged in a process of lifelong education and development to be best prepared to raise up disciples for Christ by teaching the faithful, reaching the lost, and sharing Christ’s love through care and acts of mercy for this generation and generations to come; and

WHEREAS, While presently over 200 pastors are involved in PALS, over 500 pastors are involved in continuing education events hosted by the seminaries, and another 70 pastors are enlisted as Doctor of Ministry students each year; and

WHEREAS, One can never know the Scriptures and Lutheran Confessions too well or study and practice ways to apply this knowledge and skills in specific ministry contexts too much; and...

WHEREAS, 2016 Res. 17-01 also specifically endorses the PALS program, developed collaboratively with the districts of the Synod and operated by the seminaries, as well as affirming the role of the seminaries in providing continuing theological education; and

WHEREAS, Continuing education for new pastors, though vital, imposes financial and time demands upon pastors, their families, and their congregations; thus, it makes no sense to incur additional expense and spend extra time to duplicate programs that have already been created Synod-wide through the cooperation of the districts and the seminaries; and

WHEREAS, It also makes sense that continuing education programs of a formal nature be overseen by the seminaries, who have the vocation, resources, and, through their faculties, the expertise to do so; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Synod in convention give thanks and encouragement to all those involved in ongoing pastoral education, be they students or instructors; and be it further

Resolved, That in light of the many time and financial demands upon local congregations, pastors, and their families from the attendance at continuing education programs, districts be directed to use and financially support the PALS program for new pastor orientation and not to impose additional requirements upon new pastors over and above those applicable to all pastors (e.g., general pastoral conferences); and be it further

Resolved, That effective September 1, 2020, all programs of continuing theological education for ordained members of Synod conducted by an recognized service organization of Synod that are intended to meet the requirements of Synod and/or be included in a
continuing education portfolio to be recorded under question 27 of
the Council of Presidents’ Self Evaluation Tool shall be approved,
once every three years, by an accreditation committee consisting of
three members of the faculty of each seminary selected by the board
of regents thereof; and be it further

Resolved, That this resolution is in no way intended to impede or
denigrate the work done, formally or informally, by organizations
such as Doxology, Grace Place, and others; through district pastoral
conferences and free conferences; through the Synod and its
agencies; by the Concordia University System institutions; or
through winkels and fraternal encouragement; and be it finally

Resolved, That the Synod seeks, and this resolution shall be
interpreted to ensure that formal academic theological continuing
education is conducted in a uniform manner, consistent with best
practices, recognizing that “We, though many, are one body in
Christ” (Rom. 12:5); it is a great blessing and unifying force for our
Synod, as we walk together, to look to the seminaries for consistent,
high quality, orthodox theological education that is uniform
throughout the Synod.

Board of Regents, Concordia Seminary;
Board of Regents, Concordia Theological Seminary
7. University Education

REPORTS
R1, R1.1, R1.2, R2, R2.2, R11, R16, R16.1–8, R62, R66

OVERTURES

Ov, 7-01

To Amend Bylaws Related to Structure and Governance of the Concordia University System

WHEREAS, The 2013 5-01A Task Force began a comprehensive study of matters related to Concordia University System (CUS) structure, governance, connection to the Synod, and Lutheran Identity; and

WHEREAS, The work of the 2013 5-01A Task Force resulted in the adoption by the CUS Board of Directors, the institution presidents, and the boards of regents of the CUS institutions all adopting a Lutheran Identity Statement; and

WHEREAS, The 2016 convention of the Synod affirmed the Lutheran Identity Statement; and

WHEREAS, The CUS institutions have begun reporting on their compliance with the Lutheran Identity Statement demonstrating their fidelity to the Church; and

WHEREAS, The 2016 convention of the Synod adopted several bylaw revisions which have further strengthened the connection between the CUS institutions and the Synod; and

WHEREAS, The 2016 convention of the Synod established the Resolution 7-02B Task Force to continue the work of the 2013 5-01A Task Force; and

WHEREAS, The 7-02B Task Force has continued to study matters of CUS structure and governance; and

WHEREAS, During the past triennium, the CUS presidents, the president of CUS, and the CUS board have discussed greater collaboration; and

WHEREAS, The CUS presidents have formalized their role as the CUS Advisory Council; and

WHEREAS, The CUS Advisory Council continues to discuss matters of structure and governance and is committed to proposing a new plan for governance to the 2022 convention of the Synod as outlined in 7-02B Task Force Overture 2; and

WHEREAS, The Lutheran Church Extension Fund (LCEF) has developed a partnership with the CUS and the CUS Advisory Council to underwrite the ongoing work of the CUS Advisory Council in order to strengthen the CUS and its institutions; and

WHEREAS, The work of the CUS Advisory Council is bearing fruit related to matters of CUS structure and governance, which require further planning, discussion, and the development of bylaw revisions that allow for implementation of the plan upon its completion and approval; and

WHEREAS, The 2016 Res. 7-02B Task Force believes that the ongoing work of the CUS Advisory Council will result in the formulation of much stronger and effective bylaws for the CUS and its institutions that ensure fidelity to the Church and the agility necessary to ensure institutional financial stability; and

WHEREAS, The 2016 Res. 7-02B Task Force has identified several bylaw changes that are necessary in order to resolve current structural and governance challenges in advance of the CUS Advisory Council recommendations; therefore be it

Resolved, That the 2016 Res. 7-02B Task Force recommends that minimal changes be made to the present bylaws related to structure and governance of the CUS and its institutions; and be it further

Resolved, That the bylaws of the Synod be amended as follows:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

Concordia University System

3.6.6 Concordia University System, as a corporation under the laws of the State of Missouri, is operated by its members and board of directors in accordance with its Articles of Incorporation and corporate Bylaws to further the objectives of higher education within the Synod. Any amendments to these Articles of Incorporation shall be subject to approval by the members.

3.6.6.1 The Board of Directors of the Concordia University System has authority with respect to the Synod’s colleges and universities. It shall have the overall responsibility to provide for the education of pre-seminary students, ministers of religion–commissioned, other professional church workers of the Synod, and others desiring a Christian liberal arts education by facilitating prior approval as set forth in Bylaw 3.10.6.7.3 for theology appointments to college/university faculties and by coordinating the activities of the Synod’s colleges and universities as a unified system of the Synod through their respective boards of regents.

3.6.6.2 The members of Concordia University System shall consist of the Synod and the colleges and universities of the Synod. The Board of Directors of the Synod and the Council of Presidents of the Synod each shall elect/appoint delegates representing the Synod. The boards of regents of the colleges and universities of the Synod shall elect/appoint delegates representing the colleges and universities. The numbers of delegates elected/appointed by the Board of Directors of the Synod, the Council of Presidents, and the boards of regents shall be established by the Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws of Concordia University System.

3.6.6.3 The Board of Directors of Concordia University System shall be composed of nine voting members and four nonvoting members (no more than two members elected by the Synod shall be from the same district, and no executive, faculty member, or staff member from a Lutheran institution of higher education may serve on the Board of Directors of Concordia University System as a voting member):

Voting Members:
1. Two ministers of religion–ordained elected by the Synod
2. One minister of religion–commissioned elected by the Synod
3. Two laypersons elected by the Synod
4. Three laypersons appointed by the delegates of the members of Concordia University System
5. The President of the Synod or his representative

Nonvoting Advisory Members:
1. A district president appointed by the Council of Presidents
2. The Chief Financial Officer of the Synod
3. The Chief Mission Officer or his/her representative
4. One university president appointed by the CUS Advisory Council

Persons elected or appointed to the Concordia University System Board of Directors should have demonstrated familiarity and support of the institutions, and shall support the doctrinal positions of the Synod, and shall possess two or more of the following qualifications: theological acumen, an advanced degree, experience in higher
education administration, administration of complex organizations, finance, law, investments, technology, human resources, facilities management, or fund development. The Chief Administrative Officer of the Synod (or a designee) and the Secretary of the Synod (or a designee) shall review and verify that nominees are qualified to serve as stated above.

3.6.6.45 The presidents and interim presidents of the Synod’s educational institutions shall comprise an advisory council of Concordia University System’s Advisory Council, which shall meet at the call of the Board of Directors of Concordia University System and report the results of its studies to the board for consideration in making its decisions.

(a) be responsible for developing, executing, and assessing the long-term strategic direction and plan for Concordia University System, which focuses the mission of the institutions within the broad assignment of the Synod and in consultation with the Concordia University System Board of Directors (“the board”);
(b) assist the board in defining standards of viability, integrity, and theological fidelity of the curricula (Bylaw 3.6.6.4 (d)) and in the development of policies and procedures as described in Bylaws 3.6.6.4 (a) and 3.6.6.6;
(c) coordinate collaborative development, by their respective institutions, of policies required by Bylaw 3.6.6.7;
(d) serve as a pool of experts to assist, upon the board’s request, in evaluating institutional viability and fidelity, and regarding the consolidation, relocation, separation, divestiture, or closure of a college or university;
(e) contribute to the board’s development of search criteria in the selection process for a President of Concordia University System;
(f) upon the board’s request, contribute to campus transition reviews and recommendation of search criteria in the selection for a college/university president;
(g) together with districts, congregations, local boards of regents, and national efforts, assist congregations and districts in student recruitment for both professional church work and lay higher education; and
(h) serve as a resource for the development of lists of potential teachers and administrative personnel.

3.6.6.46 In keeping with the objectives and the Constitution, Bylaws, and resolutions of the Synod, the Board of Directors of Concordia University System shall

(a) adopt, in consultation with the Advisory Council, coordinating policies, the system-wide strategic plan, and procedures for cooperative roles and responsibilities of the colleges and universities after consulting with or receiving recommendations from the colleges or universities of the Synod;
(b) together with boards of regents and the Board of Directors of the Synod, coordinate institutional planning and approve capital projects in relation to campus property-management agreements and changes to institutional master plans of the colleges and universities, upon recommendations of the boards of regents;
(c) review and approve new programs and manage peer review of programs in the interest of the institution(s) and the Synod;
(d) adopt criteria and standards for determining institutional viability, integrity, and curricular fidelity of the colleges and universities, subject to approval by the Board of Directors of the Synod, and monitor compliance with these standards and criteria;
(e) together with districts, congregations, local boards of regents, and national efforts, assist congregations and districts in student recruitment for both professional church work and lay higher education;
(f) serve as a resource for the development of lists of potential teaching and administrative personnel;
(g) assist the President of the Synod in monitoring and promoting the ongoing faithfulness of Concordia University System colleges and universities to Article II of the Constitution of the Synod; and
(h) have authority, after receiving the consent of the Board of Directors of the Synod by its two-thirds vote and also the consent of either the appropriate board of regents by its two-thirds vote, the Council of Presidents by its two-thirds vote, or the appropriate board of regents, to consolidate, relocate, separate, or divest a college or university.

3.6.6.6 The Board of Directors of Concordia University System shall, after consulting with the colleges and universities of the Synod in consultation with the Advisory Council, adopt policies to assist and ensure that the boards of regents and campus administrators are:

(a) actively working to preserve their Lutheran identity by supporting the objectives of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (Constitution Art. III) and complying with an emphasis on mission-focused leadership in service to church and community;
(b) delivering academic and student programs designed to give students Christ-centered values and tools that equip them for vocations within the church and world;
(c) preparing graduates for service as ministers of religion—commissioned and for continued study for service as ministers of religion—ordained for the Synod;
(d) implementing accepted higher education standards, including policies that ensure fiscal and institutional viability:
- achieving positive annual financial results
- acquiring quality administrators, faculty, and staff
- meeting fiscal and academic benchmarks
- building endowments and managing investment assets for the long-term benefit of the institutions
- acquiring and managing long-term debt carefully and responsibly
(e) sustaining a Concordia experience that reflects strong institutional quality, provides opportunities to be of greater service to the church and society, and mobilizes individuals in a way that aids the campuses in achieving their collective vision with respect to their identity, quality, and viability; and
(f) maintaining accountability of its institutions to the system-wide board.

3.6.6.7 The Concordia University System Board of Directors shall maintain in its policies a list of subject matters that each educational institution must address in its own policies and procedures, to include faculty appointments, employment contracts, contract renewal, contract termination, faculty organization, modified service, sabbaticals, and dispute resolution. Notwithstanding the provisions of any such policy, any person connected with an institution who is a member of the Synod shall also remain under the ecclesiastical supervision of the Synod, and nothing in any such Concordia University System institution policy shall be construed to limit or constrain any action that may be taken or the rights or responsibilities of any party, pursuant to the Synod Handbook with respect to a member of Synod.

3.6.6.8 The Concordia University System shall maintain a model manual, in consultation with the Commission on Constitutional Matters, entitled Model Operating Procedures Manual regarding governing the handling of faculty complaints and dispute resolution by college/university boards of regents.

F. Concordia University System Boards of Regents

3.10.6 Each college and university of the Synod, with its president and faculty, shall be governed by a board of regents, subject to
The board of regents of each institution shall become familiar with and develop an understanding of pertinent policies, standards, and guidelines of the Synod and the Board of Directors of Concordia University System.

(a) It shall develop detailed policies and procedures for governance of the institution, including but not limited to:

1. attention to specific ways that the institution is confessing Jesus Christ in full accord with the doctrinal position of the LCMS (Constitution Art. II) and fulfilling His mission in our world;
2. annual certification of the institution’s financial viability;
3. creation, modification, and abolition of administrative positions;
4. processes for filling and vacating administrative positions;
5. a clear plan for succession of administration to ensure that the institution continues to function effectively in the case of incapacity or lengthy absence of the president;
6. handling faculty complaints and dispute resolution consistent with the Model Operating Procedures Manual maintained by the Concordia University System; and
7. all subject matters for which Concordia University System requires policies to be developed (Bylaw 3.6.6.7).

(b) It shall coordinate institutional planning with other Concordia University System schools and approve master plans for its college or university.

(c) It shall review and approve academic programs recommended by the administration and faculty after assessment of system policies in accordance with Concordia University System standards and guidelines and institutional interests and capacities.

(d) It shall review and approve the institutional budget.

(e) It shall approve institutional fiscal arrangements, develop the financial resources necessary to operate the institution, and participate in its support program.

1. Only the board of regents is authorized to establish a line of credit or to borrow for operating needs, subject to the policies of the Board of Directors of Concordia University System and the Board of Directors of the Synod.
2. All surplus institutional funds above an adequate working balance shall be deposited with the Concordia University System for investment. Earnings from such investments shall be credited to the depositing institution.

(f) It shall establish appropriate policies for institutional student aid.

(g) It shall participate fully in the procedures for the selection and regular review of the president of the institution and of the major administrators; approve the appointment of faculty members who meet the qualifications of their positions; approve sabbatical and study leaves; and encourage faculty development and research.

(h) It shall take the leadership in assuring the preservation and improvement of the assets of the institution and see to the acquisition, management, use, and disposal of the properties and equipment of the institution within the guidelines set by the Board of Directors of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

(i) It shall operate and manage the institution as the agent of the Synod, in which ownership is primarily vested and which exercises its ownership through the Board of Directors as custodian of the Synod’s property, the Board of Directors of Concordia University System, and the respective board of regents as the local governing body. Included in the operation and management are such responsibilities as these:

1. Carrying out efficient business management through a business manager appointed on recommendation of the president of the institution and responsible to him.
2. Receiving of all gifts by deed, will, or otherwise made to the institution and managing the same, in accordance with the terms of the instrument creating such gift and in accordance with the policies of the board of regents.
3. Demonstrating concern for the general welfare of the institutional staff members and other employees, adoption of regulations governing off campus activities, development of policies regarding salary and wage scales, tenure, promotion, vacations, health examinations, dismissal, retirement, pension, and other employee welfare benefit provisions.
4. Determining that the charter, articles of incorporation, constitution, and bylaws of the institution conform to and are consistent with those of the Synod.
5. Serving as the governing body corporate of the institution vested with all powers which its members may exercise in law either as directors, trustees, or members of the body corporate, unless in conflict with the laws of the domicile of the institution or its Articles of Incorporation. In such event the board of regents shall have power to perform such acts as may be required by law to effect the corporate existence of the institution.
6. Establishing and placing a priority on the capital needs of the institution and determining the plans for the maintenance and renovation of the buildings and property and purchase of needed equipment, but having no power by itself, without the prior consent of the Boards of Directors of the Concordia University System and the Synod, except in the event of legal insolvency or other financial crisis necessitating immediate closure, to close the institution or to sell all or any part of the property which constitutes the main campus.
7. Recognizing that the authority of the board of regents resides in the board as a whole and delegating the application of its policies and execution of its resolutions to the president of the institution as its executive officer.
8. Establishing a comprehensive policy statement regarding student life that commits the institution to the principles of Christian discipline, an evangelical manner, and good order.
9. Promoting the public relations of the institution and developing the understanding and cooperation of its constituency.
10. Requiring regular reports from the president of the institution as the executive officer of the board and through him from other officers and staff members in order to make certain that the work of the institution is carried out effectively.
11. Carefully exercising its fiduciary duties to the Synod.

Recognizing its fiduciary duty as a board, as well as the requirements of accrediting bodies that an institution’s governing board be clearly defined and have ultimate authority and independence in the operation of the institution subject to appropriate pre-established policies and rules (e.g., Synod Bylaws), under no circumstances shall a board delegate its authority to, nor commingle its authority with, any other body that includes non-board members. Boards of regents may meet as a “committee of the
3.10.6.6 The president of the institution shall be the executive officer of the board of regents. He shall serve as the spiritual, academic, and administrative head of the institution.

3.10.6.6.2 The following process shall govern the selection of a college/university president.

(b) The board of regents shall oversee the process of defining the institution’s needs, describing the desired characteristics of the new president, and issuing a request for nominations.

(2) The search committee shall prepare a description of the needs of the institution based on listening forums, the findings of the Board for University Education—Concordia University System’s transition review, and other relevant information. Before publishing a call for nominations, the President of Concordia University System shall convene an in-person conference involving the board of regents, the search committee, and the prior approval panel to discuss the qualifications that will be sought and the search criteria.

2016 Res. 7-02B Task Force

**To Direct the Concordia University System Advisory Council to Lead a Process to Propose a New Governance Plan**

WHEREAS, The Concordia University System (CUS) institution presidents, in consultation with the President of the Synod, the CUS Board of Directors, and the President of the CUS have concluded that greater integration and collaboration would strengthen the individual institutions and the system as a whole summarized in the following comments:

Higher Education faces an uncertain future. Most observers anticipate a serious decline in the number of colleges over the course of the next several years. Eager not only to survive but to thrive as the Church’s schools, the presidents of CUS institutions are considering various approaches to our colleges and universities’ relationship to one another. Presently, the relationship is marked by goodwill and collegiality, but there is very little mutual accountability or responsibility. Based on the premise that we are stronger together than apart, models that would reinforce and enhance our individual identity and authority coupled with a more robust systemic governance are being explored. How best to maintain local campus oversight and engagement on the one hand, while strengthening the ties that bind us together on the other is the idea. The intention is to help alleviate tensions and conflict of competition. Even more compelling, the quest is to identify ways in which systemic collaboration presents opportunities for broader reach and impact.

WHEREAS, Such an effort at greater integration requires significant study of regional and professional programmatic accreditation, legal matters, regulatory issues, and matters of structure and governance; and

WHEREAS, The CUS institution presidents are well-positioned with the best knowledge and expertise to develop a strategic plan for the future of CUS institutions that is attentive to best practices of higher education and the needs of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod; and

WHEREAS, The institution presidents and boards of regents of the CUS institutions have publicly embraced the theological confession of the church and are committed to consulting with the President of the Synod, the CUS Board of Directors, and the President of the CUS; and

WHEREAS, The culture of higher education is changing at an increasing rate that provides opportunities and poses challenges to the institutions of the CUS; and

WHEREAS, Colleges and universities—such as those within the CUS—with modest endowments, competitive recruitment, significant tuition discounting, and narrow financial margins are particularly at risk; and

WHEREAS, The colleges and universities of the CUS have successfully negotiated this challenging environment with the prayerful and financial support of individuals throughout the Synod, effective presidential leadership, and talented faculty and staff; and

WHEREAS, An economic downturn or governmental changes could pose a serious economic challenge to the financial stability of the CUS institutions; and

WHEREAS, The witness to Christ and the Church’s theological confession at the university level is strategic and vital for the Church’s future; therefore be it

Resolved, That the 2016 Resolution 7-02B Task Force recommends that the CUS institution presidents, with the active involvement of the President of the Synod, the Synod Board of Directors, the CUS Board of Directors, the President of the CUS, the institutions’ respective boards of regents, and others as needed, propose a new governance plan for consideration by the 2022 convention of the Synod; and be it further

Resolved, That the proposed new governance plan specifically address the objectives of 2013 Res. 5-01A and 2016 Res. 7-02B by continuing to:

- strengthen all CUS institutions’ connection to the Synod;
- strengthen the confessional Lutheran identity of all CUS institutions;
- review the composition, size, and selection of boards of regents;
- review the process for selecting presidents of institutions; and
be it further

Resolved, That a report on the initial governance model proposals be disseminated to the Synod for a six month period of comment commencing not later than 15 months prior to the start of the 2022 convention of the Synod; and be it finally

Resolved, That the Synod in convention give thanks for the presidents, faculties, staffs, boards of regents, and communities of the institutions of the CUS for their clear and faithful witness to Christ and the church’s theological confession and practice at the university level by rising and singing the common doxology.

2016 Res. 7-02B Task Force

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**2019 Convention Workbook**
To Modify the Governance of the Colleges and Universities of the Concordia University System

Preamble

Higher education is in a time of significant change, including but not limited to demographic shifts in prospective student populations, increasing market competition from non-profit and for-profit providers of education, ongoing innovations in technology and academic program delivery models, increasing accountability to public and private entities, and growing financial complexities.

Christian colleges and universities face the additional challenge to be faithful to their confession in an increasingly secular culture.

To survive and thrive in today’s highly competitive, complex, and secular environment Christian institutions of higher education require an informed and talented board of regents, with a common commitment to education in the context of the Christian Gospel. Regents’ understanding of and passion for the unique missions of the institutions they govern, a multiplicity of skill sets to support the specific needs of the institutions they govern, and the capacity to support these institutions with their time, talent, treasure, and other resources is critical.

WHEREAS, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) has been blessed by our Concordia colleges and universities for more than 100 years; and

WHEREAS, The colleges and universities of the Concordia University System (CUS) desire to preserve and extend their identity as Lutheran institutions of higher education, which offer quality, affordable education, and have therefore renewed their commitment to Lutheran higher education by signing the Lutheran Identity Statement; and

WHEREAS, Our CUS colleges and universities continue to provide the highest quality of education and faith development in the midst of a highly competitive higher education market; and

WHEREAS, Concordia University Texas (CTX) received negative feedback through their process of reaffirmation of accreditation from the off-site committee of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges in the governance structure portion of the university’s report because of “undue influence from external bodies”; and

WHEREAS, Synod currently provides no direct financial support to CTX, giving the Synod “undue influence” with no financial responsibility or liability; and

WHEREAS, Each Concordia is located in a unique part of the United States and faces legal challenges, cultural opportunities, and economic diversity which may differ from other CUS schools; and

WHEREAS, The schools of the CUS are valued partners of the LCMS; therefore be it

Resolved, That the LCMS in convention give thanks to God for the treasures it has in its eight colleges and universities; and be it further

Resolved, That the governance of the individual colleges and universities of the CUS be changed to the extent that

- Each board of regents will include among its members:
  - the president of the LCMS district in which the college or university is located,
  - a regent who resides in the Synod geographic region of the university, appointed by the LCMS president,
  - a regent who resides in the Synod geographic region of the university, appointed by the LCMS Board of Directors,
  - a minimum of two regents who are members in good standing on the LCMS roster of ministers of religion—ordained,
  - a minimum of two regents who are members in good standing on the LCMS roster of ministers of religion—commissioned;

and be it further

Resolved, That the Commission on Handbook be directed to make the appropriate changes to the Bylaws of the Synod in accordance with Bylaw 3.9.4.2 (b); and be it finally

Resolved, That the Texas District in convention memorialize the Synod in convention with this resolution.

Atlantic District; Texas District

Ov. 7-04

To Modify the Governance of the Colleges and Universities of the Concordia University System

Rationale

Higher education is in a time of significant change, including but not limited to demographic shifts in prospective student populations, increasing market competition from non-profit and for-profit providers of education, ongoing innovations in technology and academic program delivery models, increasing accountability to public and private entities, and growing financial complexities.

Christian colleges and universities face the additional challenge to be faithful to their confession in an increasingly secular culture.

To survive and thrive in today’s highly competitive, complex, and secular environment Christian institutions of higher education require an informed and talented board of regents, with a common commitment to education in context of the Christian Gospel. Regents’ multiplicity of skill sets to support the specific needs of the institution they govern and the capacity to support these institutions with their time, talent, treasure, and other resources is critical.

WHEREAS, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) has been blessed by our Concordia colleges and universities for more than 100 years; and

WHEREAS, The colleges and universities of the Concordia University System (CUS) desire to preserve and extend their identity as Lutheran institutions of higher education, which offer quality, affordable education, and have therefore renewed their commitment to Lutheran higher education by signing the Lutheran Identity Statement; and

WHEREAS, Our CUS colleges and universities continue to provide the highest quality of education and faith development in the midst of a highly competitive higher education market; and
WHEREAS, Each Concordia is located in a unique part of the United States and faces legal challenges, cultural opportunities, and economic diversity which may differ from other CUS schools; and

WHEREAS, The schools of the CUS are valued partners of the LCMS; therefore be it

Resolved, That the LCMS in convention give thanks to God for the treasures it has in its eight colleges and universities; and be it further

Resolved, That the governance of the individual colleges and universities of CUS be changed to the extent that

- Each college or university will determine the number of regents it chooses to appoint to its board of regents;
- Each board of regents will be responsible for appointing its own members from within a pool of candidates consisting of the members of member congregations of the LCMS;
- Each board of regents will include among its members:
  - the president of the LCMS district in which the college or university is located,
  - a regent who resides in the Synod geographic region of the university, appointed by the LCMS president,
  - a regent who resides in the Synod geographic region of the university, appointed by the LCMS Board of Directors,
  - a minimum of two regents who are members in good standing on the LCMS roster of ministers of religion—ordained,
  - a minimum of two regents who are members in good standing on the LCMS roster of ministers of religion—commissioned;

and be it further

Resolved, That the Commission on Handbook be directed to make the appropriate changes to the Bylaws of the Synod in accordance with Bylaw 3.9.4.2 (b); and be it finally

Resolved, That Christ Lutheran Church, Scituate, MA memorialize the Synod in convention with this resolution.

Christ, Juniata, NE; Christ, Scituate, MA;
Concordia, Lakewood, CO; Our Savior, Rehoboth Beach, DE;
Trinity, Houston, TX; Zion, Mayer, MN

Ov. 7-05

To Affirm that the Concordia University System Colleges and Universities Exist to Educate Both Church Workers and Lay People and to Modify their Governance System

Preamble

Higher education is in a time of significant change, including but not limited to demographic shifts in prospective student populations, increasing market competition from non-profit and for-profit providers of education, ongoing innovations in technology and academic program delivery models, increasing accountability to public and private entities, and growing financial complexities. Christian colleges and universities face the additional challenge to be faithful to their confession in an increasingly secular culture.

The desire of our Synod has always been to provide training for church workers and education for all of its members: pastors, teachers, deaconesses, directors of Christian education, and other commissioned ministers of the Gospel as well as laypeople who will serve the Lord Jesus in their various vocations. Our Synod needs our Concordias to serve all of our Synod, both church workers and lay people, as well as the people reached through the Gospel by the witness of our Concordia faculty, staff, and students to those who attend our Concordias as secular students.

To survive and thrive in today’s highly competitive, complex, and secular environment, Christian institutions of higher education require informed and talented boards of regents, with a common commitment to education in the context of the Christian Gospel. Regents’ understanding of and passion for the unique missions of the institutions they govern, a multiplicity of skill sets to support the specific needs of the institutions they govern, and the capacity to support these institutions with their time, talent, treasure, and other resources is critical.

WHEREAS, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod has been blessed by our Concordia colleges and universities for more than 100 years; and

WHEREAS, The colleges and universities of the Concordia University System (CUS) desire to preserve and extend their identity as Lutheran institutions of higher education, which offer quality, affordable education, and have therefore renewed their commitment to Lutheran higher education by signing the Lutheran Identity Statement; and

WHEREAS, Our CUS colleges and universities continue to provide the highest quality of education and faith development in the midst of a highly competitive higher education market; and

WHEREAS, Concordia University Texas received negative feedback through their process of reaffirmation of accreditation from the off-site committee of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges in the governance structure portion of the university’s report because of “undue influence from external bodies,” and other Concordias are reporting the same accreditation concerns; and

WHEREAS, Synod currently provides no direct financial support to Concordia colleges and universities, giving the Synod “undue influence” with no financial responsibility or liability; and

WHEREAS, Each Concordia is located in a unique part of the United States and faces legal challenges, cultural opportunities, and economic diversity which may differ from other CUS schools; and

WHEREAS, The schools of the CUS are valued partners of the Synod; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Synod in convention give thanks to God for the treasures it has in its nine colleges and universities; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod in convention state our intention to prepare church workers and lay people for service to the Lord Jesus in their various vocations, each of which advance Christ’s Kingdom work here on earth, and our intention that our Concordias provide a Gospel witness to students and the communities they serve; and be it further

Resolved, That the governance of the individual colleges and universities of the CUS be changed to the extent that:

- Each college or university will determine the number of regents it chooses to appoint to its board of regents;
• Each board of regents will be responsible for appointing its own members from within a pool of candidates consisting of the members of member congregations of the Synod;

• Each board of regents will include among its members:
  • the president of the Synod district in which the college or university is located;
  • a regent who resides in the geographic region of the university, appointed by the President of Synod;
  • a regent who resides in the geographic region of the university, appointed by the Synod Board of Directors;
  • a minimum of two regents who are members in good standing on the Synod roster of ministers of religion—ordained;
  • a minimum of two regents who are members in good standing on the Synod roster of ministers of religion—commissioned;

and be it finally

Resolved, That the Commission on Handbook be directed to make the appropriate changes to the bylaws of the Synod in accordance with Bylaw 3.9.4.2 (b).

Trinity
tRoselle, IL

Ov. 7-06

To Provide Regional Support
for Our Concordia Universities and Colleges

WHEREAS, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) has been blessed by our Concordia colleges and universities for more than 100 years; and

WHEREAS, All Concordia University System (CUS) schools have renewed their commitment to Lutheran higher education by signing the Lutheran Identity Statement; and

WHEREAS, Our CUS colleges and universities continue to provide the highest quality of education and faith development in the midst of a highly competitive higher education market; and

WHEREAS, All members of the boards of regents of each school are to be members of LCMS congregations; and

WHEREAS, For election purposes, the Synod is divided into five geographic regions; and

WHEREAS, Each Concordia is located in a unique part of the United States and faces legal challenges, cultural opportunities and economic diversity which may differ from other Concordias; therefore be it

Resolved, That we give thanks to God for the blessings we have received through our CUS colleges and universities; and be it further

Resolved, That the bylaws of the Synod be amended to restrict Board of Regents members elected by the district or Synod in their respective conventions be limited to LCMS members who reside in the region of the university.

Trinity
Roselle, IL

Ov. 7-07

To Affirm Balanced Governance
for Concordia University System Institutions

WHEREAS, The Concordia University System (CUS) schools are treasures of the entire Synod, built by God’s grace with the people’s offerings, bequests, and tuition, that serve to educate students from throughout the country—and increasingly, from around the world—for service both in church work and in society at large; and

WHEREAS, Today’s complex higher education environment means that each Concordia is competing, not only locally, but nationwide and even globally, for students, faculty, and financial resources; to succeed, each Concordia must avail itself of leadership and personnel not only locally or regionally, but from throughout the Synod; and

WHEREAS, No Concordia serves merely a district or a region, but serves the whole Church, and accordingly must avoid limiting itself to a narrow or myopic geographically based focus; and

WHEREAS, A significant number of the overtures relating to governance issues for CUS institutions were submitted for consideration by the 2016 Synod convention, including overtures seeking to create regional-only or self-perpetuating boards, that would deprive the congregations of the Synod, or of districts, the right to elect board members; and

WHEREAS, A self-perpetuating board at Concordia University Edmonton (CUE), originally founded by The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) in 1921 for the purpose of training teachers and seminary candidates, chose to renounce its Christian mission, sever all ties with the Lutheran Church Canada (LCC), and become an entirely secular, non-Lutheran and non-Christian institution, and as a result the LCC has been deprived not only of the use of the institution for training its church workers but also of the value of the CUE property; and

WHEREAS, The Synod in convention wisely rejected overtures to upend the current balanced governance system for CUS institutions, and instead, by an overwhelming vote of 731–48 (94%), approved 2016 Resolution 7-02B, “To Preserve Concordia Colleges and Universities as Institutions of the Church and Strengthen Their Structural Bonds with Synod”; and

WHEREAS, The current governance system for the CUS schools, as strengthened by the 2016 convention, ensures equal board of regents representation from the district where the institution is located (four elected members plus the district president or his representative) and from the Synod at large (four elected members plus a Praesidium representative), as well as allowing up to eight members to be appointed by each board itself to best meet the unique mission and needs of each institution; and

WHEREAS, The selection of highly qualified regents is ensured by 2013 Res. 5-05B, which improved the governance process for CUS boards of regents by imposing specific requirements for qualifications of regents, and by requiring boards of regents to document to the CUS Board of Directors various key factors including financial stewardship and faithfulness to the church, and verifying that elected and appointed regents have educational backgrounds suiting them for service on the governing boards of complex and sizeable institutions, which requirement has been implemented successfully for the benefit of each CUS school; and

WHEREAS, The current governance system for the CUS schools also ensures continuity of leadership, because board of regents
members from the district and Synod are elected, and appointed members chosen, in different years, so that the majority of each board remains consistent from year to year; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Synod encourage each of its member congregations to give thanks for all of the faithful CUS institutions, not merely those in close proximity to such congregation, recognizing that “we, though many, are one body in Christ” (Rom. 12:5); and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod educate our congregations on the benefits of the current governance structure, which ensures that all congregations have a voice in the governance of each CUS school, and which also ensures that the governance of CUS schools is not narrowly localized, nor divorced from the entire Synod and its member congregations; and be it further

Resolved, That in the event any CUS school is required by its governing documents to elect persons resident in a specific state or locality, such requirement shall be satisfied by electing such qualified individual(s) from among those persons elected to such school’s board at the district convention for the district encompassing such state or locality, commencing with the 2021 district convention cycle, in order to maintain the balance between district-elected regents (who must reside in the specific district) and Synod-elected regents (who may reside in any district), to avoid restricting the rights of the Synod in convention to choose those persons who are best qualified without regard to state of residence; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod continue to seek the best qualified candidates for Synod-elected regents from congregations throughout the Synod without regard to state of residence; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod not permit any new restrictions on the residence of Synod-elected regents; and that the CUS board work with each board of regents in seeking to review and remove, insofar as legally possible, any such existing restrictions; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod give thanks for all those involved in governance of our CUS institutions; and be it finally

Resolved, That the Synod affirm the current balanced system of governance of CUS institutions.

Board of Regents
Concordia University Chicago

Ov. 7-08

To Affirm Balanced Governance for Concordia University System Institutions

WHEREAS, The Concordia University System (CUS) institutions are treasures of the entire Synod, built by God’s grace with the people’s offerings, bequests, and tuition, that serve to educate students from throughout the country—and increasingly, from around the world—for service both in church work and in society at large; and

WHEREAS, 2013 Resolution 5-05B improved the governance process for CUS boards of regents by adopting specific requirements for qualifications of regents; and

WHEREAS, Such requirements include documentation to the CUS Board of Directors of various key factors including financial stewardship, faithfulness to the church, and educational background preparing them for service on the governing boards of complex and sizeable institutions; and

WHEREAS, Such requirements have been implemented successfully for the benefit of each CUS institution; and

WHEREAS, No Concordia serves merely a district or a region, but the whole church; and

WHEREAS, A significant number of the overtures relating to governance issues for CUS institutions were submitted for consideration by the 2016 convention of the Synod, including overtures seeking to create regional-only or self-perpetuating boards that would deprive the congregations of the Synod, or of districts, the right to elect board members; and

WHEREAS, A self-perpetuating board at Concordia University Edmonton (CUE), originally founded by The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod in 1921 for the purpose of training teachers and seminary candidates, chose to renounce its Christian mission, sever all ties with the Lutheran Church Canada (LCC), and become an entirely secular, non-Lutheran and non-Christian institution. As a result, the LCC has been deprived not only of the use of the institution for training its church workers but also of the value of the CUE property; and

WHEREAS, By an overwhelming vote of 731–48 (94 percent), 2016 Resolution 7-02B was approved, “To Preserve Concordia Colleges and Universities as Institutions of the Church and Strengthen Their Structural Bonds with Synod”; and

WHEREAS, The current governance system for the CUS institutions, as adopted by the 2016 convention, ensures equal board of regents representation between the district where the institution is located (four elected members plus the district president or his representative) and the Synod at large (four elected members plus a Praesidium representative), as well as up to eight members appointed by each board itself to best meet the unique mission and needs of each institution; and

WHEREAS, The current governance system for the CUS institutions also ensures continuity of leadership because boards of regents members from the district and Synod are elected, and appointed members chosen, in different years, so that the majority of each board will remain consistent from year to year; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Minnesota South District give thanks for all of the faithful CUS institutions, recognizing that “We, though many, are one body in Christ” (Rom. 12:5); and be it further

Resolved, That the Minnesota South District encourage all youth, from a young age, to be aware of the opportunity to obtain higher education in a Lutheran setting through our CUS institutions; and be it finally

Resolved, That the Minnesota South District memorialize the Synod in convention to give thanks for those involved in governance of our CUS institutions, to ensure that the best qualified candidates for boards of regents are sought throughout the Synod, and to affirm the current system of governance of CUS institutions.

Minnesota South District
To Streamline the Concordia University System and Provide for the Education of Professional Church Workers

WHEREAS, The Concordia University System (CUS) is comprised of nine colleges and universities in the United States which are affiliated with The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS); and

WHEREAS, The initial purpose of these colleges and universities was to prepare men and women for full-time service in the church; and

WHEREAS, There are students at CUS institutions that are not preparing for full time church work; and

WHEREAS, A number of the faculty at CUS institutions are not rostered members of the Synod nor members of LCMS congregations; and

WHEREAS, The chartering of a gay pride student organization at Concordia University, Portland, indicates an inconsistency of the confession of our faith; and

WHEREAS, It requires considerable resources to maintain the physical plant and bureaucratic infrastructure for nine universities; and

WHEREAS, Streamlining the CUS would enhance the ability of the Synod to attend to the integrity of its confession; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Montana District in convention memorialize the LCMS at its 2019 convention to direct the President of the Synod to appoint a blue ribbon task force to perform the following tasks:

- Determine which campuses will serve as the sites for a streamlined CUS.
- Constitute the streamlined CUS with a primary focus on training such students as desire to become rostered members of Synod.
- Assess the needs of the streamlined CUS in terms of the number and composition of the faculty to be comprised of rostered members of Synod.
- Develop a plan for caring for those currently employed within the CUS who would not have a position in the streamlined CUS.
- Develop a plan for the gradual closing and sale of the unused campuses over a period of ten years using the proceeds from such sales to fund the streamlined CUS joint endowment, retire all debts, and assist in funding professional church worker education.

Montana District

To Give Thanks for the Concordia University System Presidential Search Process and Those Participating Therein

WHEREAS, The selection of a president is a task of the utmost importance for any Concordia University System (CUS) school, given that the president is its spiritual, administrative, and academic head, ensuring its successful and faithful operation as an institution of the Synod and in accordance with the policies and strategic plan of its Board of Regents; and

WHEREAS, As part of the restructuring implemented by the Synod at our 2010 convention, the presidential search process was revised to ensure that all relevant constituencies were represented in an inclusive manner, consistent with the proper balance of accreditation requirements and the responsibility of the CUS schools to operate as institutions of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS); and

WHEREAS, The process includes:

- a detailed review of the specific needs of the institution, in collaboration with the CUS;
- ability of all congregations of the LCMS to nominate candidates;
- formation of a search committee including faculty representatives who are members of local LCMS congregations, to assist in narrowing the list of nominees;
- selection by the Board of Regents of a slate of at least five qualified candidates;
- review of the slate by the district president of the district where the institution is located, the President of Synod, and a representative of the CUS, with a two-thirds vote required to remove any candidate from the slate; and
- election of the president of the institution from the remaining candidates originally chosen by the Board of Regents, provided at least two candidates remain; and

WHEREAS, The process is by design lengthy and detailed to ensure a thorough review of candidates and involvement by persons at all levels of the Synod, to allow maximum opportunity for input and review, understanding that it is more important to find the right candidate than to find a candidate quickly; and

WHEREAS, Concordia University Chicago followed the process during its 2013–2014 presidential search, and found the process to be extremely beneficial to our institution, allowing the Board of Regents to call from among a slate of extremely well-qualified candidates, a president, Rev. Dr. Daniel Gard, who was recommended by our search committee; and

WHEREAS, The experience of the Board of Regents with those from the district and Synod who were involved in this process was extremely positive, and the Board wishes to thank all such individuals, and commend in particular the assistance given us by our former district president, the Rev. Dan Gilbert; the CUS representative, Rev. Dr. Dan Jastram; and the President of Synod, Rev. Dr. Matthew Harrison; and

WHEREAS, Any process can only succeed with the good faith participation of all involved; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Synod in convention commend and affirm the current search process for CUS presidents, and the opportunities that it presents for fraternal dialogue, and input from all constituencies; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod in convention exhort all CUS institutions that are or may be involved in the search for a new president to do so joyfully, faithfully, and in compliance with the letter and spirit of the process and the relevant requirements that our Synod has set forth for CUS presidents, in full cooperation with those persons and entities that our Synod has placed into the process for the good of the institution and of the Synod; and be it further

Resolved, That those involved in the presidential search process that we have established as Synod be encouraged to view this process as a blessing and not a hindrance, putting the best
construction on the actions of all involved as we are called to do; and be it finally

Resolved, That the convention rise in the singing of the common doxology to give thanks for the efforts of all those involved in presidential searches under the current process and specifically within the last triennium.

Board of Regents
Concordia University Chicago

Ov. 7-11

To Affirm the Three-Fold Role of Concordia University System Presidents

WHEREAS, Bylaw 3.10.6.6 sets forth the three-fold role for the president of each Concordia University System (CUS) institution: “He shall serve as the spiritual, academic, and administrative head of the institution”; and

WHEREAS, These three roles must not be viewed in isolation or in opposition to one another, as though one could have a university without academic leadership, or a complex organization without administrative leadership, or a school of the Church without spiritual leadership; rather, each role is necessary and complementary to the others; and

WHEREAS, God knows the material needs of our CUS schools (Matt. 6:32) and He will provide them according to His good and gracious will, and we give thanks to God for the many dedicated and talented faculty, staff, and administrators who serve and have served to advance the mission of Concordia University Chicago (CUC), and for the many blessings our university has received from God working through their efforts; and

WHEREAS, As Scripture teaches us in Mark 8:36: “For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul?” what does it profit a CUS school if it gains a billion-dollar endowment and award-winning academics, yet forfeits its identity in Christ? and

WHEREAS, We give thanks that such loss of identity has not happened at CUC, and we give thanks for the spiritual headship of our president, Rev. Dr. Daniel Gard, who has faithfully led this institution to confess Christ crucified for all our students, faculty, staff, and administration; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Gard has fulfilled his responsibilities to “be responsible for the provision of spiritual care and nurture for every student” and “carefully [to] watch over the spiritual welfare, personal life, conduct, educational progress, and physical condition of the students and in general exercise such Christian discipline, instruction, and supervision as may be expected at a Christian educational institution” (Bylaw 3.6.6.1 [h,i]); and

WHEREAS, Though all roles are needed, it is evident that spiritual headship is the most important role of a CUS president. Any secular institution can manage academics and administration, but our CUS schools have as their reason for existence the development of our students in mind, body, and soul to serve their neighbors and the church in the vocations to which God has called them; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Synod in convention reaffirm the vocation of the CUS president including the role of spiritual head, recognizing that all presidents rely upon staff and administrators experienced in their respective administrative and financial roles, and no one person possesses all possible skills; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod in convention affirm, as the Commission on Constitutional Matters (CCM) has ruled on multiple occasions over at least the past 35 years (e.g. CCM Op. 07-2489, CCM Op. 99-2160), and previous opinions, that spiritual headship is a non-delegable duty, and that accordingly, consistent with the order of creation, CUS presidents must be male, possess theological acumen sufficient for this duty, and ideally, be ordained.

Board of Regents
Concordia University Chicago

Ov. 7-12

To Give Thanks for Servant Leadership for the Concordia University System

WHEREAS, “We, though many, are one body in Christ” (Rom. 12:5), and likewise, the colleges and universities of the Concordia University System (CUS) are sister institutions, joined by the common bond of our Confessions, and united in service to Synod and the world at large by providing quality higher education for the spread of the Gospel through the training both of future church workers and faithful laity; and

WHEREAS, The CUS schools have a long history of cooperation over many decades, including joint software purchasing, consulting on operational matters, and many other areas, seeking to use the children’s tuition and the people’s offerings in the most effective way possible in collaboration, not in competition, and viewing the ability to partner and work together not as a threat but as an opportunity of service (Matt. 23:11); and

WHEREAS, The CUS schools are coordinated through the CUS, which has as its members our Synod and all of the colleges and universities of the Synod, with delegates representing the boards of regents of the CUS schools; the Council of Presidents of the Synod; and the Board of Directors of the Synod (Bylaw 3.6.6.2); and

WHEREAS, The CUS Board is broadly representative, including not only members elected by the Synod in convention, but also a district president and a CUS university or college president; and

WHEREAS, All CUS board members are required to have demonstrated familiarity and support of the institutions, to support the doctrinal positions of the Synod, and to possess two or more of the following qualifications: theological acumen, an advanced degree, experience in higher education administration, administration of complex organizations, finance, law, investments, technology, human resources, facilities management, or fund development (Bylaw 3.6.6.3); and

WHEREAS, The congregations of the Synod have directed the CUS Board to use its expertise to work on behalf of the Synod to assist and oversee the CUS schools in various matters, including policies and procedures for cooperative roles and responsibilities of the colleges and universities (Bylaws 3.6.6.5–3.6.6.7); and

WHEREAS, The congregations of the Synod have also directed the Synod’s Board of Directors to approve capital projects and institutional master plans for the CUS schools, and to establish and monitor criteria for determining institutional viability, fiscal and otherwise (Bylaw 3.3.4.5 [c]); and

WHEREAS, Such work of the CUS Board and Synod Board of Directors is accomplished through cooperation and shared governance, recognizing that each individual board of regents is responsible for the governance of its CUS college or university within the parameters established by the Synod; and
WHEREAS, The CUS Board and Synod Board of Directors have worked diligently to assist Concordia University Chicago (CUS) with approval of recent capital projects such as our new Concordia Hall residence hall, our presidential search, financial arrangements, and many other matters; and

WHEREAS, The members of the CUS Board and Synod Board of Directors, including laymen, commissioned workers, and pastors, spend countless hours of dedicated service to the Church and to the CUS schools, on a completely volunteer basis; and

WHEREAS, The Synod Board of Directors, in particular, has worked valiantly to assist CUS schools over the last decade, including absorbing millions of debt from Concordia University, Ann Arbor and providing millions in funding support to Concordia College Alabama; such involvement of the Synod is vital where district or local efforts alone may prove insufficient; and

WHEREAS, Synod President Rev. Dr. Matthew Harrison and Secretary of Synod Rev. Dr. John Sias have also provided a positive and faithful vision for the future of the CUS as we must adapt to a changing world; such bold leadership is vital as institutions of higher education that faithfully confess the Gospel of Jesus Christ face new and unprecedented threats to our religious liberty; and

WHEREAS, As a board of regents we gratefully recognize that we can always benefit from the counsel, assistance, and support of our Synod, its officers, its congregations, the CUS Board, and the Synod Board of Directors, who have worked to help strengthen CUC and other CUS schools; we, and our fellow board members at sister CUS schools, do not seek to fight for “control” (however that is defined) or seek our own selfish power and institutional independence; rather, we seek to work for the greater good of the Church in its visible form in our Synod; and

WHEREAS, We note with sadness that sometimes the good faith efforts of the CUS, the officers of Synod, and the Synod Board of Directors are unfairly and inaccurately maligned in an unchristian manner; we call upon all in the Synod instead to repent, give thanks, and put the best construction upon the work of our servant leaders of the CUS in this challenging environment as we are called to do; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Synod in convention affirm the efforts of the CUS Board, the Synod Board of Directors, and the officers of Synod, in service to the Church, to aid and support our CUS colleges and universities; and be it further

Resolved, That the convention rise in the singing of the common doxology to give thanks for the servant leadership displayed by all those involved in CUS governance within the last triennium.

Board of Regents
Concordia University Chicago

Ov. 7-13

To Move Our Concordia Universities and Seminaries to Independence from Government Funding

WHEREAS, “The common goal [of our Concordia Universities and Seminaries] is to develop Christian leaders for the church, community and world” (lcms.org/cus, quoted on September 8, 2017); and

WHEREAS, “The Concordia University System is one of the most powerful and far-reaching tools the Lord of the Church has given to God and true man—only transitory and material beings” (cus.edu, accessed September 8, 2017); and

WHEREAS, Faculty and students in our CUS receive government grants and loans for research and tuition support (for an example of the receipt of federal funds for research support, see the listing of Prof. Matt Wise at cu-portland.edu/academics/college-arts-sciences/faculty-research [accessed September 8, 2017]); and

WHEREAS, The schools of the Wisconsin Synod to this day do not receive federal funding; and

WHEREAS, The acceptance of government monies is increasingly coming with requirements, which attempt to pressure our institutions of higher learning to compromise their Christian witness; therefore be it

Resolved, That the English District memorialize the Synod in convention to reaffirm the stated mission and goals of the CUS; and

be it further

Resolved, That the district in convention call upon the LCMS to urge our institutions of higher learning to issue a financial progress report in 2022, detailing how they are advancing toward independence from government funding; and be it finally

Resolved, That the district in convention call upon the LCMS to take at least one of the following actions: (1) begin a fund-raising campaign with the goal of supporting our institutions of higher learning to allow them to become financially independent of government funding; (2) restructure the CUS such that it liquidate the assets of most of the campuses in order to use the proceeds to create an endowment that will allow up to four remaining campuses to operate on a model employed by Grove City College in Pennsylvania and Hillsdale College in Michigan.

English District

Ov. 7-14

To Nurture Our Lutheran System of Higher Education

WHEREAS, The Concordia University System (CUS) exists to “build national identity, enable cooperative endeavors and enhance the strength of the colleges and universities of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod as they engage students of diverse ages and cultures in quality, Christ-centered, value-oriented, Lutheran

2019 Convention Workbook
higher education for lives of service to church and community” and with the goals:

- to transmit Lutheran values more effectively;
- to provide enhanced quality education to college students;
- to attain efficiencies in operation of the campuses; and
- to capitalize the schools and system

(Concordia University System: Mission and Purpose, 1992, cus.edu); and

WHEREAS, Recent events on some of our campuses have given rise to anti-Christian philosophies and practices that are contrary to these stated mission and goals; therefore be it

Resolved, That the English District memorialize the Synod in convention to reaffirm the stated mission and goals of the CUS; and be it finally

Resolved, That the proper ecclesiastical supervisors speak the truth in love by bringing proper discipline to bear on the faculties and student bodies of the CUS as needed to maintain and nurture our institutions as centers of Evangelical-Lutheran Christian teaching, learning, and life together.

English District

Ov. 7-15

To Amend Bylaws Regarding Qualification of Nominees for Concordia Boards of Regents and CUS Board of Directors

WHEREAS, Bylaws 3.10.6.2 and 3.6.6.3 were amended with the laudable goal of ensuring more highly qualified candidates are nominated and elected to serve as regents in our Concordia University System and for the Concordia University System Board of Directors. The prefatory material of 2010 Resolution 5-09B (Proceedings, p. 138) and 2013 Res. 5-05B (Proceedings, pp. 140–145) set forth these reasons. Quoting from the latter: “Because of the increasing complexity of oversight and governance of higher education programs and facilities, individuals who serve as board members should be required to possess appropriate specialized qualifications”; and

WHEREAS, Bylaw 3.10.6.2 (8) states:

Persons elected or appointed to a board of regents should be knowledgeable regarding the region in which the institution is located and shall … possess two or more of the following qualifications: theological acumen, an advanced academic degree, experience in higher education administration, administration of complex organizations, finance, law, investments, technology, human resources, facilities management, or fund development. … and

WHEREAS, The bylaw then prescribes a process in which potential candidates are screened by a panel of two individuals:

… When regents are elected at the national convention of the Synod or appointed by the board of regents, qualifications shall be reviewed and verified by the Secretary of Synod (or designee) and the President of the CUS (or designee). When regents are elected at district conventions, qualifications of all nominees, including floor nominees, shall be reviewed and verified by the chair and secretary of the district board of directors or their designees.

and

WHEREAS, Bylaw 3.6.6.3, regarding the CUS Board of Directors, similarly states (in part):

Persons elected or appointed to the Concordia University System Board of Directors should have demonstrated familiarity and support of the institutions, and shall support the doctrinal positions of the Synod, and shall possess two or more of the following qualifications: theological acumen, an advanced degree, experience in higher education administration, administration of complex organizations, finance, law, investments, technology, human resources, facilities management, or fund development. The Chief Administrative Officer of the Synod (or a designee) and the Secretary of the Synod (or a designee) shall review and verify that nominees are qualified to serve as stated above.

and

WHEREAS, Determining whether an individual nominee meets the qualifications set forth can be somewhat subjective (e.g., what exactly qualifies as “theological acumen”); and

WHEREAS, The current process places the final determination on a potential candidate in the hands of only two individuals, neither of which has been elected primarily for this purpose (and in the case of the CUS Board of Directors screening, the Chief Administrative Officer is an employee and not an elected officer), rather than the wider and more diverse Committee on Convention Nominations (CCN), which is elected for the very purpose of slating the most qualified candidates; and

WHEREAS, The CCN is elected for each national convention and represents half of the 35 districts, with a wide range of ordained, commissioned and lay members, and is given the charge of slating quality nominees as candidates for election at the convention, and each district also has a corresponding CCN for its conventions; and

WHEREAS, Nominees who are disqualified during the original screening process of the Secretary and one other are not presented to the committee, and thus the committee has no ability to disagree with the determination and decide if those nominees meet the prescribed qualifications; and

WHEREAS, The list of qualifications ensconced in the Bylaws may be, in fact, too narrow. Our schools may well benefit from regents with a set of skills that are not expressly mentioned but may still provide great use in governance and leadership (e.g., expertise in marketing, statistics, demographics, or some other valuable skills not yet considered in the Bylaw’s list of eleven); and

WHEREAS, The concerns for excellent and skilled leadership in our nominees must be addressed with a fair and due process which respects the will of Synod and those individuals elected to oversee nominations; and

WHEREAS, The desire for excellent and skilled leadership should neither unduly “tie the hands” of those who wish to nominate potentially qualified individuals who do not meet the narrow requirements of the current bylaws; therefore be it

Resolved, That Bylaw 3.10.6.2 (8) be amended to read as follows:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

3.10.6.2 The board of regents of each college and university shall consist of no more than 18 voting members.

…
8. Persons elected or appointed to a board of regents shall demonstrate familiarity and support for the doctrinal positions of the Synod, should be knowledgeable regarding the region in which the institution is located and shall demonstrate familiarity and support for the doctrinal positions of the Synod and should possess two or more of the following qualifications: theological acumen, an advanced academic degree, experience in higher education administration, administration of complex organizations, finance, law, investments, technology, human resources, facilities management, or fund development, or other valuable skills which may be pertinent to the position. Demonstrated familiarity and support of the institution is a desired quality in the candidate. When regents are elected at the national convention of the Synod or appointed by the board of regents, qualifications shall be reviewed and verified by the Secretary of Synod (or designee) and the President of the CUS (or designee). When regents are elected at district conventions, qualifications of all nominees, including floor nominees, shall be reviewed and verified by the chair and secretary of the district board of directors or their designees. However, the respective Committee for Nominations (Synod or district) shall retain the right to overturn a determination that disqualifies a nominee.

and be it further

Resolved, That Bylaw 3.6.6.3 be amended to conclude as follows:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

3.6.6.3 The Board of Directors of Concordia University System shall be composed of nine voting members and four nonvoting members ... :

... Persons elected or appointed to the Concordia University System Board of Directors shall support the doctrinal positions of the Synod, should have demonstrated familiarity and support of the institutions, and shall support the doctrinal positions of the Synod, and shall possess two or more of the following qualifications: theological acumen, an advanced degree, experience in higher education administration, administration of complex organizations, finance, law, investments, technology, human resources, facilities management, or fund development, or other valuable skills which may be pertinent to the position. The Chief Administrative Officer of the Synod (or a designee) and the Secretary of the Synod (or a designee) shall review and verify that nominees are qualified to serve as stated above. However, the Committee for Convention Nominations shall retain the right to overturn a determination that disqualifies a nominee.

Messiah
Keller, TX

Ov. 7-17

To Amend the Constitution and/or Bylaws to Recognize the Certified Lay Minister as Director of Church Ministries

WHEREAS, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) has greatly benefitted from the service of certified lay ministers trained at Concordia University Wisconsin (as including now also the Ann Arbor Campus, CUW / CUWAA) for over 50 years; and

WHEREAS, CUW / CUWAA wishes to build upon the lay ministry program and adopt new nomenclature in harmony with other offices in the church such as director of Christian education and director of Christian outreach; and

WHEREAS, The director of church ministries (DCM) major and minor have been established at CUW / CUWAA, emphasizing confessional theology, the practical application of theology in a variety of auxiliary functions within congregational contexts, and the supporting role that a DCM provides to the Office of the Public Ministry; and

WHEREAS, The various commissioned offices are presently listed in the Constitution of the Synod, requiring an amendment to make the above change, and the Commission on Handbook (COH) has submitted an oversight, the effect of which would be to consolidate the listing of commissioned offices into one location in the Bylaws; and

WHEREAS, CUW / CUWAA is desirous of this restyling of office taking effect in either circumstance; therefore be it

Resolved, That the office of certified lay minister be renamed director of church ministries, either:

- should the COH’s proposal “to amend the Constitution to simplify handling of commissioned categories” be adopted and ratified, by amending resulting bylaws to replace “certified lay ministers” with “directors of church ministries”; or
- should said proposal fail of adoption or amendment, by amending Constitution Articles V B 11–12 / Const. Arts. VI 3, 6 / XII 10 B k–l to replace “certified lay minister” with “directors of church ministries”:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

Article V Membership

... B. Advisory Members
Advisory members only are the following:

3. Regular call of pastors, teachers, directors of Christian education, directors of Christian outreach, directors of family life ministry, directors of parish music, deaconesses, certified lay ministers, directors of church ministries, and parish assistants and regular election of lay delegates by the congregations, as also the blamelessness of the life of such.

6. Pastors, teachers, directors of Christian education, directors of Christian outreach, directors of family life ministry, directors of parish music, deaconesses, certified lay ministers, directors of church ministries, or candidates for these offices not coming from recognized orthodox church bodies must submit to a colloquium before being received.

Article XII Districts of the Synod and Their Regulation

Ov. 7-19

To Encourage Raising Up Lutheran Faculty for Our Concordia University System Institutions

WHEREAS, Our Concordia University System (CUS) institutions are lights of the Gospel as they seek to confess Christ in an increasingly sinful and darkened world; and

WHEREAS, Our CUS schools enroll students from around the country and around the world who may never have heard the Gospel, and are therefore a mission field in which to reach the lost with the saving message of the Gospel that they desperately need for the forgiveness of their sins; and

WHEREAS, The faculty of our CUS schools are thus in a unique position to share the Gospel in their daily vocations of teaching, particularly with international students, among increasingly diverse multi-ethnic populations, and with the unchurched; and

WHEREAS, We would not send into the field missionaries who did not know Holy Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions; and

WHEREAS, Sharing the Gospel in an educational environment that is itself a mission field requires a body of faculty who are Lutheran or, if not possible, at least faculty who confess the basic doctrines of the Christian faith, and who can without reservation teach their disciplines in accordance with Holy Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions to the unchurched who sit in the classrooms of our CUS schools, as well as those who are already part of the Body of Christ; and

WHEREAS, Our CUS schools face significant challenges in locating and retaining faculty with appropriate educational attainment who are members of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) congregations; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Synod’s “LCMS U” Campus Ministry encourage those students who are enrolled in, or considering entering, graduate educational programs, to explore the possibility of teaching at a CUS school; and be it further

Resolved, That the CUS expand and enhance its current database of members of LCMS congregations who hold advanced academic degrees to include students currently pursuing graduate degrees, and by encouraging all such persons to submit their names and resume information for confidential consideration by CUS schools seeking faculty candidates; and be it further

Resolved, That each CUS school implement a formal program to assist in “growing” its own LCMS faculty so that members of LCMS congregations with master’s level degrees in fields where there is a faculty shortage are engaged and financially assisted in obtaining doctoral-level degrees while teaching at the CUS school, subject to an appropriate commitment to ongoing service in the CUS; and be it further
Resolved, That each CUS school encourage those faculty and staff who are members of LCMS congregations but who do not have roster status to seek such status where appropriate, including by providing financial incentives (annual stipend) to employees of the CUS school who have and maintain roster status, and assisting with the cost of colloquy; and be it finally

Resolved, That each CUS school shall provide formal ongoing continuing education for all of its faculty on Holy Scripture and Lutheran doctrine, to include at minimum instruction in Luther’s Small Catechism, consistent with the LCMS Lutheran Identity Statement as well as CUS Academic Freedom Policy requirements; that the president of each CUS school shall furnish the curriculum for such continuing education program to the CUS not later than December 31, 2019, certify to the CUS that such program has been implemented not later than September 1, 2020, and thereafter certify annually that each faculty member has completed such curriculum by the end of his or her first academic year, and thereafter a further or refresher course at least once in each three year period.

Resolved, That the Synod encourage its Lutheran schools to make students aware, from a young age, of the opportunity to obtain higher education in a Lutheran setting through our CUS institutions, and create an annual “CUS Week” program for congregations to promote such awareness; and be it further

Resolved, That the CUS create a secure database that the CUS would use to transmit information on behalf of CUS schools regarding the opportunities available in the CUS, and that the Synod encourage congregations to make the names, addresses, and email addresses of high school students seeking a college education available to the CUS for such purpose; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod also encourage its member congregations to make their members aware of the opportunities for continuing education and advanced degrees available at CUS schools, for those adults considering such educational options.

Board of Regents
Concordia University Chicago

Ov. 7-20
To Encourage Raising Up Lutheran Students for Our Concordia University System Institutions

WHEREAS, Our Concordia University System (CUS) institutions are lights of the Gospel as they seek to confess Christ in an increasingly sinful and darkened world; and

WHEREAS, Today’s predominant culture of higher education presents a particular challenge to the Gospel and the Church, and seeks to destroy the faith of the next generation, due to the prevalence of current academic theories such as post-modernism, relativism, progressive education, constructivism, intersectionality, pedagogy of oppression, and other harmful ideologies; and

WHEREAS, Such ideologies war against God’s unchanging truth (even denying the fact of His creation of male and female); attack Christianity; and often seek to divide students against one another by encouraging them to “identify” as members of groups based on demographic characteristics, not their baptismal identity as redeemed children of God; and

WHEREAS, Our Lutheran educational tradition guides us, instead, to enlighten our students with knowledge, beauty, and truth, as embodied in the liberal arts; to affirm the unique value of each individual as one created in God’s own image; and to pass down the timeless scholarship of civilization through the ages; and

WHEREAS, Our CUS schools fulfill the first purpose of the Concordia colleges and universities: to train church workers; and thus they encourage students to consider ways in which they can serve the Church through their lifelong vocations, whether it be as full-time church workers, through advanced theological study, and/or as faithful laity; and

WHEREAS, Our CUS schools can be of great benefit to all those Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) students seeking undergraduate and graduate education in an environment where their faith can be strengthened through daily chapel and Word and Sacrament ministry; and

WHEREAS, Currently only a small percentage of LCMS high school seniors seeking a college education enroll at CUS schools, and an increase in this number would benefit both the Church at large and our CUS schools; therefore be it

Resolved, That each CUS school encourage those faculty and staff who are members of LCMS congregations but who do not have roster status to seek such status where appropriate, including by providing financial incentives (annual stipend) to employees of the CUS school who have and maintain roster status, and assisting with the cost of colloquy; and be it finally

Resolved, That each CUS school shall provide formal ongoing continuing education for all of its faculty on Holy Scripture and Lutheran doctrine, to include at minimum instruction in Luther’s Small Catechism, consistent with the LCMS Lutheran Identity Statement as well as CUS Academic Freedom Policy requirements; that the president of each CUS school shall furnish the curriculum for such continuing education program to the CUS not later than December 31, 2019, certify to the CUS that such program has been implemented not later than September 1, 2020, and thereafter certify annually that each faculty member has completed such curriculum by the end of his or her first academic year, and thereafter a further or refresher course at least once in each three year period.

Resolved, That the Synod encourage its Lutheran schools to make students aware, from a young age, of the opportunity to obtain higher education in a Lutheran setting through our CUS institutions, and create an annual “CUS Week” program for congregations to promote such awareness; and be it further

Resolved, That the CUS create a secure database that the CUS would use to transmit information on behalf of CUS schools regarding the opportunities available in the CUS, and that the Synod encourage congregations to make the names, addresses, and email addresses of high school students seeking a college education available to the CUS for such purpose; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod also encourage its member congregations to make their members aware of the opportunities for continuing education and advanced degrees available at CUS schools, for those adults considering such educational options.

Board of Regents
Concordia University Chicago

Ov. 7-21
To Close Concordia University, Portland

WHEREAS, The administration of Concordia University, Portland allows and promotes a pro-homosexual advocacy group, the Queer Allies (Q&A) Club; and

WHEREAS, The administration of Concordia University, Portland has not been responsive to appeals to shut down this group; therefore be it

Resolved, That the President of the Synod, the President of the Concordia University System, and the Synod Board of Directors admonish the administration of Concordia University, Portland; and be it further

Resolved, That if such admonition should fail to bring about the necessary changes, the President of the Synod, acting with the approval of the Board of Directors, be authorized to remove the uncooperative administration officials at Concordia University, Portland and replace them with others who will act appropriately.

St. Matthew
Bonne Terre, MO

Ov. 7-22
To Close Concordia University, Portland

WHEREAS, The administration of Concordia University, Portland has consistently acted with and promoted behavior contrary to Holy Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions; and

WHEREAS, Concordia University, Portland has failed or refused to correct these actions; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Concordia University, Portland shall be shut down immediately, with all property sold and net proceeds thereof deposited into the LCMS general fund.

St. Matthew
Bonne Terre, MO

2019 Convention Workbook
To Recognize and Give Thanks for Work at Selma

WHEREAS, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) has been actively preaching and teaching the Word of God in the American South for over 140 years; and

WHEREAS, The institution now known as Concordia College Alabama (CCA) was founded in Selma, Ala. on Nov. 13, 1922 to help train teachers for the various mission schools throughout the American South; and

WHEREAS, CCA has served faithfully for nearly a century in training thousands of Lutheran educators and lay people in their godly vocations; and

WHEREAS, There is a time for all endeavors of man, which blossom one day and wither the next like the flowers of the field, but the Word of the Lord and His work of salvation endure forever (Ecclesiastes 3; Isaiah 40; James 1); and

WHEREAS, Various factors have led to the decision to close CCA at the end of the Spring 2018 semester; and

WHEREAS, The impact of CCA will continue in our congregations and communities through its former students; and

WHEREAS, The LCMS, through the ongoing work of LCMS Black Ministry and the Office of National Mission, continues to explore many avenues for the work of sharing the Word of the Lord in the American South and throughout the African American community, including such efforts as the Black Clergy Caucus, the Black Family Ministry Convocation, the Rosa Young Academies, and the Lifehouse Mentoring Programs; therefore be it

Resolved, That we, the Central Illinois District in convention assembled remember and recognize with thanksgiving to God the good and godly work of the many faculty and staff throughout the history of CCA in the training and instruction of God’s Word and Christian life; and be it further

Resolved, That we remember and recognize with thanksgiving to God the good and godly work of the many alumni of CCA which they have done and will continue to do in our congregations and communities; and be it further

Resolved, That we give voice to our thanks and praise to God for working through CCA these past 97 years, and pray His continued guidance, as we rise and sing the third stanza of “Lift Every Voice and Sing” (LSB 964:3):

God of our weary years,
God of our silent tears,
Thou who hast brought us thus far on the way;
Thou who hast by Thy might
Led us into the light,
Keep us forever in the path, we pray.
Lest our feet stray from the places, our God, where we met Thee;
Lest, our hearts drunk with the wine of the world,
we forget Thee;
Shadowed beneath Thy hand,
May we forever stand,
True to our God, true to our native land.

and be it finally

Resolved, That we memorialize the next regular convention of the LCMS to adopt the above resolution.

Central Illinois District

To Get a Full Report Regarding the Closure of Concordia College Alabama

WHEREAS, Concordia College Alabama (CCA) opened in 1922 to offer a Christian education to African American students; and

WHEREAS, CCA, the only historically black college of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS), served as a mission to under-served students in Alabama’s Black Belt; and

WHEREAS, Bylaw 3.6.6.5 states: “[a]ny church body that the potential was present for the closure of CCA; and

... (h) have authority, after receiving the consent of the Board of Directors of the Synod by its two-thirds vote and also the consent of either the Council of Presidents by its two-thirds vote or the appropriate board of Regents by its two-thirds vote, to consolidate, relocate, separate, or divest a college or university.

and

WHEREAS, CCA was abruptly closed without any warning from the CCA Board of Regents, the Concordia University System (CUS) or the LCMS Board of Directors; and

WHEREAS, The church-at-large has a right to know the cause of the closure; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Synod President form a committee of current or past college or university presidents to issue a full report regarding the closure of CCA (including statements from the past president of CCA, members of the most recent CCA Board of Regents, the CUS Board, the Council of Presidents, and the LCMS Board of Directors) to be prepared and distributed to all members of the LCMS prior to the next Synod convention; and be it further

Resolved, That steps are taken to assure future closures, if any, be done with full transparency, and that closure notices be made well in advance, and be made available to all members of the Synod.

Board of Directors
Southeastern District

To Get a Full Report regarding the Closure of Concordia College Alabama

WHEREAS, Concordia College Alabama (CCA) opened in 1922 to offer a Christian education to African American students; and

WHEREAS, CCA, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod’s (LCMS) only historically black Lutheran college, served as a mission to under-served students in Alabama’s Black Belt, as well as the larger African American community; and

WHEREAS, CCA was closed without any warning from the CCA Board of Regents, the Concordia University System (CUS) or the LCMS Board of Directors; and

WHEREAS, There was not a Synod appeal to alert the larger church body that the potential was present for the closure of CCA; and

WHEREAS, The church-at-large would greatly benefit from dialog regarding the closure of CCA; and

WHEREAS, CCA has had a significant impact upon the ministry of the Southeastern District of the LCMS; therefore be it
Resolved, That the CCA Board of Regents, CUS, and LCMS Board of Directors issue a full report regarding the closure of CCA be prepared and distributed to all members of the LCMS; and be it further

Resolved, That steps are taken to assure future closures, if any, be done with full transparency, and that closure notices be made well in advance, and be made available to all members of Synod.

Grace, Concord, NC; Trinity, San Diego, CA; Unity, Norfolk, VA

Ov. 7-26
To Get a Full Report Regarding the Closure of Concordia College Alabama

WHEREAS, Concordia College Alabama (CCA) opened in 1922 to offer a Christian education to African-American students; and

WHEREAS, CCA, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod’s (LCMS) only historically black college, served as a mission to underserved students in Alabama’s black belt; and

WHEREAS, CCA was closed without reasonable warning from the Board of Regents (BOR), the Concordia University System (CUS) or the LCMS’s Board of Directors (BOD); and

WHEREAS, The process required for closing any college in the CUS as prescribed in Bylaw 3.6.6.5 of the 2016 Handbook was not adhered to; and

WHEREAS, The church-at-large has a right to know the cause of the closure; therefore be it

Resolved, That the BOR, CUS, and BOD prepare a full report regarding the closure of CCA and distribute to all members of the Synod; and be it further

Resolved, That steps are taken to assure future closures, if any, be done with full transparency, and that closure notices be made well in advance, and be made available to all members of Synod.

Berea
Baltimore, MD

Ov. 7-27
To Get a Full Report Regarding the Closure of Concordia College Alabama

WHEREAS, Concordia College Alabama (CCA) opened in 1922 to offer a Christian education to African-American students; and

WHEREAS, CCA, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod’s (LCMS) only historically black college, served as a mission to underserved students in Alabama’s black belt; and

WHEREAS, CCA was abruptly closed without any warning from the Board of Regents (BOR), the Concordia University System (CUS) or the LCMS’s Board of Directors (BOD); and

WHEREAS, The church-at-large has a right to know the cause of the closure; therefore be it

Resolved, That the BOR, CUS, and BOD issue a full report regarding the closure of CCA and distribute it to all members of the Synod; and be it further

Resolved, That steps are taken to assure future closures, if any, be done with full transparency, and that closure notices be made well in advance, and be made available to all members of Synod.

Saint Peters
Concord, NC

Ov. 7-28
To Request a Full Report on the Closure of Concordia College Alabama

WHEREAS, For 93 years Concordia College Alabama (CCA) has been a gift of God for the Gospel proclamation as the only predominantly black Lutheran college in the United States; and

WHEREAS, CCA served as a mission to underserved students in the Alabama Black Belt; and

WHEREAS, The process required for the closure of CCA and any college in the Concordia University System (CUS) as prescribed in Bylaw 3.6.6.5 was not adhered to; and

WHEREAS, CCA was closed without reasonable warning from the CCA Board of Regents, CUS, and The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) Board of Directors; and

WHEREAS, Financial concealment and operational transparency were prevalent, thereby hindering growth and opportunity necessary to be a stellar and vibrant college within the CUS; and

WHEREAS, The constant rumors about the closing of CCA (for far too long) were never adequately addressed resulting in the loss of many of its funders; and

WHEREAS, The vast majority of black pastors, teachers, laity workers in the churches and schools of the LCMS have their roots there; therefore be it

Resolved, That the CCA Board of Regents, CUS, and LCMS Board of Directors issue a detailed report to be distribute to all LCMS members regarding the CCA closure; and be it further

Resolved, That strategic planning details are reviewed, distributed and communicated with full transparency, including closure notification(s) well in advance to all LCMS members.

Transfiguration
Saint Louis, MO

Ov. 7-29
To Obtain a Full Report Regarding the Closure of Concordia College Alabama

WHEREAS, Concordia College Alabama (CCA) opened in 1922 to offer a Christian education to African-American students; and

WHEREAS, CCA, the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod’s (LCMS) only historically black college, has for many years served as a mission to under-served students in Alabama’s Black Belt; and

WHEREAS, CCA, was closed by the college’s Board of Regents (BOR), by the Concordia University System (CUS) and by the LCMS Board of Directors (BOD); and

WHEREAS, There is a profound sadness in Circuit 15 of the Southeastern District and other parts of the Synod over the sudden closure of CCA; and

WHEREAS, The members and congregations of the Synod have a right to know the cause of the closure; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Circuit Forum of Circuit 15 of the Southeastern District hereby petitions the CUS and the BOD to prepare a full report regarding the closure of CCA, and distribute that report to all members of the Synod; and be it further

Resolved, That steps be taken by the BOD and the CUS to assure that future closures, if any, be done with full transparency, and that
closure notices be made well in advance to all members of the Synod.

Circuit 15
Southeastern District

Ov. 7-30

To Celebrate and Give Thanks to God for the 125th Anniversary of Concordia University, Nebraska

WHEREAS, Since its founding on November 18, 1894, the Lord of the Church has blessed Concordia University, Nebraska (CUNE) by empowering it to serve The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) as an educational institution equipping students to learn, serve and lead in the Church and in the world; and

WHEREAS, The Lord of the Church led the founders of the university to provide the funds and land to locate the institution in Seward, Neb. so that the institution would be a blessing to the local community, the Nebraska and surrounding districts and the entire LCMS; and

WHEREAS, The Lord of the Church has blessed CUNE to be the leading preparer of full-time workers in the ministries of the LCMS, as today it places more graduates into the commissioned teaching and Director of Christian Education ministries of the Church than any other institution of the Concordia University System; and

WHEREAS, The Lord of the Church has blessed CUNE to equip men for the pastoral ministry through its pre-seminary and other academic programs so that, historically, each year between 40 and 50 are involved in academic and spiritual preparation to study at an LCMS seminary with the result that seven percent of those serving as pastors in the LCMS today are alumni of CUNE; and

WHEREAS, The God of all creation has blessed CUNE with opportunities to equip students with a Lutheran Christian higher education for vocations of service in business, laboratories, hospitals, industry, courtrooms, government, the military, their home, and the communities where they reside; and

WHEREAS, The God of all wisdom and knowledge has blessed CUNE by enabling it to serve the Church and world through 110 undergraduate and graduate academic programs at its campuses in Seward and Lincoln, through its high school partners and online; and

WHEREAS, The God of service has blessed the Church and world through the more than 23,000 alumni, sainted and living, of CUNE who have walked by faith and not by sight and the hundreds of gifted and faithful faculty and staff who served these men and women during their educational studies; and

WHEREAS, The God of abundance has blessed CUNE through the tens of thousands of donors who have faithfully supported the university with their prayers, generous gifts, and referral of students; and

WHEREAS, The God of grace and mercy continues to bless CUNE with record numbers of undergraduate and graduate students: 2,757 in 2016–17; therefore be it

The Kansas, Missouri, and Nebraska District overtures contained this additional resolving clause:

[Resolved, That the 2018 Convention of the … District of the LCMS pause from its regular business to offer special thanksgiving and praise to almighty God for His continued blessings on CUNE and to commend students, faculty, staff, and administration to His continued providential care; and be it further]

Resolved, That the LCMS at its July 2019 convention declare November 17, 2019 as a Synod-wide “Concordia University, Nebraska Sunday,” encouraging and facilitating prayers, thanksgiving, offerings, gifts, and student referrals to be given in celebration of the Lord’s abundant blessings to the Church through one of its treasured universities.

Kansas District; Missouri District; Nebraska District; Rocky Mountain District; South Dakota District
8. Finance

REPORTS
R1, R1.1, R1.2, R4, R4.1–2, R6–6.2, R14, R16, R16.1–8, R18, R19, R20, R62, R66

OVERTURES

Ov. 8-01
To Encourage the Synod to Establish a Synod-wide 1.1.1 Funding Model for Specifically Designated Mission Endeavors

WHEREAS, Resolution 2-02 adopted at the 2018 District Convention of the English District of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) established a funding model for missions whereby congregations gather significant gifts above and beyond regular offerings to be used for specifically designated mission endeavors (namely, the "$1 per member per week initiative, hereafter “1.1.1”); and

WHEREAS, Many congregations of the English District are participating in this simple model, showing there is power and strength in many giving a little as these congregations raise significant extra funds for missions; and

WHEREAS, More than $50 million could be raised annually if half of the Synod baptized members would participate in a 1.1.1 funding model; and

WHEREAS, The church is the beautiful Body of Christ that desires more missions to be started, more missionaries to be sent, more pastors and teachers to be trained, more people to be baptized, to hear of Jesus and be saved; and

WHEREAS, Corporate mission funding by member congregations has been a hallmark of the LCMS since its founding, as seen in the original Synod Constitution, Article I, “Reasons for Forming a Synodical Organization”: “6. The unified spread of the kingdom of God and to make possible the promotion of special church projects. (Seminary, agenda, hymnal, Book of Concord, schoolbooks, Bible distribution, mission projects within and outside the Church.)” (tr. Suelflow, Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly 16, no. 1 [Apr 1943]: 1–18); therefore be it

Resolved, That the Synod adopt and promote the 1.1.1 mission funding model as a way for its congregations to raise funds for specifically designated mission endeavors; and be it further

Resolved, That the Council of Presidents set before the Synod the specific designated mission goals that all congregations can see and help achieve through their extra designated funds raised via the 1.1.1 mission funding model; and be it finally

Resolved, That the members of the Synod dream big and joyfully work together to fulfill a purpose for which the Synod was originally formed.

Prince of Peace, Menomonee Falls, WI; Board of Directors, English District; Circuit 16 (Milwaukee), English District

Ov. 8-02
To Plan Wisely for the Future Use of Our Earthly Resources, Trusting in the Lord (Jeremiah 29:11)

WHEREAS, As we enter a post-Christian culture in the United States, every district of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) has witnessed a decline in its membership; and

WHEREAS, Most individual congregations, districts, and our Synod itself, along with other entities of our Synod, are facing significant challenges to their ability to continue their present work with fewer people and reduced financial resources; and

WHEREAS, For our Synod to assist its local congregations in the continued proclamation of the Gospel in its truth and purity and right administration of the Sacraments, our Synod must prioritize its primary purposes and duties, as set forth in its first constitution (1847):

1. The example of the apostolic Church (Acts 15:1–31).
2. The preservation and furthering of the unity of pure confession (Eph. 4:3–6; 1 Cor. 1:10) and to provide common defense against separatism and sectarianism (Rom. 16:17).
3. Protection and preservation of the rights, and duties of pastors and congregations.
4. The establishment of the largest possible conformity in church government.
5. The will of the Lord that the diversities of gifts be used for the common good (1 Cor. 12:4–31).
6. The unified spread of the kingdom of God and to make possible the promotion of special church projects (seminary, agenda, hymnal, Book of Concord, schoolbooks, Bible distribution, mission projects within and outside the Church);

WHEREAS, To assist in evaluating the Synod’s existing programs, properties, and structures, it would be helpful to obtain recommendations from those with expertise in such matters who are not currently employed by the Synod or any of its agencies; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Board of Directors (BOD) of the Synod engage experts who are not currently employed by the Synod or any of its agencies, to conduct an independent third-party review of the property, programs, duties, operations, and staffing of the LCMS, including its Synod corporate entities, Synod trust entities, districts, Concordia University System (CUS), and auxiliary organizations of the Synod; and be it further

Resolved, That such a review consider the reasons for forming a synodical organization (listed above) as set forth in the first constitution of the LCMS for prioritization of tasks and duties of an Evangelical Lutheran Synod in making its recommendations; and be it further

Resolved, That such a review and recommendations be completed and submitted to the Synod BOD by October 31, 2020, and made available electronically to all members of the Synod; and be it further

Resolved, That such a review and recommendations be used by the BOD to recommend a strategic plan for the LCMS, including its Synod corporate entities, Synod trust entities, districts, CUS, and auxiliary organizations of the Synod, to streamline programs, duties, and staffing of the same, and optimize use of property, for the benefit of all congregations of Synod, taking into account financial and demographic resources and realities, and making recommendations for any resolutions of the Synod in convention
that may be necessary or appropriate to implement it; and be it further

Resolved, That such a strategic plan be made available electronically to all members of the Synod by October 31, 2021; and be it further

Resolved, That a regular report of actions taken to enact and execute the strategic plan be made electronically in January of each year until 2033 to all members of the Synod by the Office of the President of the Synod; and be it finally

Resolved, That failure to enact a strategic plan and comply with the requirements of this resolution will become a cause for discipline for any president, director, or executive of the LCMS, Synod corporate entities, Synod trust entities, districts, CUS, and auxiliary organizations of the Synod.

High Plains Circuit Wyoming District

Ov. 8-03

To Acknowledge God’s Gift of Pastors and to Memorialize The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod to Increase its Budgeted Support of Both Seminaries

WHEREAS, “So that we may obtain this faith, the ministry of teaching the Gospel and administering the Sacraments was instituted. Through the Word and Sacraments, as through instruments, the Holy Spirit is given. He works faith, when and where it pleases God, in those that hear the good news that God justifies those who believe that they are received by grace for Christ’s sake. This happens, not through our merits, but for Christ’s sake.” (Augsburg Confession [AC] V); and

WHEREAS, “The Synod is organized to work in support of and on behalf of congregations to assist them in carrying out their ministries as they seek to serve our Lord Jesus Christ, the members of His body, and the whole world which stands in need of the Word and the impact of His redeeming love.” The Synod is “to assist [member congregations] in carrying out their functions of worship, witness, teaching and nurture, service, and support.” (Bylaw 1.1.1); and

WHEREAS, The Synod’s objectives include:

3. Recruit and train pastors, teachers, and other professional church workers and provide opportunity for their continuing growth;

5. Aid congregations to develop processes of thorough Christian education and nurture and to establish agencies of Christian education such as elementary and secondary schools and to support synodical colleges, universities, and seminaries;

WHEREAS, The number of pastoral candidates is down from “240 recent annual averages of candidates” to “90 pastoral candidates” in 2017, which is not sufficient to cover the Synod's needs (Pamela J. Nielsen, “COP reviews Koinonia Project outcomes,” Reporter, Nov. 2017, 2); and

WHEREAS, In May, 2017, the Board of Regents for Concordia Seminary approved a budget of $23 million dollars “for the coming fiscal year” [2017–18] (Concordia Seminary News), and Concordia Theological Seminary has a budget of $12.9 million for “this fiscal year” [2017–18] (email from Dr. Ron Garwood, Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Board of Regents, December 1, 2017), and the two seminaries are also running the Global Seminary Initiative; and

WHEREAS, Only 4.2% of the Synod’s budget ($3,097,000) goes toward “Pastoral Education” (“Financial Year 2017 Expenses,” Lutheran Witness, Nov. 2017, 12) for both seminaries; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Montana District in convention in 2018 acknowledge: (1) that the Lord of the Church has chosen, given, instituted, and established “the ministry of teaching the Gospel and administering the Sacraments” (that is, the Office of the Word/Pastoral Office) to be the primary means through which He expands His kingdom and upholds His Body, the Church; (2) that it is through this Office that the Synod carries out the majority of its purposes and objectives; and (3) that we receive with thanksgiving both those men He has currently called to this office and those He calls to be trained for this office; and be it further

Resolved, That the Montana District in convention memorialize the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod in convention in 2019 to adopt the above Resolved as its own; and be it finally

Resolved, That the Montana District in convention memorialize the LCMS in convention in 2019 to direct the Synod's Board of Directors to increase the Synod’s budgeted support of both seminaries by 10% per annum until reaching 51% of the combined seminaries’ budgets by the 2025 Synod budget.

Montana District

Ov. 8-04

To Encourage Congregations to Receive Special Offerings to Support the LCMS Joint Seminary Fund on the Occasions of the Ordination/Installation of Pastor or Pastors’ Ordination Anniversaries

WHEREAS, Well-trained pastors are essential for the ongoing work of Word and Sacrament ministry in our congregations; and

WHEREAS, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) has been blessed by God with two seminaries for the training and equipping of parish pastors and every congregation in Synod has and continues to benefit from the work of our seminaries in training and equipping parish pastors; and

WHEREAS, Every congregation in our Synod has benefited and continues to benefit from the ministry and service of well-trained pastors from our Synod’s seminaries; and

WHEREAS, As the cost of seminary education continues to rise, the LCMS continues to search for ways to cover the costs of maintaining the quality of the pastoral education of our seminaries without unduly increasing the financial burden of the students; and

WHEREAS, The LCMS Joint Seminary Fund was established as a vehicle to allow congregations and individuals to contribute to the support of our seminaries in an orderly and systematic way; and

WHEREAS, The occasions of ordinations and/or installations and the ordination anniversaries of pastors provide wonderful opportunities for congregations to show their thankfulness to God for a pastor to carry out the Word and Sacrament ministry in its midst; therefore be it
Resolved, That congregations of the LCMS be encouraged to take a special thank-offering on the occasion of the installation and/or ordination of a new pastor or the anniversary of their pastor’s ordination to support the LCMS Joint Seminary Fund.

South Dakota District

Ov. 8-05

To Optimize the Stewardship of Gifts to Our Seminaries

WHEREAS, For many decades, the Synod has managed the Joint Seminary Fund, providing donors an opportunity to make a single donation that financially supports both seminaries; and

WHEREAS, The Synod establishes both the formula for distribution of those gifts to the seminaries and the amount to be retained by the Synod for fund raising expenses; and

WHEREAS, Trends in Synod giving indicate that donors who connect more directly with ministries are more trusting of and financially generous with those ministries; and

WHEREAS, Direct involvement in the fundraising activity of the Joint Seminary Fund by the two seminaries has been greatly reduced; and

WHEREAS, This reduced involvement has had a direct impact on the performance of the Joint Seminary Fund such that the financial support to the two seminaries has been significantly diminished; and

WHEREAS, The administrative leadership of both seminaries have been successful in connecting directly with individuals who desire to support those ministries; and

WHEREAS, The administrative leadership of both seminaries are committed to working together to manage a joint seminary fund-raising operation in a way that provides the same opportunities for donors and that continues an equitable distribution model, yet reduces costs through the use of existing fundraising expertise and infrastructure of the seminaries; therefore be it

Resolved, That Concordia Theological Seminary and Concordia Seminary be directed to create a joint fundraising team, which has the responsibility for receiving gifts intended to benefit both seminaries; and be it further

Resolved, That gifts be split between the two seminaries each year in proportion to total residential Master of Divinity enrollment for the most recent completed academic year; and be it further

Resolved, That the existing Joint Seminary Fund, administered by the Synod, be transferred, in its entirety to this new fund; and be it finally

Resolved, That any gifts or bequests received by The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod or The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod Foundation, any earnings from trusts, endowments, or other similar receipts directed to the Joint Seminary Fund, or otherwise designated or restricted for the use of the two seminaries, be immediately distributed to the new joint fund, but in each case remaining subject to any applicable restrictions on use imposed by the donors thereof.

Board of Regents, Concordia Seminary;
Board of Regents, Concordia Theological Seminary

Ov. 8-06

To Ensure Timely and Transparent Financial Reporting in the Synod

WHEREAS, Biblical stewardship requires us to be accountable for the gifts that God has entrusted to His people (Matt. 25:14f.; Luke 12:48; 1 Cor. 4:2); and

WHEREAS, The Synod has historically recognized its responsibility of accountability and faithfulness in the handling of the finances entrusted to it by its members, as is evidenced by Synod Bylaws and Resolutions (Bylaws 1.5.1—1.5.4; 2010 Proceedings, Res. 4-03, p. 120); and

WHEREAS, The members of the Synod expressed even further the need for full transparency in all areas of financial disclosure of all funding, including special appeals by adopting 2016 Res. 9-04A, “To Improve Disclosures Related to Financial Gifts from God’s Stewards for Special Appeals,” (2016 Proceedings, p. 189) which stated in part:

Resolved, That the financial offices of corporate Synod continue to recognize the desire of donors and members of the Synod to improve processes of reporting and work to provide clear, timely, and transparent accounting for all funding and special appeals, so that the Body of Christ may experience the joy of Gospel-centered mission and ministry beyond the local context or community.

and

WHEREAS, There is a desire among the members of the Florida-Georgia District for more transparency and regularity in reporting of the financial position of the Synod especially in regard to special appeals for disaster relief, which is of the utmost importance to the members and constituencies of the Florida-Georgia District who have a vested interest in the care of those impacted by disasters; and

WHEREAS, The people of God motivated by the Gospel will respond through better, open, and honest communication about the great things God is able to accomplish for His Kingdom when we work together; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Synod in convention direct the Chief Financial Officer to report quarterly in the Synod’s official publications the financial position of the Synod in a format easily understood by persons unfamiliar with financial terminology according to generally accepted accounting principles; and be it further

Resolved, That these quarterly reports include information about the regular Synod budget as well as reporting on special appeals.

Florida-Georgia District

Ov. 8-07

To Ensure Timely and Transparent Financial Reporting in the Synod

WHEREAS, A principle of biblical stewardship is to be accountable with the resources with which one has been entrusted, as expressed in the Parable of the Talents (Matt. 25:14f.); and

WHEREAS, Much is required of those to whom God has entrusted his gifts. As Jesus said, “Everyone to whom much was given, of him much will be required, and from him to whom they entrusted much, they will demand the more” (Luke 12:48b); and

WHEREAS, The Scriptures teach that “it is required of stewards that they be found faithful” (1 Cor. 4:2); and
WHEREAS, The Synod has historically recognized its responsibility of accountability and faithfulness in the handling of the finances entrusted to it by its members, as is witnessed in Bylaw 1.5.4, “The Synod and each of its agencies shall fully disclose their financial books and records to any member congregation of the Synod”; and

WHEREAS, The Synod in previous conventions has expressed its opinion that such accountability and faithfulness be found additionally in regular reporting of such financial disclosure by adopting 2010 Resolution 4-03, “To Broadly Communicate the Statement of Financial Position of LCMS,” which reads in its totality:

WHEREAS, It is helpful to understand the Synod’s financial position and communicate it to the members of the congregations of Synod; therefore be it

Resolved, That each November, the Vice-President—Finance—Treasurer of the Synod use widely available means, (i.e., The Lutheran Witness, Reporter, the LCMS Website) to state the financial position of the Synod in a format easily understood by persons unfamiliar with financial terminology (2010 Proceedings, 120);

and

WHEREAS, The members of the Synod expressed even further the need for full transparency in all areas of financial disclosure by adopting 2016 Res. 9-04A, “To Improve Disclosures Related to Financial Gifts from God’s Stewards for Special Appeals,” which stated in part:

WHEREAS, Monies for special appeals requested by corporate Synod (e.g., following natural disasters) are reported only in part in Synod publications (e.g., Reporter and The Lutheran Witness) and sometimes only annually; and

WHEREAS, Donors and members of the Synod are interested in the impact of funds raised for special appeals and will appreciate improved disclosure of results; therefore be it

Resolved, That the financial offices of corporate Synod continue to recognize the desire of donors and members of the Synod to improve processes of reporting and work to provide clear, timely, and transparent accounting for all funding and special appeals, so that the Body of Christ may experience the joy of Gospel-centered mission and ministry beyond the local context or community… (2016 Proceedings, 189);

and

WHEREAS, It was reported to the 2013 Synod convention by the Board of Directors in its “Report on the Description of Fundining the Mission Recommendations” that “The decline in the Synod’s annual unrestricted revenue continues, ... The board believes that congregations will respond through better, open, and honest communication about the great things God is able to accomplish for His kingdom when we work together. Numerous conventions have passed resolutions calling on congregations to maintain and increase unrestricted support for district and Synod ministries, yet the unrestricted support passed through our districts to the Synod has continued to decline at the average rate of $1 million each year” (2013 Convention Report R6-03-01, Workbook, 114–15); and

WHEREAS, In 2016, the Chief Financial Officer of the Synod, in reporting to the Synod about offerings received, stated, “This sharing from God’s bounty continues to decline. Although the amount of decline in the past three years has not been as severe as the average decline of the previous 20 years, it is still trending negatively. In the face of continued declining unrestricted revenues, the ability of Synod, Inc. to respond quickly and nimbly to mission and ministry opportunities and challenges laid before us by our Lord also declines, as does our ability to ‘fill in the gap’ when restricted revenues, needed to fund much of our mission and ministry activities, fall short of their goals. The financial challenges facing our beloved Synod persist. I believe that these challenges are of our own making, a product of how we distribute the resources provided by our loving Father” (Report of the Chief Financial Officer, 2016 Workbook, 61–62); and

WHEREAS, There have been few tangible reports about the financial struggles of the Synod, such as the need to trim $4 million dollars from the budget of the Synod ( “Boards and Business: International, National Mission, Reporter Online, July 7, 2017, blogs.lcms.org/2017/international-national-mission and Board of Directors Minutes, May 19–20, 2017, ag. 87A, “Action Items: Adoption of 2017–2018 (FY18) LCMS Mission and Ministry Operating Budget,” p. 52, lcms.org/Document.fdoc?src=lcm&id=4769), and these reports are less than sufficient to keep the members of the Synod regularly informed about the financial condition of the Synod; and

WHEREAS, It has been widely reported, albeit not in the official channels of the Synod communications, that the Synod has only minimal days of operating capital in its cash reserves, which would seemingly place the Synod in a precarious financial position (Board of Directors Minutes, Feb. 17–18, 2017, ag. 45, “Financial Report,” p. 29, lcms.org/Document.fdoc?src=lcm&id=4659, which stated that without funds held on behalf of the two seminaries, Synod had only five days of cash available); and

WHEREAS, In the face of such challenging financial times, transparency and regularity in reporting of the financial situation of the Synod is of utmost importance to the members and constituency of the Synod who have a vested interest in the financial viability of the Synod and who merit clear, concise and timely reports; and

WHEREAS, The President of the Synod recommended in his report to the Synod in 2016 that the Synod have “Uniform Financial Reporting” (President’s Report, Part 2, 2016 Today’s Business, 28); therefore be it

Resolved, That the Synod in convention direct the Chief Financial Officer to report quarterly in the Synod’s official publications about the financial position of the Synod in a format easily understood by persons unfamiliar with financial terminology, such reporting to include, but not limited to income and expenses, budget versus spending, cash reserves and cash position, etc.; and be it further

Resolved, That these quarterly reports include information about the regular Synod budget and the reporting on special appeals as stipulated in 2016 Res. 9-04A; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod be shrewd managers with the resources God has given it; and be it finally

Resolved, That the Synod give thanks to God for the resources He has entrusted to us, recognizing “That the earth is the Lord’s and the fullness thereof” (Ps. 24:1).

Zion, Kalamazoo, MI; Pacific Southwest District; Rocky Mountain District
Ov. 8-08

To Ensure Timely and Transparent Financial Reporting in the Synod

WHEREAS, A principle of biblical stewardship is to be accountable with the resources with which one has been entrusted, as expressed in the Parable of the Talents (Matt. 25:14ff.); and

WHEREAS, Much is required of those to whom God has entrusted his gifts. As Jesus said, “Everyone to whom much was given, of him much will be required, and from him to whom they entrusted much, they will demand the more” (Luke 12:48b); and

WHEREAS, The Scriptures teach “it is required of stewards that they be found faithful” (1 Cor. 4:2); and

WHEREAS, The Synod has historically recognized its responsibility of accountability and faithfulness in the handling of the finances entrusted to it by its members, as is witnessed in Bylaw 1.5.4, “The Synod and each of its agencies shall fully disclose their financial books and records to any member congregation of the Synod”; and

WHEREAS, The Synod in previous conventions has expressed its opinion that such accountability and faithfulness be found additionally in regular reporting of such financial disclosure by adopting 2010 Resolution 4-03, “To Broadly Communicate the Statement of Financial Position of LCMS,” which reads in its totality: 

WHEREAS, It is helpful to understand the Synod’s financial position and communicate it to the members of the congregations of Synod; therefore be it

Resolved, That each November, the Vice-President-Finance—Treasurer of the Synod use widely available means, (i.e., The Lutheran Witness, Reporter, the LCMS Website) to state the financial position of the Synod in a format easily understood by persons unfamiliar with financial terminology (2010 Proceedings, 120);

and

WHEREAS, The members of the Synod expressed even further the need for full transparency in all areas of financial disclosure by adopting 2016 Res. 9-04A, “To Improve Disclosures Related to Financial Gifts from God’s Stewards for Special Appeals,” which stated, in part:

WHEREAS, Monies for special appeals requested by corporate Synod (e.g., following natural disasters) are reported only in part in Synod publications (e.g., Reporter and The Lutheran Witness) and sometimes only annually; and

WHEREAS, Donors and members of the Synod are interested in the impact of funds raised for special appeals and will appreciate improved disclosure of results; therefore be it

... Resolved, That the financial offices of corporate Synod continue to recognize the desire of donors and members of the Synod to improve processes of reporting and work to provide clear, timely, and transparent accounting for all funding and special appeals, so that the Body of Christ may experience the joy of Gospel-centered mission and ministry beyond the local context or community; and ... (2016 Proceedings, 189);

and

WHEREAS, It was reported to the 2013 Synod convention by the Board of Directors in its “Report on the Disposition of Funding the Mission Recommendations” that “The decline in the Synod’s annual unrestricted revenue continues, ... The board believes that congregations will respond through better, open, and honest communication about the great things God is able to accomplish for His kingdom when we work together. Numerous conventions have passed resolutions calling on congregations to maintain and increase unrestricted support for district and Synod ministries, yet the unrestricted support passed through our districts to the Synod has continued to decline at the average rate of $1 million each year (2013 Convention Report R6–03–01, Workbook, 114–5); and

WHEREAS, In 2016, the Chief Financial Officer of the Synod, in reporting to the Synod about offerings received, stated, “This sharing from God’s bounty continues to decline. Although the amount of decline in the past three years has not been as severe as the average decline of the previous 20 years, it is still trending negatively. In the face of continued declining unrestricted revenues, the ability of Synod, Inc. to respond quickly and nimbly to mission and ministry opportunities and challenges laid before us by our Lord also declines, as does our ability to “fill in the gap” when restricted revenues, needed to fund much of our mission and ministry activities, fall short of their goals. The financial challenges facing our beloved Synod persist. I believe that these challenges are of our own making, a product of how we distribute the resources provided by our loving Father.” (Report of the Chief Financial Officer, 2016 Workbook, 61–62); and

WHEREAS, There have been reports about the financial struggles of the Synod, such as the need to trim $4 million dollars from the budget of the Synod (“Boards and Business: International, National Mission, Reporter Online, July 7, 2017, blogs.lcms.org/2017/international-national-mission-mission and Board of Directors Minutes, May 19–20, 2017, ag. 87A, Action Items: Adoption of 2017–2018 (FY18) LCMS Mission and Ministry Operating Budget,” p. 52, lcms.org/Document.fdoc?src=lcm&Id=4769); and

WHEREAS, It has been reported that the Synod has only minimal days of operating capital in its cash reserves, which would seemingly place the Synod in a precarious financial position (Board of Directors Minutes, Feb, 17–18, 2017, ag. 45, “Financial Report,” p. 29, lcms.org/Document.fdoc?src=lcm&Id=4659, which stated that without funds held on behalf of the two seminaries, Synod had only five days of cash available); and

WHEREAS, In the face of such challenging financial times, transparency and regularity in reporting of the financial situation of the Synod is of utmost importance to the members and constituency of the Synod, who have a vested interest in the financial viability of the Synod and who merit clear, concise, and timely reports; and

WHEREAS, The President of the Synod recommended in his report to the Synod in 2016 that the Synod have “Uniform Financial Reporting.” (President’s Report, Part 2, 2016 Today’s Business, 28); therefore be it

Resolved, That it is the formal declaration of this assembly that annual reporting of the synod’s financial position in the official publications of the Synod is insufficient; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod in convention direct the Chief Financial Officer to report quarterly in the Synod’s official publications about the financial position of the Synod in a format easily understood by persons unfamiliar with financial terminology, such reporting to include, but not limited to income and expenses, budget versus spending, explanations for variances in budget line
items that vary by $50,000 or more, cash reserves and cash position, etc.; and be it further

Resolved, That these quarterly reports include information about the regular Synod budget and the reporting on special appeals as stipulated in 2016 Res. 9-04A; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod be shrewd managers with the resources God has given it; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod give thanks to God for the resources He has entrusted to us, recognizing “That the earth is the Lord’s and the fullness thereof” (Ps. 24:1); and be it finally

Resolved, That the Texas District in convention memorialize the Synod in convention with this resolution.

Christ, Juniata, NE; Christ, Scituate, MA; Concordia, Lakewood, CO; Our Savior, Rehoboth Beach, DE; Trinity, Houston, TX; Zion, Mayer, MN; Texas District

Ov. 8-09

To Ensure Timely and Transparent Financial Reporting in the Synod

WHEREAS, A principle of biblical stewardship is to be accountable with the resources with which one has been entrusted, as expressed in the Parable of the Talents (Matt. 25:14f); and

WHEREAS, Much is required of those to whom God has entrusted his gifts. As Jesus said, “Everyone to whom much was given, of him much will be required, and from him to whom they entrusted much, they will demand the more” (Luke 12:48b); and

WHEREAS, The Scriptures teach “it is required of stewards that they be found faithful” (1 Cor. 4:2); and

WHEREAS, The Synod has historically recognized its responsibility of accountability and faithfulness in the handling of the finances entrusted to it by its members, as is witnessed in Bylaw 1.5.4, “The Synod and each of its agencies shall fully disclose their financial books and records to any member congregation of the Synod”; and

WHEREAS, The Synod in previous conventions has expressed its opinion that such accountability and faithfulness be found additionally in regular reporting of such financial disclosure by adopting 2010 Resolution 4-03, “To Broadly Communicate the Statement of Financial Position of LCMS,” which reads in its totality:

WHEREAS, It is helpful to understand the Synod’s financial position and communicate it to the members of the congregations of Synod; therefore be it

Resolved, That each November, the Vice-President—Finance—Treasurer of the Synod use widely available means, (i.e., The Lutheran Witness, Reporter, the LCMS Website) to state the financial position of the Synod in a format easily understood by persons unfamiliar with financial terminology (2010 Proceedings, 120);

and

WHEREAS, The members of the Synod expressed even further the need for full transparency in all areas of financial disclosure by adopting 2016 Res. 9-04A, “To Improve Disclosures Related to Financial Gifts from God’s Stewards for Special Appeals,” which stated in part:

WHEREAS, Monies for special appeals requested by corporate Synod (e.g., following natural disasters) are reported only in part in Synod publications (e.g., Reporter and The Lutheran Witness) and sometimes only annually; and

WHEREAS, Donors and members of the Synod are interested in the impact of funds raised for special appeals and will appreciate improved disclosure of results; therefore be it

... Resolved, That the financial offices of corporate Synod continue to recognize the desire of donors and members of the Synod to improve processes of reporting and work to provide clear, timely, and transparent accounting for all funding and special appeals, so that the Body of Christ may experience the joy of Gospel-centered mission and ministry beyond the local context or community … (2016 Proceedings, 189);

and

WHEREAS, It was reported to the 2013 convention by the Board of Directors in its “Report on the Disposition of Funding the Mission Recommendations” that “The decline in the Synod’s annual unrestricted revenue continues, … The board believes that congregations will respond through better, open, and honest communication about the great things God is able to accomplish for His kingdom when we work together. Numerous conventions have passed resolutions calling on congregations to maintain and increase unrestricted support for district and Synod ministries, yet the unrestricted support passed through our districts to the Synod has continued to decline at the average rate of $1 million each year (2013 Convention Report R6-03-01, Workbook, 114–5); and

WHEREAS, In 2016, the Chief Financial Officer of the Synod, in reporting to the Synod about offerings received, stated, “This sharing from God’s bounty continues to decline. Although the amount of decline in the past three years has not been as severe as the average decline of the previous 20 years, it is still trending negatively. In the face of continued declining unrestricted revenues, the ability of Synod, Inc. to respond quickly and nimbly to mission and ministry opportunities and challenges laid before us by our Lord also declines, as does our ability to “fill in the gap” when restricted revenues, needed to fund much of our mission and ministry activities, fall short of their goals. The financial challenges facing our beloved Synod persist. I believe that these challenges are of our own making, a product of how we distribute the resources provided by our loving Father (Report of the Chief Financial Officer, 2016 Workbook, 61–62); and

WHEREAS, In the face of such challenging financial times, transparency and regularity in reporting of the financial situation of the Synod is of upmost importance to the members and constituency of the Synod who have a vested interest in the financial viability of the Synod and who merit clear, concise and timely reports; and

WHEREAS, The President of the Synod recommended in his report to the Synod in 2016 that the Synod have “Uniform Financial Reporting.” (President’s Report, Part 2, 2016 Today’s Business, 28); therefore be it

Resolved, That the Synod in convention direct the Chief Financial Officer to report in the Synod’s official publications about the financial position of the Synod in a format easily understood by persons unfamiliar with financial terminology, such reporting to include, but not limited to income and expenses, budget versus
spending, cash reserves and cash position, etc. (Synod Bylaw 3.1.4.3 [g]); and be it further

Resolved, That these reports include information about the regular Synod budget and the reporting on special appeals as stipulated in 2016 Res. 9-04A; and be it further

Resolved, That the congregations of Synod be encouraged to support financially the work of Synod including with unrestricted giving; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod be shrewd managers with the resources God has given it; and be it finally

Resolved, That the Synod give thanks to God for the resources He has entrusted to us, recognizing “That the earth is the Lord’s and the fullness thereof” (Ps. 24:1).

Oklahoma District

Ov. 8-10

To Ensure Timely and Transparent Financial Reporting in the Synod

WHEREAS, The Synod in previous conventions has expressed its opinion that such accountability and faithfulness be found additionally in regular reporting of such financial disclosure by adopting 2010 Resolution 4-03, “To Broadly Communicate the Statement of Financial Position of LCMS,” [Yes: 1,108; No: 32] (2010 Proceedings, 120), which reads in its totality:

WHEREAS, It is helpful to understand the Synod’s financial position and communicate it to the members of the congregations of Synod; therefore be it

Resolved, That each November, the Vice-President–Finance—Treasurer of the Synod use widely available means, (i.e., The Lutheran Witness, Reporter, the LCMS Website) to state the financial position of the Synod in a format easily understood by persons unfamiliar with financial terminology.

and

WHEREAS, The members of the Synod expressed even further the need for full transparency in all areas of financial disclosure by adopting 2016 Res. 9-04A, “To Improve Disclosures Related to Financial Gifts from God’s Stewards for Special Appeals” by a voice vote without objection (2016 Proceedings, 189) which stated, in part,

WHEREAS, Monies for special appeals requested by corporate Synod (e.g., following natural disasters) are reported only in part in Synod publications (e.g., Reporter and The Lutheran Witness) and sometimes only annually; and …

Resolved, That the financial offices of corporate Synod continue to recognize the desire of donors and members of the Synod to improve processes of reporting and work to provide clear, timely, and transparent accounting for all funding and special appeals, so that the Body of Christ may experience the joy of Gospel-centered mission and ministry beyond the local context or community; …

and

WHEREAS, A principle of biblical stewardship is to be accountable for the resources with which one has been entrusted, as expressed in the parable of the talents (Matt. 25:14f.); and

WHEREAS, Much is required of those to whom God has entrusted his gifts. As Jesus said, “Everyone to whom much was given, of him much will be required, and from him to whom they entrusted much, they will demand the more” (Luke 12:48b); and

WHEREAS, The Scriptures teach “it is required of stewards that they be found faithful” (1 Cor. 4:2); and

WHEREAS, The Synod has historically recognized its responsibility of accountability and faithfulness in the handling of the finances entrusted to it by its members, as is witnessed in Bylaw 1.5.4, “The Synod and each of its agencies shall fully disclose their financial books and records to any member congregation of the Synod;” and

WHEREAS, Despite some efforts toward financial transparency with regard to disaster relief funds (e.g., “LCMS Disaster Response Financial Report—FY2018” at files.lcms.org/0w?id=6j2l9jnFwH5c6uMA2WwS6tiiKjTKjiitJ), more than a year later there is still no clear, transparent, published plan for the expenditure of more than half of the almost $10 million given by The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) donors for disaster relief ($5,220,435.06 of the $9,974,931.69 in donations); and

WHEREAS, Donors and members of the Synod are interested in the impact of funds raised for special appeals and will appreciate improved disclosure of results; and

WHEREAS, It was reported to the 2013 convention of the Synod by the Board of Directors in its “Report on the Disposition of Funding the Mission Recommendations” that, “The decline in the Synod’s annual unrestricted revenue continues … The board believes that congregations will respond through better, open, and honest communication about the great things God is able to accomplish for His kingdom when we work together. Numerous conventions have passed resolutions calling on congregations to maintain and increase unrestricted support for district and Synod ministries, yet the unrestricted support passed through our districts to the Synod has continued to decline at the average rate of $1 million each year.” (2013 Convention Report R6-03-01, Workbook, 114–115); and

WHEREAS, In 2016, the Chief Financial Officer of the Synod, in reporting to the Synod about offerings received, stated, “This sharing from God’s bounty continues to decline. Although the amount of decline in the past three years has not been as severe as the average decline of the previous 20 years, it is still trending negatively. In the face of continued declining unrestricted revenues, the ability of Synod, Inc. to respond quickly and nimbly to mission and ministry opportunities and challenges laid before us by our Lord also declines, as does our ability to ‘fill in the gap’ when restricted revenues, needed to fund much of our mission and ministry activities, fall short of their goals. The financial challenges facing our beloved Synod persist. I believe that these challenges are of our own making, a product of how we distribute the resources provided by our loving Father.” (2016 Convention Report R5 [Board of Directors], Workbook, 61–62); and

WHEREAS, There have been reports about the financial struggles of the Synod, such as the need to trim $4 million dollars from the budget of the Synod (Paula Schluter Ross, “Boards and Business: International, National Mission,” Reporter Online, July 7, 2017, blogs.lcms.org/2017/international-national-mission; Board of Directors, Meeting Minutes, May 19–20, 2017, lcms.org/about/leadership/board-of-directors); and

WHEREAS, It has been reported that the Synod has only minimal days of operating capital in its cash reserves, which would seemingly place the Synod in a precarious financial position (see Board of
Ov. 8-12

To Change Congregational Assessments for District Conventions

WHEREAS, Each congregation in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod is considered a member of Synod; and

WHEREAS, Each congregation is assessed an equal amount for the support of its district conventions; and

WHEREAS, Congregations that share a pastor under a dual parish arrangement are allowed only one lay delegate from only one of the congregations to district conventions; and

WHEREAS, Both congregations in a dual parish arrangement are allowed separate delegates to the circuit forum that elects pastoral and lay delegates to the Synod convention; therefore be it

Resolved, That only the parish with a lay delegate be assessed for the district convention.

Circuit 6
North Wisconsin District

Ov. 8-13

To Commend the Work of the LCMS Foundation to the Church

WHEREAS, The Lord of the Church has placed before our Synod many remarkable opportunities for Gospel testimony, both at home and abroad; and

WHEREAS, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod Foundation was incorporated in 1958 to promote the growth of our Church by receiving special gifts on behalf of the Church, including its congregations, districts, schools, recognized service organizations, auxiliaries, and other organizations; and

WHEREAS, The LCMS Foundation offers investment management services for planned gifts, endowments, and trust funds of the Synod and its agencies, striving to offer competitive returns in a low-cost model; and

WHEREAS, The LCMS Foundation was created to offer “programs of deferred giving … for the Synod and its districts, colleges, seminaries, and other agencies” (Bylaw 3.6.5.3) and to provide for immediate and future work in our Lord’s kingdom through proper estate planning, using such devices as unitrusts, annuities, life reserve, and life income agreements to transfer cash, securities, and real estate to the church; and

WHEREAS, Since its incorporation the LCMS Foundation has distributed over $1 billion dollars from gifts provided by generous and spirit-moved donors to ministries of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS); and

WHEREAS, The LCMS Foundation earnestly endeavors to continue serving our Church and its entire membership by channeling additional support to the missionary, educational, and other activities of the Synod; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Synod commend the LCMS Foundation to our congregations and their membership, urging them to utilize the LCMS Foundation’s services in making special gifts available for our work at home and abroad; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod convention express deep appreciation to the generous donors who have elected to utilize the channel of the LCMS Foundation in the exercise of their Christian stewardship; and be it further
Resolved. That all members of the LCMS be encouraged to use estate planning also to provide additional resources for the extension of Christ’s church in the future; and be it further

Resolved, That the LCMS Foundation seek to expand its various deferred giving programs within the LCMS for the promotion of the Church’s mission and ministry; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod give thanks to the Lord for His gifts and the ability to use them to His glory and the welfare of His church; and be it further

Resolved, That the official boards of all districts, Synod schools, affiliated agencies, and congregations make themselves aware of and be encouraged to utilize the LCMS Foundation’s various services, and, where feasible, use the LCMS Foundation in establishing their own endowment funds; and be it finally

Resolved, That the LCMS, in convention assembled, implore the overflowing blessing of the Lord of the Church on the continued activities of the LCMS Foundation, so that under divine benediction it continues to be a powerful help in the expansion of our Church’s work.

Board of Trustees
LCMS Foundation
FLOOR COMMITTEE REPORTS AND OVERTURES ASSIGNMENTS

9. Structure and Administration

REPORTS
R1, R1.1, R1.2, R5, R6–6.2, R9, R11, R13, R58, R61, R62, R64

OVERTURES

Ov. 9-01
To Recommend Moving to a Four-Year Convention Cycle

WHEREAS, Both decreases in the size of many Synod congregations and the uncertain economic climate of our times have placed an increased financial burden on many of those who are assessed a portion of the cost of the Synod convention; and
WHEREAS, We are all charged to be good stewards of our time and treasure; and
WHEREAS, The urgency of matters coming before a district or Synod convention does not demand a three-year cycle and large economic savings are made possible by moving to a four-year cycle; therefore be it
Resolved, That the Synod transition to meeting in convention once every four years; and be it further
Resolved, That the four-year convention cycle be scheduled to begin in 2022.
Grace, Concord, NC; Board of Directors, Southeastern District

Ov. 9-02
To Recommend Moving to a Four-Year Convention Cycle

WHEREAS, Both decreases in the size of many Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) congregations and the uncertain economic climate of our times have placed an increased financial burden on many of those who are assessed a portion of the cost of the LCMS convention; and
WHEREAS, We are all charged to be good stewards of our time and treasure; and
WHEREAS, The urgency of matters coming before a district or Synod convention does not demand a three-year cycle; and
WHEREAS, Large economic savings are made possible by moving to a four-year cycle; therefore be it
Resolved, That the Synod transition to meeting in convention once every four years; and be it further
Resolved, That the Synod convention does not demand a three-year cycle; and
Resolved, That all terms of officers of the Synod and districts be moved from three to four year terms; and be it finally
Resolved, That the four-year convention cycle be scheduled to begin in 2022.
Circuit 15 Southeastern District

Ov. 9-03
To Recommend Moving to a Four-Year Convention Cycle of the Synod and Districts

WHEREAS, Both decreases in the size of many Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) congregations and the uncertain economic climate of our times have placed an increased financial burden on many of those who are assessed a portion of the cost of the LCMS convention; and
WHEREAS, We are all charged to be good stewards of our time and treasure; and
WHEREAS, The urgency of matters coming before a district or Synod convention does not demand a three-year cycle; and
WHEREAS, Large economic savings are made possible by moving to a four-year cycle; therefore be it
Resolved, That the Synod transition to meeting in convention once every four years; and be it further
Resolved, That the four-year convention cycle be scheduled to begin in 2022.
Board of Directors Michigan District

2019 Convention Workbook
Resolved, That this become effective upon completion of the 2019 convention and shall affect every Synod and district convention thereafter; and be it further

Resolved, That bylaw provisions shall be determined for adoption at the 2019 convention for immediate implementation of election cycles, terms of office, staggering terms, and any other necessary issues that arise prior to the 2019 convention; and be it further

Resolved, That Constitution Article VIII A 1 be amended as follows:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

Article VIII Synodical Meetings

A. Time and Legality of Meetings

1. The Synod convenes every three/four years for its regular meeting.

and be it finally

Resolved, That the Commission on Handbook be charged to change any additional bylaws to bring them into conformity with such a four-year cycle.

Board of Directors
Missouri District

Ov. 9-05

To Hold National and District Conventions Every Four Years

WHEREAS, The estimated cost of this Synod convention is $4,181,556. The estimated cost per delegate is $3,207; and

WHEREAS, We currently have a three-year convention cycle resulting in four conventions in 12 years totaling an estimated cost of $16,726,224; and

WHEREAS, Moving to a four-year convention cycle, there would be three conventions in 12 years totaling an estimated cost of $12,544,668. The 12-year savings would be $4,181,556. This does not include the savings each district convention of the Synod would realize by moving to a four-year cycle; and

WHEREAS, The overall cost to host a district or national convention has continued to increase over the years. This cost is borne by offerings received from congregations, many of which are struggling financially, and impacting district and national budgets; and

WHEREAS, Moving to a four-year convention cycle would provide more time to implement convention actions; and

WHEREAS, Moving to a four-year convention cycle may provide opportunity for substantial financial relief to congregation, district, and national budgets; therefore be it

Resolved, That a four-year convention cycle be adopted for the national and district levels; and be it further

Resolved, That the four-year schedule would be as follows:

- year one: circuits hold convocations and/or local forums;
- year two: districts hold regional theological and missional convocations;
- year three: district conventions; and
- year four: the national convention;

and be it further

Resolved, That the President of the Synod, district presidents, and circuit visitors and their respective staffs utilize the extra year to accomplish visitation in a more reasonable and equitable fashion; and be it further

Resolved, That this become effective upon completion of the 2022 Synod convention and shall affect every Synod and district convention thereafter; and be it further

Resolved, That bylaw provisions shall be determined for adoption at the 2022 Synod convention for immediate implementation of election cycles, terms of office, staggering of terms, and any other necessary issues that arise prior to the 2022 Synod convention; and be it finally

Resolved, That the Commission on Handbook shall make changes necessary for a four-year convention cycle.

Board of Directors
Iowa West District

Ov. 9-06

To Change the Way Electoral Circuits Are Formed

WHEREAS, The Synod divides itself into districts and allows each district to create circuits, and the criteria to create districts and circuits are determined by the Synod in convention (Bylaw 1.3.2); and

WHEREAS, Electoral circuits are established for the sole purpose of sending representative voting delegates to Synod conventions; and

WHEREAS, The district board of directors of each district is authorized to determine electoral circuits in its district (Bylaw 3.1.2 [a]); and

WHEREAS, Electoral circuits meet at the call of the circuit visitor to elect its voting delegates, and the circuit visitor is responsible for conducting those meetings (Bylaw 3.1.2.1 [a, e, i]); and

WHEREAS, Not all visitation circuits meet the criteria of being an electoral circuit (currently set at 7–20 member congregations, and aggregate communicant membership ranging from 1,500–10,000), so electoral circuits are by definition not necessarily equivalent to visitation circuits, (Bylaw 3.1.2 [a]); and

WHEREAS, Visitation circuits consisting of small or geographically distant congregations may find it difficult to reach Synod’s current criteria for an electoral circuit; and

WHEREAS, Congregations are the basic units of Synod (Bylaw 1.3.1), and congregations, not circuits, are members of Synod; therefore be it

Resolved, That The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod at its 2019 convention amend Bylaw 3.1.2 (a) to include that the district board of directors of each district be allowed to reassign one or more congregations from one or more adjacent visitation circuit(s) for the purpose of establishing electoral circuits that meet the criteria for electing delegates; and be it further

Resolved, That the number of electoral circuits within a district shall not exceed the number of visitation circuits in that district.

Oklahoma District
Ov. 9-07
To Change the Way Electoral Circuits Are Formed

WHEREAS, The Synod divides itself into districts and allows each district to create circuits and the criteria to create districts and circuits are determined by the Synod in convention (Bylaw 1.3.2); and

WHEREAS, Electoral circuits are established for the sole purpose of sending representative voting delegates to Synod conventions; and

WHEREAS, The board of directors of each district is authorized to determine electoral circuits in its district (Bylaw 3.1.2 [a]); and

WHEREAS, Not all visitation circuits meet the criteria of being an electoral circuit (currently set at 7–20 member congregations and aggregate communicant membership ranging from 1,500–10,000), so electoral circuits are by definition not necessarily equivalent to visitation circuits (Bylaw 3.1.2 [a]); and

WHEREAS, Visitation circuits consisting of small or geographically distant congregations may find it difficult to reach the Synod’s criteria for an electoral circuit; and

WHEREAS, Congregations are the basic units of the Synod (Bylaw 1.3.1) and congregations, not circuits, are members of the Synod; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Ohio District memorialize the Synod convention to make provision for the board of directors of each district to reassign one or more congregations from one or more adjacent visitation circuit(s) for the purpose of establishing electoral circuits that meet the criteria for electing delegates to the Synod convention; and be it further

Resolved, That the number of electoral circuits within a district shall not exceed the number of visitation circuits in that district; and be it finally

Resolved, That the secretary of the Ohio District prepare and submit this overture.

Board of Directors
Ohio District

Ov. 9-08
To Change the Requirements for Electoral Circuits

WHEREAS, The current requirement for an electoral circuit is 1,500 communicant members and seven congregations in the circuit; and

WHEREAS, In light of the declining number of congregations as well as communicant members throughout the Synod (Report); and

WHEREAS, Current requirements for an electoral circuit are difficult to achieve as is evidenced by the growing number of exceptional circuit requests; and

WHEREAS, These requirements give undue priority to large congregations and circuits while disenfranchising smaller congregations and circuit; and

WHEREAS, The district presidents of each district are more knowledgeable about the specific concerns and circumstances of circuits within their districts; therefore be it

Resolved, That each of the district presidents be given the authority to grant exceptional circuit status to not more than 20 percent of the established circuits as he may see fit based on the unique circumstances of the circuit and district.

Florida-Georgia District

Ov. 9-09
To Eliminate the Distinction Between Electoral and Visitation Circuits and the Communicant Membership Requirements of Same

WHEREAS, Bylaw 3.1.2 (a) states: “An electoral circuit shall consist of … 7 to 20 member congregations, involving an aggregate communicant membership ranging from 1,500 to 10,000”; and

WHEREAS, Bylaw 3.1.2 (a) is the only place in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod Constitution or Bylaws where communicant membership is taken into account; and

WHEREAS, The Church is not to be measured by “communicant membership,” for wherever the Gospel is preached in its truth and purity and the sacraments administered according to Christ’s command, there is Christ present and there is the Church, even if there are only two or three gathered together in His name (Matt. 18:20; Augsburg Confession (AC) VIII; Francis Pieper, Christian Dogmatics, 3.409); and

WHEREAS, All congregations, regardless of numbers of communicant members, share equally in the authority and power of the Church, that is, the Office of the Keys, and are the possessors of the priesthhood and all church power, even if there are only two or three believers in them (C.F.W. Walther, Kirche und Amt, Part One, Theses IV, VI, VII; Part Two, Thesis VII)

“...Visible congregations that still have the Word and the sacraments essentially according to God’s Word bear the name ‘church’ because of the true invisible church of sincere believers that is found in them, so also they possess the power [authority] that Christ has given to His whole church, on account of the true invisible church hidden in them, even if there were only two or three [believers]” (ibid, Part One, VII)

and

WHEREAS, The requirement of at least 1,500 communicant members in an electoral circuit is becoming an increasing burden in many of our districts, requiring electoral circuits of ever-increasing geographic size; therefore be it

Resolved, That the distinction between electoral and visitation circuits be eliminated and the Bylaws of the Synod be amended to reflect this change; and be it further

Resolved, That the communicant membership requirement for circuits be eliminated and that circuits be defined in these terms in the Bylaws of the Synod: “A circuit shall consist of from 7 to 20 congregations and, except during a pastoral vacancy in (a) member congregation(s), at least 7 pastors.”

South Dakota District

Ov. 9-10
To Amend Bylaws to Clarify Multi-congregation Parish Representation at the Circuit Forum

Resolution

CCM Op. 11-2617 interpreted Bylaws 3.1.2.1 (c) and Bylaw 5.3.2 to mean that a multi-congregation parish is represented at a circuit forum by a lay representative from each congregation and only one pastoral vote. Bylaws 3.1.2.1 (c) and Bylaw 5.3.2 are unclear in this regard. (Bylaw 5.3.2 is referenced in Bylaw 5.2.2 [c], regarding election of circuit visitors.) Nonetheless, the interpretation offered by the CCM—that circuit elections involve one pastoral vote and as...
many lay votes as there are in a multi-congregation parish—goes back as far as opinions of Apr. 23–24, 1970, and June 13–14, 1968. The necessity of these earlier opinions apparently arises because of a change, in 1967, in the procedure for election of circuit delegates. Prior to the 1967 changes, circuit delegates were selected “by the representatives of the respective electoral circuits at the convention of the district preceding the convention of the Synod” (1966 Bylaw 1.51). After 1967, circuits met as they do now to elect the delegates, with “[t]he privilege of voting […] exercised by one pastor and one layman from each member congregation of the circuit.” (1967 Bylaw 1.51). This was interpreted to mean that each congregation in a parish was entitled to a lay vote, and that the parish’s pastor cast a single vote. The commission, in the noted 1968 and 1970 opinions, gave no explanation of the basis on which the opinion was rendered. The 1973 convention of the Synod added bylaw language reflecting these CCM opinions.

Prior to 2010 changes, the election of the circuit visitor involved nominations by congregational action and an election at the convention (e.g., 1967 Bylaw 3.61b). Since 2010, the circuit visitor has been elected by present procedures at the circuit forum, with a multi-congregation parish voting as it does for delegates.

This practice, in both instances, for election of circuit visitor and for election of circuit delegates, reflects an unusual divergence from the pattern of representation established consistently from the foundation of the Synod—on the basis of equal representation of pastor and those pastored—one pastoral vote and one lay vote per Pfarrgemeinde, meaning pastor-congregation or, in modern nomenclature, “congregation or [multi-congregation] parish.” This divergence has, over the years, created significant confusion, and with the increasing number of multi-congregation parishes in the Synod, creates questions of imbalance—either that the number of pastoral votes is diluted by a much larger number of lay voters, or that a pastor with a large number of congregations in his parish may have a great deal of influence over the decisions made by the circuit of which the parish is a part.

The Commission on Handbook therefore recommends the following changes, the effect of which would be to register the basis of representation at the parish the same as at the district convention, each congregation or multi-congregation parish being represented by its pastor and one lay representative.

Therefore be it

Resolved, That Bylaw 3.1.2.1 be amended as follows:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

5.3.2 The circuit forum consists of a one pastor of each congregation and one layperson from member of each member congregation or multi-congregation parish designated by the congregation or parish. Congregations of a multi-congregation parish not contributing a lay voter may send an advisory representative, with voice but no vote.

Commission on Handbook

Ov. 9-11

To Elect Delegates
to the Synod and District Conventions

WHEREAS, 2010 Synod convention received and acted upon the following report from the Blue Ribbon Task Force on Synod Structure and Governance:

Equitable Congregational Representation at District Conventions

In a study of synodical conventions between 1847 and 1959, there was not one convention at which the 50/50 balance of clergy/lay actually occurred. Clergy always outnumbered the laity. The concept of one pastor and one layperson representing each congregation or parish regardless of size has been a part of the tradition of the Synod for 162 years. This arrangement was intended to maintain a balance between the numbers of pastoral and lay delegates and treat all congregations the same in terms of voting representation (in addition to their obvious identical spiritual value before God). The question today, however, is whether this approach makes maximum use of the spiritual gifts and authority God has given to all His people for the sake of His mission, and whether it truly and fairly represents the entire priesthood of believers gathered in Synod congregations (1 Peter 2).

Because the practice of representation by one pastor and one layperson is not mandated by the Word of God and is not essential to underlying theological principles, the Synod may in Christian liberty employ a different approach in achieving its representation at district conventions if it believes another approach to be more equitable, representative, and cost effective. (Appendix 1, pp. 1.10 and 1.69)

There also are three areas of inequitable representation at district conventions that the task force addresses, with the objective of providing additional congregational voice. Currently, congregations with a pastoral vacancy receive only one vote (the lay vote), multiple congregation parishes must share their lay vote among all the congregations involved in the partnership, and large congregations have no more numerically representative voice than small congregations despite having a significantly larger number of members.

Vacancy or interim pastors are considered “called” when they receive formal requests from congregations to provide vacancy services. Thus, called they should be allowed to represent the congregations they serve as delegates to district conventions. (Appendix 1, pp. 1.69)

Representation at conventions and all decision-making should reflect such theological considerations as the general priesthood of all believers, God’s gift of spiritual power to the whole church, the functioning of the Body of Christ, and the spiritual gifts of all individual Christians for the edification and common good of
and the whole church. (see the passage cited in the Preamble of the Constitution [Reason for the Forming of a Synodical Union]).

Historically, representation through electoral circuits has changed based on the number or size of congregations:

- 1874: groupings of two to seven congregations
- 1893: groupings of five to seven congregations
- 1917: groupings of 10 to 15 congregations (The 1917 convention clarified that districts have the responsibility to work out their own circuit borders “... with the understanding that the relative size of congregations shall determine how many shall constitute a circuit, provided, however, that no circuit shall comprise less than 10 and not more than 15 congregations.” Between 1917 and 1967, the Handbook read: “Large congregations shall form small circuits, and small congregations shall form large circuits.”)
- 1967–2010: groupings of seven to 20 congregations and communicant membership ranging from 1,500 to 10,000 (Under the recommendation of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) Commission on Constitutional Matters, and owing to the difficulty encountered in implementing the 1917 resolution through the years, the 1967 convention implemented these new criteria. A procedure also was prescribed that permitted the Synod President to manage those cases that still proved to be exceptional.);

and

WHEREAS, 2010 Resolution 8-05B received great support and was referred to the Commission on Handbook by a vote of Yes: 583; No: 551; therefore be it

Resolved, That the essence of the resolution as presented by the 2010 Floor Committee be submitted to the 2019 Synod convention:

WHEREAS, The Synod convention is the “principal legislative assembly, which amends the Constitution and Bylaws, considers and takes action on reports and overtures, and handles appropriate appeals and establishes general positions and policies of the Synod, provides overall program direction and priorities, and evaluates all such programs, programs, policies, directions, and priorities in order to provide responsible service for and on behalf of its members.” (Bylaw 3.1.1); and

WHEREAS, Voting membership in the Synod is held by all member congregations of the Synod and exercised through their elected representatives to Synod and district conventions; and

WHEREAS, The number of delegates to a Synod convention shall be established to:

- Enable greater engagement of the delegates in the discussion and proceedings of mission and business;
- Ensure equity in the number of delegates each district is apportioned; and
- Allow for a greater stewardship of the gifts of God’s people for the work of mission and ministry by opening up less expensive venues; and

WHEREAS, It is important that representatives of member congregations understand in advance of the election of delegates for Synod convention that an orderly process will be followed, one that includes:

- An apportioning of congregations in light of the district’s prescribed number of delegates;
- A selection of delegates in a manner that takes into consideration reasonable and equitable representation;
- A process for creating electoral clusters; and
- An election by those electoral clusters; therefore, be it

Resolved, That the number of voting delegates to the Synod convention be fixed based on ten percent of the number of member congregations in the Synod six months prior to the first district convention; and be it further

Resolved, That voting delegates for Synod conventions be elected by electoral clusters; and be it further

Resolved, That each district shall select advisory delegates (minister of religion–ordained, minister of religion–commissioned) retaining the proportionate representation to voting delegates as is currently followed; and be it finally

Resolved, That the amendments concerning delegates and representatives to Synod conventions proposed for Bylaws 3.1.2, 3.1.2.1, 3.1.2, and 3.1.3.1 be amended accordingly:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

Voting Delegates

3.1.2 Electoral circuits shall meet as required by the Bylaws of the Synod to elect circuit voting delegates to the Synod’s national conventions:

(a) An electoral circuit shall consist either of one or two adjacent visitation circuits, as shall be determined by the district board of directors on the basis of the following requirements: each pair of delegates shall represent from 7 to 20 member congregations, involving an aggregate confirmed membership ranging from 4,500 to 10,000.

(b) Exceptions to these requirements may be made only by the President of the Synod upon request of a district board of directors.

The Office of the Secretary of the LCMS shall facilitate the election of voting delegates to the next following national convention. These delegates shall be elected for three-year terms during the conventions of the districts of the Synod.

(a) The total number of voting delegates shall be set at 10% of the number of congregations in the Synod six months prior to the start of the first district convention. Such number shall be rounded to the higher even number to enable delegate pairs (lay and minister of religion–ordained).

(b) Two factors shall be averaged to determine the number of delegates from each district. Those factors are:

(1) The percentage of the district’s member congregations compared to the number of member congregations of the Synod; and

(2) The percentage of the number of confirmed members of the district’s congregations compared to the number of confirmed members of the congregations of the Synod.

(c) The most recent available roster statistics shall be used to determine all matters related to delegate representation.

(d) One-half of the district’s total allotment of delegates shall be lay from member congregations of the district and one-half shall be a minister of religion–ordained with membership in the congregations of the district.

3.1.2.1 Elections of voting delegates to the national convention shall ordinarily take place in accordance with established policy and procedure as follows:

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(a) Each electoral circuit shall meet at the call of the circuit visitor(s) to elect its delegates not later than nine months prior to the opening day of the convention. When in-person meetings are burdensome (e.g., geographically large circuits), a circuit may select another manner of meeting (e.g., e-meeting technologies) that is suitable and made available to all participants, taking into consideration the need to provide for an open and fair exchange of ideas and secure, private, and confidential voting. The district board of directors shall determine how its electoral clusters will caucus in light of its prescribed number of delegates to the next national convention. Such groupings shall take into consideration geographical and such other factors as will provide reasonable and equitable congregational representation in and as a result of the delegate selection process to occur not later than nine months prior to the opening day of the Synod convention.

(b) Each electoral circuit may adopt procedures and methods that will insur.e efficiency and accuracy, including the use of mechanical, electronic, or other methods of counting, recording, or tabulating votes. Elections shall be by written ballot. Candidates for election as delegates to the national convention shall be the delegates attending the district convention, except for those unwilling or unable to serve.

(c) The privilege of voting shall be exercised by one pastor and one layperson from each member congregation of the circuit, both of whom shall have been selected in the manner prescribed by the congregation. Multiple parishes shall be entitled to a lay vote from each member congregation. Time shall be allotted on the district convention agenda to allow the delegates from each electoral cluster to caucus in order to select its delegates to the following national convention.

(d) All pastors who are not advisory members under Article V.B of the Constitution shall be eligible for election.

(1) Each voter may write in the names of two pastors on the initial ballot. The three pastors (or more, in case of a tie vote) who receive the highest number of votes in this preliminary ballot shall be placed on the next ballot.

(2) Each voter shall now vote for only one candidate. Balloting shall continue with the lowest candidate being removed from each succeeding ballot until one pastor shall have received a simple majority of all votes cast, whereupon he or she shall be declared the pastoral delegate.

(3) The congregation or congregations served by the elected pastoral delegate shall be removed from consideration for supplying any alternates to that particular convention.

(e) A majority ballot vote is required for the election of each delegate. Prior to the meeting of the electoral circuit, each congregation may nominate one layperson, either from its congregation or from the circuit. These names must be submitted to the circuit visitor prior to the day of the circuit meeting and shall constitute the slate of candidates. All congregational nominees, except those who have been eliminated through the election of the pastoral delegate, shall be eligible for election.

(1) Each voter may write in the name of two of the remaining lay nominees on the initial ballot. The three laypersons (or more, in case of a tie vote) who received the highest number of votes in this preliminary ballot shall be placed on the next ballot.

(2) Each voter shall now vote for only one candidate. Balloting shall continue with the lowest candidate being removed from each succeeding ballot until one layperson shall have received a simple majority of all votes cast, whereupon he or she shall be declared the lay delegate.

(f) All other pastors who received votes in the initial write-in ballot, except those who were eliminated through the election of the lay delegate, shall be eligible for election as the alternate delegate.

(1) Each voter shall now vote for only one candidate.

(2) Balloting shall continue with the lowest candidate being removed from each succeeding ballot until one pastor shall have received a simple majority of all votes cast, whereupon he shall be declared the alternate pastoral delegate.

(g) All lay nominees except those who have been disqualified through the procedures listed above shall be eligible for election as the alternate lay delegate. The election of the alternate shall follow the same procedures as in paragraph (1) above.

(h) All four persons: Each delegate elected shall come from four different member congregations.

(i) The circuit visitor(s) selected to chair the caucus shall report the results of the election to the secretary of the district in writing immediately after said election.

(j) If neither the delegate nor the alternate (pastoral-minister of religion-ordained or lay) can be able to serve, the vacancy shall be filled by an appointment of the district president in consultation with the respective circuit visitor(s). In harmony with Bylaw 3.1.2.2.

(k) Delegates are certified by the submission of their names and addresses to the secretary of the Synod by the secretary of the district using official registration forms provided by the Secretary of the Synod.

3.1.2.2 Voting delegates Delegates shall serve from the time of election and shall function as advisory members of the circuit forum. They shall serve as resource persons to the congregations they represent and to the district and national Synod in the circuit, and shall assist in the dissemination and implementation of reports and resolutions of the national convention Synod in the circuit.

(a) Delegates—They are responsible to the circuits the congregations they represent and shall attempt to discover the sentiment of the members thereof, but the congregations

(b) Congregations shall not require their delegates to vote in accordance with specific instructions, but every delegate shall be permitted to vote according to his or her own conviction.

(c) Delegates are expected to be faithful in attendance at They shall attend all sessions of the convention. All duly elected voting delegates shall attend all sessions regularly until the close of the convention. Delegates who arrive late or leave early or who do not attend at all shall and present a written excuse to their respective district president for all absences, late arrivals, and early departures.

(d) Delegates shall report the actions of the Synod to their circuits after each convention, preferably appearing before each of the congregations they represent.

3.1.3.1 Each district shall select one advisory delegate for every 60/20 advisory ordained ministers and specific ministry pastors, and one advisory delegate for every 60/20 commissioned ministers on the roster of the Synod Fractional groupings shall be disregarded except that each district shall be entitled to at least one advisory delegate in each category.”

...
by the Constitution by designating that the right to vote belongs to the polity of the Synod was an equity between the laity and clergy. Even more fundamentally, it sees to representation of the power,” at the conventions of the Synod between the laity and the clergy. The question thus arose: at conventions of the Synod and district, led to establishment of advisory membership when Synod was formed in 1847. This category was created to allow pastors to fulfill their desire to join the Synod while their congregations yet desired to remain independent. Typically, in the early period of the Synod, a large number of those pastors in attendance at conventions were advisory members, entitled to voice at the convention but no vote. Thus, while the understanding and intention of the Synod is clear regarding voting representation at conventions of the synod—a parish being the total number of congregations cared for by a pastor (or pastors)—unique situations occurred and were addressed by the Synod. One of these situations was the practice of forming a Gesamtgemeinde as Lutheranism expanded in certain cities. Perhaps the most notable of these was the Gesamtgemeinde in St. Louis. In 1847, due to the growth of Trinity Lutheran Church in St. Louis, where C.F.W. Walther was the pastor, the congregation started a school and church on a second location, which took the name of Immanuel. Initially Immanuel was not an independent congregation. In 1856, a third school and then church were added, which caused a re-evaluation of the arrangement. The solution was the division of the Gesamtgemeinde into three “districts.” In this arrangement, while the Gesamtgemeinde would nominate pastors for a vacant congregation, each “district” or congregation would actually elect him, with the result that each congregation was cared for by its own pastor even though the congregations were related to one another in the Gesamtgemeinde.

The same apparent desires, for Synod to be composed fundamentally of units of preaching and hearing (Pfarrgemeinden or pastor-congregations) and to maintain equity between the laity and the clergy at the conventions of the Synod, led to establishment of advisory membership when Synod was formed in 1847. This category was created to allow pastors to fulfill their desire to join the Synod while their congregations yet desired to remain independent. Typically, in the early period of the Synod, a large number of those pastors in attendance at conventions were advisory members, entitled to voice at the convention but no vote.

09-12

To Clarify the Meaning of Parish as it Relates to Congregational Representation at District Conventions and Election of the Synod President, and to Distinguish Assisting Capacity Pastoral Calls

Rationale

At the time of its inception, one of the major founding principles for the polity of the Synod was an equity between the laity and clergy in the decision-making process of the Synod. This was written into the Constitution by designating that the right to vote belongs to the member congregations of the Synod, with each congregation (the German term was Pfarrgemeinde, or “pastor-congregation”) receiving two votes: one was the vote of its pastor, and the other was the vote of its lay delegate (in the German, these were Deputierten der Pfarrgemeinden). A footnote of the 1847 constitution of the Synod describes what was understood by the term Pfarrgemeinde:

A Pfarrgemeinde is either one single congregation or the sum of the individual congregations which the pastor serves, as in Germany the territory in which he serves is called Kirchspiel or Kirchensprengel. The pastor may serve 3 or 4 or more congregations, locally separated; they are in relation to him essentially only one congregation and must, therefore, jointly send to the convention one delegate.

When the Constitution of the Synod was translated into English in 1924, the term congregation was used to refer to a Pfarrgemeinde comprising a single Gemeinde cared for by a pastor, and the term parish was used to refer to a Pfarrgemeinde comprising two or more Gemeinden cared for by a pastor. Thus, one German term Pfarrgemeinde was divided, in English, into two constituent cases. Thus, while the term parish was not used until 1924, the concept that a parish is “two or more congregations being cared for by the same pastor (or pastors)” goes back to the 1847 Synod constitution. This arrangement, that representation was on the basis of Pfarrgemeinden ensures a congregation-pastor parity, a “balance of power,” at the conventions of the Synod between the laity and the clergy. Even more fundamentally, it sees to representation of the congregations—which are the voting members of the Synod—on an equitable basis by units of preaching and hearing. One may be reminded of Luther’s bipartite definition of the Church as comprising hearers and those who preach to them: “holy believers and lambs who hear the voice of their Shepherd” (Smalcald Articles, Part III, Art. XII 2). These same apparent desires, for Synod to be composed fundamentally of units of preaching and hearing (Pfarrgemeinden or pastor-congregations) and to maintain equity between the laity and the clergy at the conventions of the Synod, led to establishment of advisory membership when Synod was formed in 1847. This category was created to allow pastors to fulfill their desire to join the Synod while their congregations yet desired to remain independent. Typically, in the early period of the Synod, a large number of those pastors in attendance at conventions were advisory members, entitled to voice at the convention but no vote.

Thus, while the understanding and intention of the Synod is clear regarding voting representation at conventions of the synod—a parish being the total number of congregations cared for by a pastor (or pastors)—unique situations occurred and were addressed by the Synod. One of these situations was the practice of forming a Gesamtgemeinde as Lutheranism expanded in certain cities. Perhaps the most notable of these was the Gesamtgemeinde in St. Louis. In 1847, due to the growth of Trinity Lutheran Church in St. Louis, where C.F.W. Walther was the pastor, the congregation started a school and church on a second location, which took the name of Immanuel. Initially Immanuel was not an independent congregation. In 1856, a third school and then church were added, which caused a re-evaluation of the arrangement. The solution was the division of the Gesamtgemeinde into three “districts.” In this arrangement, while the Gesamtgemeinde would nominate pastors for a vacant congregation, each “district” or congregation would actually elect him, with the result that each congregation was cared for by its own pastor even though the congregations were related to one another in the Gesamtgemeinde.

The question thus arose: at conventions of the Synod and district, was this group of congregations to be understood as one Pfarrgemeinde, entitled to only one pair of delegates? The situation was brought to the 1866 convention of the Synod for resolution, and the convention determined that each congregation with its own independent pastor was to be recognized as a congregation entitled to be represented at conventions by an ordained and a lay delegate. The sense of congregation or parish, taken together as equivalent to the German Pfarrgemeinde, thus is more flexible than the often-applied, modern-day rule, as stated in the since-removed 1963 Bylaw 3.09: “If a pastor serves two or more congregations, these shall be regarded as one parish and shall be entitled to only one lay vote.” While this bylaw was removed in 1981, without replacement, this interpretation has been consistently applied since. In the early period, however, congregations having pastors in common might still be separate Pfarrgemeinden, so long as each had a distinct pastor to call its own (head) pastor.

Today as well, there are unique situations occurring which raise complex problems for representation and for which the current bylaws do not provide a means of addressing. To give two examples:

- Congregations A & B have formed a two-congregation parish and have been regularly served by a pastor. After that pastor took a call, the situation of those two congregations was such that it would be difficult to support a pastor. A larger Congregation C, which has its own pastor (Pastor 1), offers to help solve their dilemma by having the new pastor of Congregations A & B (Pastor 2) assist at Congregation C for one day a week and paying a portion of the salary. The pastor of Congregation C has no responsibilities in Greenwood, IN

Mount Olive Greenwood, IN
Congregations A & B. Congregations A & B have their own pastor (Pastor 2), and Congregation C has its own pastor (Pastor 1). Pastor 2 merely assists part-time at Congregation C.

- Congregations D & E both have their own pastor, and because of their size both are in need of some additional pastoral help. However, neither has the size or resources to call an associate pastor on their own. To resolve their situations, Congregations D & E decide, in addition to the pastor that each one has, to call a pastor between them, who would split his time serving both congregations. Here congregations D and E each have their own pastor, but a third pastor is shared, assisting at both and “the (head) pastor” of neither.

In both of these examples, since, in each case one of the pastors is serving all of the congregations, present interpretation makes all the congregations involved become a multi-congregation parish, entitled to one pair of delegates at the district convention and for the President of the Synod.

The resolution adopted in 1866, however, would seem to indicate that in these examples, while these congregations or parishes have some sort of a joint arrangement or relationship, each congregation-or-parish (e.g., the parish comprised of A and B, and the congregations being C, D, and E) has its own independent pastor, and each congregation-or-parish should be allowed to be represented by two delegates at a district convention, one ordained and one lay. Bylaws as they currently exist, however, make no provision for this possibility, and in addition pose significant problems in allowing this to take place. For example, the current bylaws allow any ordained minister called by a congregation to be designated as the pastoral delegate of that congregation. In the example of Congregations D & E the one individual who is called by both congregations would be eligible to vote for either.

The Commission on Constitutional Matters has proposed the following additions to the Bylaws to clarify the definition of the meaning parish in Constitution Article V A and the bylaws dealing with district conventions and election of the Synod president, and to provide a means for dealing with these unique situations so that congregations having their own pastors are not deprived of the privilege of voting at the conventions of a District and for the President of the Synod.

The following bylaw revision is possible under the Constitution of the Synod because the definition adopted falls within the originally adopted meaning of Pfarrgemeinde or congregation-or-parish, as the 1866 resolution demonstrates. If adopted, it would replace and supersede the understanding derived from the former 1963 Bylaw (removed without replacement in 1981), namely, that any congregations served by any pastor in common are one parish. Therefore be it

Resolved, That Bylaws 2.5.5–6 be added to Bylaw Section 2.5, “Calling Ministers of Religion by Congregations,” under the new heading as indicated:

PRESENT PROPOSED WORDING

Calls and multi-congregation parishes

2.5.5 The total number of congregations regularly cared for (served) by a pastor or pastors constitutes a parish as used in Const. Art. V A and as it applies to bylaws dealing with representation at circuit forums (Bylaws 3.1.2.1 [c], 5.3.2) and district conventions (Bylaw 4.2.2; Const. Art. V A), and in voting for the Synod President (Bylaw 3.12.2.3). However, the called service of a pastor in a designated assisting capacity (Bylaw 2.5.6) does not render the congregations that he assists part of a parish with any other congregations he serves, whether in an assisting or non-assisting capacity.

2.5.6 The call of an ordained minister to a congregation may be designated as in an assisting capacity if the call entails service under the supervision of another called pastor of that congregation. A pastor serving in an assisting capacity is not in charge of that congregation (Const. Art. V B 2, XII 10 B b) and is a pastor but not “the pastor” of that congregation (Const. Art. V A, XII 10 A). An assisting capacity call does not, therefore, confer that congregation’s pastoral vote or eligibility to serve as circuit pastoral delegate, or cause the congregation assisted to constitute a parish with other congregations served by the assisting pastor. Those rendering assisting service on a regular basis shall be called, installed, and rostered as such. One serving a congregation in an assisting capacity is, with regard to that congregation, an assisting pastor.

and be it further

Resolved, That Bylaws 3.1.2.1 (c) and (d), regarding the election of circuit delegates, and 3.12.2.3 (a), regarding the election of the Synod President, be amended as follows, to indicate that calls to a congregation in an assisting capacity do not confer the congregation’s pastoral vote or eligibility to serve as pastoral delegate:

PRESENT PROPOSED WORDING

3.1.2.1 Elections of voting delegates shall take place in accordance with established policy and procedure.

... (c) The privilege of voting shall be exercised by one pastor and one layperson from each member congregation of the circuit, both of whom shall have been elected in the manner prescribed by the congregation. Multi-congregation parishes shall be entitled to a lay vote from each member congregation. A pastor serving a congregation in an assisting capacity (Bylaw 2.5.6) is not eligible to cast that congregation’s pastoral vote.

(d) If a pastor is serving a congregation in an assisting capacity...

... be it further

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Resolved, That Bylaw 3.3.1, regarding the service of the President of the Synod, be revised as follows to incorporate the new language of assisting capacity rather than the now-removed constitutional category of assistant pastor:

**PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING**

3.3.1 The President of the Synod shall be a full-time executive and shall serve as a voting member of the Board of Directors of the Synod.

(a) He shall not be in charge of a congregation or hold a chair at any educational institution but may be called as an assistant pastor to a congregation in an assisting capacity, provided such services do not interfere with his official duties as President.

(b) He shall, with the approval of the Board of Directors of the Synod, be empowered to engage sufficient staff to carry out the duties of his office.

and be it further

Resolved, That congregations and district presidents be urged to arrange for those regularly assisting congregations with pastoral service to be called, installed, and rostered as such; and be it finally

Resolved, That LCMS Rosters & Statistics and the Council of Presidents be directed to coordinate changes to the forms and procedures for multi-congregation parish designation and then to assist congregations in adjusting calls and designations as necessary under these newly-adopted bylaws.

Commission on Constitutional Matters

Ov. 9-13

**To Amend Synod’s Constitution to Allow All Member Congregations Voice and Vote**

Rationale

The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) Constitution Article V A introduces the undefined term “parish” when describing which members hold voting rights in the Synod, which creates an internal inconsistency, to wit: “All organized congregations that have joined the Synod hold voting membership. At the meetings of the districts of the Synod every congregation or parish [emphasis added] is entitled to two votes, one of which is cast by the pastor and the other by the lay delegate.”

The term parish has been interpreted multiple times by opinions of Synod’s Commission on Constitutional Matters (CCM) and rulings by the Secretary of the Synod as being “two or more congregations served by one pastor.” However, in other places in Synod’s Constitution and Bylaws, the term parish is used as an adjective to refer to an individual (i.e. “parish nurse”) serving a single congregation. The practical effect of this inconsistency is that it makes the first sentence of Const. Art. V A above untrue. It also creates a second class of Synod membership, congregations with no say or stake in membership. This issue has been around for more than 40 years and it is time to put an end to the controversy it generates, which only serves to divide us when the times in which we live demand our unity.

The issue on congregation disenfranchisement has taken on more importance in recent years as the process for electing the President of the Synod has changed by allowing individual congregations to vote in a pre-convention process. Not allowing some congregations to participate in this process is not only demoralizing for the congregations involved but removes any incentive for other congregations to become a part of our Synod, particularly if they are small and dependent upon outside support for Word and Sacrament ministry.

In reality, the issue centers on district conventions. District conventions do more than vote on things. They are a valuable tool for providing information, support, and fellowship among the leadership within the district. Although strong lay leadership is universally desirable, it is even more essential in those congregations who do not have a full time, dedicated pastor. When one of these congregations is disenfranchised, as is currently the case, there is no incentive for it to send a representative to the

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2019 Convention Workbook
district convention or any other district meeting for that matter, and, as a result, valuable ministry moments are lost. This is an important matter that should be corrected to assist in assuring the long-term viability of these congregations.

One of the frequently voiced arguments for keeping things the way they are has to do with the theoretical “balance” between lay and clergy representation. Such representation is not guaranteed by current practice. For instance, congregations with vacancies not being served by called and installed intentional interim pastors are still entitled to their lay representation even though they do not have clergy representation. As the available supply of ministers of religion—ordained continues to shrink, the number of such congregations is destined to grow. Also, there are no procedures in place to assure such “balance” is attained either at district or Synod level. In fact, for Synodwide election/ratification processes, the results are determined by percentage of votes actually cast, not on percentage of eligible voters. In the last election for Synod president, only 78% of eligible votes were actually cast.

Past efforts to deal with the issues involved have included lengthy and valid theological and historical arguments, all of which have gone to naught. Perhaps it is time to realize that the real rationale for addressing and correcting this inconsistency is simply that it is the “meet, right, and salutary” thing to do.

The path to correction is simply to eliminate the dual use of the word parish.

Therefore be it

Resolved, That the Synod in convention correct the inequity in congregation voting rights by taking the actions described in the following resolves; and be it further

Resolved, That Const. Art. V A be amended by the Synod in convention as follows:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

A. Voting Members

All organized congregations that have joined the Synod hold voting membership. At the meetings of the districts of the Synod and for all Synodwide elections and ratifications, every congregation or parish is entitled to two votes; one of which is to be cast by the pastor and the other by the lay delegate. In the case of a pastor serving two or more congregations by regular call, he shall be entitled to only one vote. At the meetings of the Synod a number of congregations shall form a group which shall be represented by two voting delegates, one a pastor and one a lay delegate.

and be it further

Resolved, That Bylaw 3.1.2.1 (c) be amended by the Synod in convention as follows:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

3.1.2.1 Elections of voting delegates shall take place in accordance with established policy and procedure.

…

c) The privilege of voting shall be exercised by one pastor and one layperson from each member congregation of the circuit, both of whom shall have been elected in the manner prescribed by the congregation. Multi-congregation parishes shall be entitled to a lay vote from each member congregation. Pastors serving multiple congregations shall be entitled to only one vote.

…

and be it further

Resolved, That Article 3.1.2.1 (h) which defines the delegates and alternates to Synod convention of the circuit in the Bylaws be amended by the Synod in convention as follows:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

3.1.2.1 Elections of voting delegates shall take place in accordance with established policy and procedure.

…

(h) All four persons elected shall come from four different parishes, congregations.

…

and be it further

Resolved, That Article 3.12.2.3 of the Bylaws be amended by the Synod in convention as follows:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

3.12.2.3 The Secretary of the Synod shall compile and maintain the voters list for the election of the President of the Synod. This list and any of its parts shall not be disseminated.

(a) This voters list shall include:

(1) the pastor of serving each a member congregation, or multi-congregation parish. Pastors serving multiple congregations shall be entitled to only one vote.

(2) a lay person from the each congregation or parish.

(b) The congregation shall present to the Secretary of Synod 90 days prior to the election a proper credentials form provided by the Secretary, signed by two of the congregation’s officers. If a congregation or parish has more than one pastor eligible to vote, the congregation shall designate on the credentials form which pastor will cast a vote on behalf of the congregation.

…

and be it further

Resolved, That Bylaw 4.8.2 (d)(1) be amended by the Synod in convention as follows:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

4.8.2 Official conferences for all ordained and commissioned ministers on the respective rosters of the Synod shall meet, if possible, in plenary sessions at least once each year.

…

d) All ordained and commissioned ministers on the district rosters are expected to attend meetings of their official conference or present a valid excuse.

(1) Attendance at the official conferences shall be obligatory for ordained and commissioned ministers serving in congregations and parishes.

…

and be it further

Resolved, That all prior rulings and opinions of the Secretary of the Synod and the CCM on this subject be declared superseded by this action; and be it finally

Resolved, That we renew our pledge that all member congregations of the Synod strengthen and encourage each other in all aspects of our walk together in our work to fulfill the Great Commission in our fallen world.

Board of Directors
Southeastern District
To Amend the Synod Constitution to grant a Lay Vote to Every Congregation

Preamble

When Jesus directs those attempting to admonish an erring brother, He states that the final attempt of such admonition is to take the matter before the Church (Matt. 18:17). To that assembly Jesus predicated the authority to exercise the Office of the Keys saying, “And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. Truly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven” (Matt. 18:17b–18). This God-given authority is not limited by the size of a congregation, for Jesus goes on to add a clear promise to be with even the smallest assembly or congregation, “Again I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in My name, there am I among them” (Matt. 18:19–20).

The Lutheran Church in general and The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) in particular have always held the autonomy of the congregation in high esteem. The Confessions of the Lutheran Church testify to the authority given by Christ to the Church as recorded in the Scriptures. Particularly, the above-mentioned verses of Matthew 18 are cited in the Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope defending the church’s right of calling ministers (Tr 24). Later it is made clear that this authority comes down to each congregation: “Therefore when the regular bishops become … unwilling to administer ordination, the churches retain their own right to ordain … ministers. Wherever the Church is, there is the authority to administer the Gospel …” (Tr 66–67).

When the question of church and ministry was raised in the early days of our Synod’s history, Pastor C.F.W. Walther expressed the urgency of clarifying the scriptural position on the matter in part, because of its implications for church polity (cf. C.F.W. Walther, The Church & The Office of The Ministry, ed. Matthew Harrison [St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2012], especially pp. xvii–xix). Because of the divine institution of the Church and the Office of the Holy Ministry, the LCMS has consistently upheld the temporal right of a congregation to have a say in the business of the Synod, and this say is not limited to pastoral representation, but has also included the laity. In recent times, the voice of the congregation has been heard through the voting of two delegates appointed by a congregation to represent her at district conventions as well as at circuit forums, where representatives to Synod conventions are elected.

However, even though we acknowledge the God-given authority of each congregation, our Synod has not allowed certain congregations to be represented equally in the affairs of our Synod. As we walk together we have muted the voices of many congregations by calling “dual or multiple congregation arrangement served by the same pastor” a “parish” and limiting each parish in such a context to one pastoral and one lay vote (CCM Opinion 03-2327, “Voting Rights of Congregations”). In one extreme case four congregations served jointly by two pastors have been allowed a total of two votes at district meetings (CCM Op. 09-2545, “Voting Rights of Congregations”).

By disenfranchising certain congregations who hold membership in the Synod, we have acted inconsistently on a number of levels.

• Though we confess no divinely appointed form of church polity, denying some congregations the right to the same representation that other congregations have in matters of the Synod is at best at a disconnect with our theological understanding of a congregation’s embodiment of the catholicity of the Church.

• In some matters of the Synod that are dealt with on a congregational level, every congregation is allowed to speak for herself. However, in other matters, multiple congregations served jointly by one or more pastors are required to come together and speak with one voice thereby reducing the value of each congregation’s voice.


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• In regard to voting at district conventions, the term parish has come to mean a “dual or multiple congregation arrangement served by the same pastor,” but the majority of times parish is used in the Handbook it is used synonymously with the term congregation, for example in the following titles: “director of parish music” and “parish assistant.” Such servants of the church are certainly not limited to settings where two or more congregations have come together to call a pastor.

• Furthermore, if the term parish is used consistently we must also re-evaluate whom we elected to The Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR) seeing as Bylaw 3.9.5.1 requires “Two ordained ministers who are parish pastors” (emphasis added).

The problems created by such a situation are only intensified when the congregations making up a multiple congregation setting lie in different circuits or even districts.

Some would claim that allowing each congregation in a multi-point setting a vote at district conventions would throw off the balance between laity and clergy. Historically the Synod has allowed for an equal number of pastoral and lay voting delegates; however, no great effort has been made to ensure that an equal number of lay and pastoral delegates actually attend the convention of Synod. The
that there are approximately 6,100 congregations in the Synod, given significant lay participation along with the clergy.

If there are 473 multi-point settings comprised of 989 congregations (Source: LCMS Rosters and Statistics, April 20, 2018), and given that there are approximately 6,100 congregations in the Synod, such a change would permit 6,100 voting lay delegates to 5,095 pastoral delegates.

Granted, these numbers could change according to changing demographics, but currently, if every congregation sent a lay delegate, on average across the various districts lay delegates would outnumber clergy by a ratio of less than 1.1 to 1. And, it is likely that a sizable minority of congregations who are able to send lay delegates do not, so that even if congregations in multi-point settings were each allowed a voting lay delegate, pastoral delegates may still outnumber the lay delegates in general.

Regarding the objection that granting a voting lay delegate to every congregation would change the historic precedent, it should be noted that other aspects of our structure have changed significantly since 1847. For example, we now have the possibility for (and numerous real examples of) multi-congregation settings consisting of congregations in different districts. In those cases the congregations in a district other than the district in which their pastors are members, receive no representative with a voice at their district conventions.

WHEREAS, “Article V Membership, A. Voting Members” of the Synod’s Constitution deals with voting members of Synod and states: “All organized congregations that have joined the Synod hold voting membership. At the meetings of the districts of the Synod, every congregation or parish is entitled to two votes, one of which is to be cast by the pastor and the other by the lay delegate…”; and

WHEREAS, The term “or parish” is used for the first time in the Constitution and only in this place it has been interpreted to mean “multiple congregations” served by the same pastor(s); and

WHEREAS, “Multiple congregations” are only allowed to send a single lay delegate to district conventions and does not respect the equal dignity, gifts, and authority of all member congregations. Rather, it creates degrees of voting membership in the Synod because every congregation is allowed a vote in some places, but not in others (see chart in preamble); and

WHEREAS, The basic meaning of parish is more geographical than the basic meaning of congregation (congregation membership is not limited by geography, and a parish would, strictly speaking, include many people [even members of other denominations, as well as unbelievers] who are not members of an LCMS congregation); and

WHEREAS, The presence of a pastor is not what determines the presence of a congregation. According to C.F.W. Walther’s Church and Ministry, concerning the Church, Thesis VII, “As visible fellowships [Gemeinschaften] that still have the Word and the Sacraments essentially according to God’s Word bear the name ‘church’ because of the true invisible Church of genuine believers that is found in them, so also they possess the authority that Christ has given to His whole Church, on account of the true invisible Church hidden in them, even if there were only two or three [believers]” (2012 Edition, 76); and

WHEREAS, The polity of the LCMS is based on congregations and not on parishes; and

WHEREAS, The emphasis of our polity on the representation of congregations is intrinsically connected to the scriptural and confessional understanding of a congregation bearing all the characteristics of the Church; and

WHEREAS, The restructuring of the LCMS passed by the delegates at the 2010 Synod convention included the provision that congregations of the Synod would directly vote for the Synod President (2010 Res. 8-17, “Congregations Walking Together in Mission as They Elect President and First Vice-President: To Elect the Synod President,” Proceedings, 167); and

WHEREAS, Requiring that multiple congregations share a vote or voice disenfranchises one or more of the congregations in so-called multiple congregation settings who are forced to share representation at district conventions and election of Synod President; and

WHEREAS, The idea of congregations electing the Synod President and having an opportunity to vote at a district convention enhances the representative nature of the election and the district convention; and

WHEREAS, The Res. 3-07A of the 2013 convention of the LCMS, “To Further Promote Mission Awareness, Support, Collaboration, and Coordination for Rural and Small Town, Urban and Inner City, and Suburban Ministry,” was adopted by an overwhelming majority [Yes: 981; No: 15]. The final resolve of which stated: “That the LCMS in convention continue to respect the equal dignity, gifts, and authority of all member congregations, regardless of demographics or size (2013 Proceedings, 119); and

WHEREAS, The use of the term parish has led to confusion and the denial of voting rights to certain congregations; and

WHEREAS, Allowing every congregation an independent voice at the district convention and the election of Synod President does not change the one layman and one pastor representation at the Synod convention; and

WHEREAS, At the last Synod convention a majority voted to amend the constitution to address this inconsistency, but a two-thirds (2/3) majority (66.67%) needed to amend this inconsistency failed by three votes [Yes: 635; No: 321] or 66.42% (2016 Proceedings, 200); and

WHEREAS, Further discussion has taken place in the Synod over the past triennium; therefore be it

Resolved, That The 49th District Convention of The Oklahoma District memorialize the LCMS at its 2019 convention to:

• Give all organized congregations that hold membership in the Synod the opportunity to vote for Synod President and to be represented by a lay delegate and a pastoral delegate at district conventions (Bylaw 3.1.2.1 [c] allows representation at circuit forums and regional caucuses);
• Retain a single vote for a pastor who represents more than one congregation
• Amend Const. Art. V A;

and be it further

Resolved, That Const. Art. V A be amended as follows:
PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

Article V Membership

... A. Voting Members

All organized congregations that have joined the Synod hold voting membership. At the meetings of the districts of the Synod every congregation or parish is entitled to two votes, one of which is to be cast by the pastor and the other by the lay delegate and no individual shall cast more than one vote. At the meetings of the Synod a number of congregations shall form a group which shall be represented by two voting delegates, one a pastor and one a lay delegate.

and be it further

Resolved, That Bylaw 3.12.2.3 (a) be amended to read:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

3.12.2.3 The Secretary of the Synod shall compile and maintain the voters list for the election of the President of the Synod. This list and any of its parts shall not be disseminated.

(a) This voters list shall include:

(1) the pastor of each member congregation or multi-congregation parish

(2) a lay person from each congregation or parish

and be it finally resolved

Resolved, That the Commission on Handbook update the Handbook to remove all references to dual- or multi-congregations/parishes or parish(es) as a qualifier in all representative or voting matters.

Oklahoma District

Ov. 9-16

To Study Allowing All Congregations in a Multi-Congregation Parish to Have a Lay Voting Delegate at District Conventions

WHEREAS, Each congregation is a member of their district; and

WHEREAS, Multi-point parishes only have one lay vote; and

WHEREAS, Sister congregations are then deprived of representation; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Minnesota South District memorialize the Synod at its next regular convention in 2019 to form a special Synod task force to study and to report on the current representation and voting procedures of congregations in the Synod; and be it finally

Resolved, That the report from this special task force be shared with district presidents and members of the Synod by January 1, 2021.

Minnesota South District

Ov. 9-17

To Recognize Vacancy Pastors as “In Charge of Congregations” for the Purposes of Voting Representation

WHEREAS, The Constitution of the Synod defines “ministers not in charge of congregations” as “advisory members” (Constitution Article V B; XII 10 B b); and

WHEREAS, Bylaw 3.1.2.1 (d) states, “All pastors who are not advisory members under Article V B of the Constitution … shall be eligible for election” as delegates to the national convention; and

WHEREAS, Bylaw 4.2.1 (a) states, “The conventions of the districts shall be governed by the bylaws adopted by the Synod for its conventions, insofar as these may be applicable” thus eliminating vacancy pastors from voting representation at district conventions as well; and

WHEREAS, The original intent of the Synod was that representation by pastoral and lay delegates at Synod and district conventions should be balanced; and

WHEREAS, Vacancy pastors are certainly “in charge of congregations” they are serving, delivering both Word and Sacrament as well as pastoral care; and

WHEREAS, When the vacancy pastor, who is in charge of the congregation, is not allowed to represent the congregation for either national or district conventions, congregations are denied half their voting representation; therefore be it

Resolved, That for the purposes of voting representation at both national and district conventions, vacancy pastors not otherwise called to serve another congregation be considered to be in charge of the congregations they serve; and be it further

Resolved, That the Commission on Handbook be charged with crafting appropriate language to codify the intent of this resolution, and that such language be brought to the next convention for consideration.

Concordia Williston, ND

Ov. 9-18

To Amend the Constitution to Address District Convention Representation

Rationale

The Commission on Handbook presents a proposal for amendment of Constitution Article XII 10 to adjust the terminology and extent of official attendance at the conventions of Synod’s districts, as touches the following aspects:

• Terminology: The purpose of Const. Art. XII 10 is, as its introductory phrase indicates, to delineate attendance at district conventions. Const. Art. V indicates the membership of the Synod, congregational and individual, and the members of a district are simply those members of the Synod so assigned. Furthermore, bylaws and customs dealing with district convention attendance uniformly use the term delegate. The constitutional language should be updated to reflect the common usage, changing the terms representative and member both to delegate.

• Bylaw 4.2.3 correctly indicates the intention of the Constitution, that “All nonvoting ordained and commissioned ministers who are members of the Synod within the district shall serve as advisory delegates.” At the time the constitutional list of Const. Art. XII 10 B was composed, any pastor called by a congregation who was not the voting pastoral delegate would have been an assistant pastor, and therefore an advisory delegate to the district convention. The creation of the associate category of pastors created the possibility that there might be pastors other than
the voting pastoral delegate and assistant pastors associated with a congregation. The elimination of assistant pastors as a constitutional category further compounded the deviation between the intent of the constitutional language and its surface reading. The non-voting pastors of a congregation are today nowhere apparent in the list of Const. Art. XII 10 B, but are intended to be included in the advisory attendance of the district convention.

- The earlier historical practice in the Synod and the custom in certain districts more recently has been to allow for advisory lay representation from the congregations of a multi-congregation parish that did not provide the parish’s voting lay delegate. For example, the 1873 Handbuch (Handbook) provided: “While it is hoped for and desired that the various congregations of one pastor might each send its own [lay] delegate…only one at a time can represent [as voting lay delegate] the interests of the parish,” and the 1899: “A parish consisting of several congregations but having only one pastor can send only one voting [lay] delegate. Others sent are…only advisory members.” The commission recommends restoring this historic practice in explicit constitutional language, to guarantee these advisory delegates their voice at district conventions.

If this constitutional amendment is adopted along with that of the commission’s other overture, “To Amend the Constitution to Simplify Handling of Commissioned Categories,” the text below would provide the final text of Const. Art. XII 10. Therefore be it

Resolved, That Constitution Article XII 10 be amended as follows:

PRESENT PROPOSED WORDB

Article XII Districts of the Synod and Their Regulation

10. The meetings of the districts of the Synod are composed of the following:

A. Voting RepresentativesDelegates

The pastors of such congregations as hold voting membership in the Synod and the lay delegates elected and deputed by these congregations shall be voting representatives delegates.

B. Advisory MembersDelegates

Advisory members delegates are the commissioned and nonvoting ordained ministers who are members of the Synod within the district. In addition, a congregation that is part of a multi-congregation parish, other than the congregation supplying the voting lay delegate, may elect and depute an advisory lay delegate.

a. Pastors whose congregations do not hold membership in the Synod
b. Ministers not in charge of congregations
c. Professors at the Synod’s educational institutions
d. Teachers of the Evangelical Lutheran Church
e. Directors of Christian education
f. Directors of Christian outreach
g. Directors of family life ministry
h. Directors of parish music
i. Deaconesses
j. Parish assistants
k. Certified lay ministers

I. Candidates for the office of the ministry, for that of a teacher of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, for director of Christian education, for director of Christian outreach, for director of family life ministry, for director of parish music, for deaconess, for certified lay minister, or for parish assistant.

... Commission on Handbook Ov. 9-19

To Amend Methods for Selection of Nonvoting and Advisory Delegates

WHEREAS, The bylaws of the Synod state in regard to nonvoting advisory delegates for the convention of the Synod, “Each district shall select one advisory delegate for every 60 advisory ordained ministers and specific ministry pastors, and one advisory delegate for every 60 commissioned ministers on the roster of the Synod” (Bylaw 3.1.3.1); and

WHEREAS, The current bylaws of the Synod do not address balloting methods that are available through current technologies, e.g. electronic balloting, to aid in the selection of nonvoting advisory delegates from the districts to the convention of the Synod (cf. Bylaw 3.1.3.1 [a]); and

WHEREAS, The widespread accessibility and overall acceptance of various methods of balloting for elections, such as electronic technologies and others, are viewed as valid and expedient and are being utilized in the conduct of corporate business in both the secular and church realm; and

WHEREAS, The inclusion of alternate methods of balloting are currently incorporated in the operation of the Synod with inclusion in the bylaws as a possibility for the election of voting delegates to the convention of the Synod (cf. Bylaw 3.1.2.1, “a circuit may select another manner of meeting [e.g. e-meeting technologies] that is suitable and made available to all participants”) and in the election of the President of the Synod (cf. Bylaw 3.12.2.4, “the Secretary of the Synod shall provide, via a secure and verifiable method, opportunity for two voting delegates from each congregation, as determined according to Bylaw 3.12.2.3, to vote for one of the candidates for President”); and

WHEREAS, The current bylaws of the Synod include alternate methods for the selection of voting delegates to the convention, but such provisions are not provided in the bylaws for the selection of district nonvoting advisory delegates to the convention; and

WHEREAS, The inclusion of alternate methods of balloting, such as the use of electronic technologies, for the selection of district nonvoting advisory delegates for the convention of the Synod would offer an expedient method for this process and assist in meeting the nine-month deadline for selection completion, as official conferences conducted the year before a Synod convention may occur after the nine-month deadline; and

WHEREAS, The inclusion of alternate methods of balloting for the selection of district nonvoting advisory delegates for the convention of the Synod could allow for more widespread involvement and overall greater participation in the selection process for these advisory delegates; therefore be it

Resolved, That current Synod Bylaw 3.1.3.1 (a) be revised to include the opportunity for alternate methods of balloting (e.g., electronic technologies) that may be utilized for the selection of
district nonvoting advisory delegates for the convention of the Synod; and be it further

Resolved, That the district secretary, who is currently charged with calling for these elections, be the district officer charged with oversight for any alternate methods of balloting that may be employed; and be it finally

Resolved, That Synod Bylaw 3.1.3.1 (a) be revised to read, as follows:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

Reports and Overtures

3.1.3.1 Each district shall select one advisory delegate …

(a) Selection of district advisory delegates to conventions of the Synod shall be made by the respective groups meeting at the call of the district secretary either during the district convention or at official district conferences of ordained and/or commissioned ministers, or through a manner of balloting (e.g. electronic technologies) deemed acceptable by the district secretary that is suitable and made available to all participants.

... Board of Directors

Texas District

Ov. 9-20

To Enable Commissioned Ministers to Serve As Voting Lay Delegates

WHEREAS, Ministers of religion—commissioned hold membership in the Synod (Constitution Article V); and

WHEREAS, Ministers of religion—commissioned must be communicant members of a congregation that is a member of the Synod (Bylaws 2.11.1, 2.11.2); therefore be it

Resolved, That ministers of religion—commissioned be enabled to serve as voting lay delegates at conventions of the Synod and its districts.

Circuit 6
North Wisconsin District

Ov. 9-21

To Enable Commissioned Ministers to Serve As Voting Lay Delegates

WHEREAS, Commissioned workers of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) congregations are highly valued for their zeal and faithfulness; and

WHEREAS, All commissioned works are theologically trained in some fashion, many even holding advanced degrees; and

WHEREAS, Constitution Article V B describes “advisory members only” to include “Teachers of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, Directors of Christian Education, Directors of Christian Outreach, Directors of Family Life Ministry, Directors of Parish Music, Deaconesses and Parish Assistants”; and

WHEREAS, C.F.W. Walther’s tenth thesis on the Holy Ministry states, “To the ministry of the Word, according to divine right, belongs also the duty to judge doctrine, but laymen also possess this right. Therefore, in the ecclesiastical courts (consistories) and councils they are accorded both a seat and vote together with the clergy.” (C.F.W. Walther, Church and Ministry [St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1987], 23); and

WHEREAS, The above commissioned offices of LCMS congregations are laypersons; and

WHEREAS, By virtue of a man-made constitution they are disqualified from representing their congregations as voting delegates to conventions; and

WHEREAS, This inadvertently creates an inconsistency between accepted theology (Walther’s theses) and Synod polity (Const. Art. V B); and

WHEREAS, The 2016 Synod convention voted in the affirmative [Yes: 921; No: 58] “To Allow Voting Privilege for Assistant Pastors” (Resolution 11-09, 2016 Proceedings, p. 202), thus indicating a willingness for the Handbook to better reflect Synod’s theology; therefore be it

Resolved, That “Teachers of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, Directors of Christian Education, Directors of Christian Outreach, Directors of Family Life Ministry, Directors of Parish Music, Deaconesses and Parish Assistants” be stricken from the list of “Advisory members only” of Synod (Const. Art. V B); and be it further

Resolved, That congregations of the LCMS be encouraged to consider those highly educated and faithful laypersons to be sent as their voting representatives to circuit, district, and Synod events.

Bay City Circuit
Michigan District

Ov. 9-22

To Consider Voting Privilege for Commissioned Ministers

WHEREAS, Called commissioned ministers have a critical ministry impacting the lives of families as an outreach arm of congregations; and

WHEREAS, Commissioned ministers are highly valued for their zeal and faithfulness; and

WHEREAS, All commissioned ministers are theologically trained; and

WHEREAS, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod requires commissioned ministers to attend district conventions as advisory delegates, whose only authority is to speak to the convention; and

WHEREAS, Districts are expected to appoint a representative number of commissioned ministers to represent the district at the Synod convention as advisory delegates, whose only authority is to speak to the convention; and

WHEREAS, The 2016 Synod in convention voted 921 to 58 “To Allow Voting Privilege for Assistant Pastors” (Resolution 11-09), thus indicating a willingness for the Synod to reconsider the rigid restrictions placed on voting privilege; therefore be it

Resolved, That a discussion regarding the voting privilege for commissioned ministers begin at the 2019 Synod convention with a decision reached by the 2022 Synod convention.

Michigan District
Ov. 9-23

To Propose Commissioned Ministers as Voting Members at LCMS District and Synod Conventions

WHEREAS, The Synod celebrates the ministry contributions of teachers, directors of Christian education, directors of Christian outreach, directors of family life ministry, directors of parish music, deaconesses, parish assistants and certified lay ministers through their inclusion as ministers of religion—commissioned; and

WHEREAS, The Synod recognizes the voices and wisdom of our commissioned ministers as gifts from the Lord; and

WHEREAS, The Synod Board of Directors is comprised of ordained, lay, and commissioned ministers; and

WHEREAS, The boards of directors of the districts of Synod are comprised of ordained, lay, and commissioned ministers; and

WHEREAS, The boards of regents of the various Concordia colleges and universities are comprised of ordained, lay, and commissioned ministers; and

WHEREAS, The board of regents of each of our seminaries is comprised of ordained, lay, and commissioned ministers; and

WHEREAS, The various commissions, committees and boards of Synod and districts are generally comprised of ordained, lay, and commissioned ministers; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Pacific Southwest District in convention memorialize the 67th Regular Convention of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (2019) to amend Constitution Article V A–B as follows:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

Article V Membership

... 

A. Voting Members

All organized congregations that have joined the Synod hold voting membership. At the meetings of the districts of the Synod every congregation or parish is entitled to two up to three votes, one of which is to be cast by the pastor, and the other one by the lay delegate and the other by a commissioned minister. Congregations without a commissioned minister may send a second lay or pastoral delegate. At the meetings of the Synod a number of congregations shall form a group which shall be represented by two voting delegates, one a pastor and one a lay delegate and the third by a commissioned minister from one of the congregations within this group (circuit). Groups (circuits) without a commissioned minister may send an additional lay or pastoral delegate.

B. Advisory Members

Advisory members only are the following:

1. Pastors whose congregations do not hold membership in the Synod
2. Ministers not in charge of congregations Pastors who are not called to Synod member congregations
3. Professors at the Synod’s educational institutions
4. Teachers of the Evangelical Lutheran Church—Candidates for the office of the ministry, for that of a teacher of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, for director of Christian education, for director of Christian outreach, for director of family life ministry, for director of parish music, for deaconess, for parish assistant, or for certified lay minister.

5. Directors of Christian education
6. Directors of Christian outreach
7. Directors of family life ministry
8. Directors of parish music
9. Deaconesses
10. Parish assistants
11. Certified lay ministers

Candidates for the office of the ministry, for that of a teacher of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, for director of Christian education, for director of Christian outreach, for director of family life ministry, for director of parish music, for deaconess, for certified lay minister or for parish assistant.

Pacific Southwest District

Ov. 9-24

To Amend Synod Bylaws 3.12.2.1 and 3.12.2.2

WHEREAS, Prior to the 2013 Synod convention, the slate for President was the five individuals with the highest number of votes in the nominating process who consented to serve if elected; and

WHEREAS, Bylaw 3.12.2.1 allows for only three candidates; and

WHEREAS, There is no possibility for a write-in vote, or nominations from the floor; and

WHEREAS, Reintroducing a five-candidate slate would allow for more diversity of candidates for Synod President; therefore be it

Resolved, That Bylaw 3.12.2.1 be amended as follows:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

3.12.2.1 The candidates for the office of President shall be the threefive ordained ministers who received the highest number of votes in the nominating process and who consent to serve if elected. The candidates for the office of First Vice-President shall be the 20 ordained ministers receiving the highest number of votes in the nominating process. No opportunity shall be provided for additional nominations.

and be it further

Resolved, That Bylaw 3.12.2.2 be amended as follows:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

3.12.2.2 The Secretary of the Synod shall publish in the Convention Workbook and post on the Synod Website brief biographies of the threefive candidates for President and the 20 candidates for First Vice-President. This report shall contain such pertinent information as age, residence, number of years in the Synod, present position, offices previously held in a district or the Synod, year of ordination, former pastorates, involvement in community, government, or interchurch affairs, and any other specific experience and qualification for the office. Opportunity to provide a personal statement shall be offered to each candidate for publication in an official periodical, this statement also to be posted on the Synod’s Website.

and be it further

Resolved, That the Secretary of Synod adapt the timing of the online voting to accommodate for the increased number of candidates; and be it finally

Resolved, That the Southern Illinois District send this resolution to the 2019 Synod convention as an overture.

Southern Illinois District

2019 Convention Workbook
To Amend Bylaw 3.12.2.6 Revising the Process of Election for the Office of the First Vice-President

WHEREAS, The Church has been provided by God with many men who are equipped to serve in the various administrative positions of the Synod; and

WHEREAS, A diversity of individuals would be helpful in providing God-pleasing leadership of Synod; and

WHEREAS, It is helpful to have candidates considered for the office of First Vice-President of Synod who are the most broadly known across the entirety of Synod to be most capable and well respected; and

WHEREAS, The Synod already limits the election ballot for the office of President of Synod to three ordained ministers who received the highest number of votes in the nominating process and who have consented to serve if elected; therefore be it

Resolved, That Synod Bylaw 3.12.2.6 be amended as follows:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

Elections of President and First Vice-President

3.12.2.6 Prior to all other elections, the convention shall elect the First Vice-President.

(a) The President-elect shall select from the list of 20 nominees for the Office of First Vice-President five nominees who have consented to serve if elected, at least three of whom shall be taken from the top five nominees.

(b) Balloting will proceed with the candidate receiving the smallest number of votes eliminated from consideration until one candidate receives a majority of the votes cast, who shall be declared elected.

Resolved, That Synod Bylaw 3.12.2.6 be amended as follows:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

To Address Residency Requirements for District Regional Positions

WHEREAS, Bylaw 3.12.1 (b) notes “For purposes of regional elections, individuals will be considered a part of the geographical region in which they reside”; and

WHEREAS, This requirement has also been applied to regional elections on the district level (Bylaw 4.3.1 and 4.3.3); and

WHEREAS, On the district level, there are members and pastors who might live across the state line or regional line from where their congregation is located; and

WHEREAS, This eliminates otherwise qualified candidates; and

WHEREAS, The requirement of membership in a congregation of the region is more feasible on the district level; therefore be it

Resolved, That district regional positions be exempt from this residency requirement; and be it further

Resolved, That congregational membership in a region be applied at the district level; and be it further

Resolved, That Bylaw 4.3 be amended as follows:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

Michigan District
4.3 District Officers

4.3.1 A president shall be elected from the clergy roster of the Synod by each district. Two or more vice-presidents, a secretary, and a circuit visitor for each circuit established by the district shall be elected from the clergy roster of the district. In the case of regional selections, nominees shall be from the clergy roster of the district with residence members in a congregation in the designated region. (This shall also be the case for all other regional selections.)

4.3.2 Each district shall have a treasurer who shall be a layperson and shall be elected or appointed as the bylaws of the district may provide.

4.3.3 All officers and members of boards shall be members of member congregations of the district and, when appropriate, resident members of congregations of designated regions during the course of their tenure.

and be it finally

Resolved, That this take effect immediately.

Board of Directors
Kansas District

Ov. 9-29

To Amend Bylaw 3.1.8 To No Longer Require Publication of Delegate Mailing Addresses

Rationale

Bylaw 3.1.8 requires the Workbook to include “the names and mailing addresses of all voting delegates.” This requirement was imposed by 1989 Resolution 5-18 (Proceedings, p. 139) in response to a number of overtures indicating a desire on the part of parties structurally independent from Synod to communicate easily by mail, before the convention, with lay as well as pastoral delegates. This has provided opportunity over the years for the circulation of delegates with all manner of unofficial convention-related and non-convention-related material.

A lay delegate to the 2016 Synod convention noted, however, that standard best practices for personal and sensitive information require the diligent safeguarding of personal information, its use only in the official conduct of business, and strict limitations on its disclosure, necessitating:

- a clear privacy policy: what data are gathered and stored, and how will they be used or shared? Provide opt-in or opt-out for sharing;
- stewardship, not ownership: personal identity information is not corporate property to be repurposed or sold, but to be used only for official business;

Already in 1986, overtures to require publication of delegate addresses were dismissed with the concern that publication of lay addresses “might cause potential delegates to refuse service [or] increase legal liability.” Publication of delegates’ addresses demonstrably exposes them involuntarily to unofficial and even convention-unrelated communications. It may expose their addresses to the general public, when for a variety of reasons they may prefer or even need them to remain private. In the present political climate, the publication in the Workbook of delegates’ full postal addresses, available for open download on the internet, creates potential for misuse of lists “by pressure groups who oppose the positions those delegates take in convention.” Elaborating on this point, the delegate noted:

It seems that LCMS has a cherished history of advocacy on internal issues that depends on the delegate addresses being disclosed to LCMS connected groups, but it’s especially bad practice to put delegate postal addresses in the Workbook on the public Internet. One only has to think about the resolutions we pass in convention for biblical marriage and sexuality and then remember what happened when Southern Poverty Law Center identified Family Research Council on a map as a hate group. And what happened when opponents of California Prop 8 created an online map with pushpins for anyone who donated in support of traditional marriage. It resulted in violence, harassment, vandalism, and job loss. Without realizing it, we’re exposing our convention delegates and their families to risk by making their personal addresses available openly. We need the bylaws to place some reasonable boundaries on use of delegate and elector personal data.

Responsibility for the list of delegate addresses, physical and e-mail, lies with the Secretary of the Synod (Board of Directors Policy 5.7.3.1–5.7.3.2.1.2, adopted Feb. 20, 2016), and administrative steps have already been taken to apply best practices for personal and sensitive information. Delegate e-mail addresses have not been and will not be shared outside corporate Synod and will be used by the Synod only for official, convention related business. Those in the districts who help to compile and certify this information have been reminded of this policy.

Bylaw 3.1.8 remains, however, and requires publication of full delegate postal addresses, in print and on the Internet. (And, in keeping with longstanding historic practice, delegate postal addresses, as they are included in the Workbook, may be shared with outside entities as a matter of convenience, recouping cost of collection and dissemination.)

The convention now has the opportunity to determine if the benefit of requiring the publishing of full delegate addresses outweighs the costs and/or risks of such a requirement. It is proposed that delegates be listed with member congregation and city, allowing, with some effort, communication with the delegates on a “care of” basis, through their congregations, without disseminating private addresses.

Therefore be it

Resolved, That Bylaw 3.1.8 be amended as follows, to remove the requirement that delegate mailing addresses be published in print and online in the Workbook:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

Pre-Convention Publications

3.1.8 A Convention Workbook containing a convention manual, reports and overtures, the names and mailing addresses and congregations of all voting delegates, and other information shall be published under the editorship of the Secretary subject to approval of the President.

LCMS Board of Directors

2019 Convention Workbook
Ov. 9-30

To Adopt Data Privacy Best Practices for Delegate Information

WHEREAS, The Synod collects personal identity and contact information from convention delegates; and

WHEREAS, Best practices for data privacy include the safeguarding of such personal information, its use only in the official conduct of business, and strict limitations on its disclosure; and

WHEREAS, Our delegates in convention take positions at odds with the culture, making disclosure of their personal information a security concern. For example, the Family Research Council in DC (Paul Bedard, “Southern Poverty Law Center website triggered FRC shooting,” Washington Examiner, 6 Feb 2013: “The Family Research Council shooter, who pleaded guilty today to a terrorism charge, picked his target of a ‘hate map’ on the website of ... Southern Poverty Law Center which is upset with conservative group’s opposition to gay rights.”) and donors to California Prop 8 (Sarah McBride, “Mozilla CEO resigns, opposition to gay marriage drew fire,” Reuters, 3 Apr 2014: Brendan Eich, CEO of major tech firm Mozilla, was forced to resign after disclosure of his $1000 donation supporting California’s traditional marriage referendum. Brad Stone, “Prop 8 Donor Web Site Shows Disclosure Law Is 2-Edged Sword,” New York Times, 7 Feb 2009: “Some donors to groups supporting the measure have received death threats and envelopes containing a powdery white substance, and their businesses have been boycotted ... [The] provocative web site, eightmaps.com, ... Takes the names and ZIP codes of people who donated to the ballot measure—information that California collects and makes public under state campaign finance disclosure laws — and overlays the data on a Google map.”) were attached professionally and personally for the same positions on marriage that our delegates enacted in 2016 Resolutions 14-02A, 14-03A, and 14-04; and

WHEREAS, The Synod openly publishes the names and street addresses of convention delegates in the Workbook as required in Bylaw 3.1.8, and the Workbook is posted on the internet and easily downloaded; and

WHEREAS, The Synod provides computerized delegate mailing lists to interested parties. In 2016 some of those distributions disclosed delegate email addresses without consent; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Synod affirms its commitment to data privacy best practices, including protection of identity and contact information for its convention delegates, and the use or distribution of that information only for official business and with consent of the persons involved; and be it further

Resolved, That we amend Bylaw 3.1.8 as follows so that we no longer include delegate addresses in the publicly available Workbook:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

3.1.8 A Convention Workbook containing a convention manual, reports and overtures, the names and mailing addresses of all voting delegates, and other information shall be published under the editorship of the Secretary subject to approval of the President.

Ov. 9-31

To Cease the Selling or Distribution of Convention Delegate Personal Information

WHEREAS, A decision in 1992 allowed the Reporter to announce that the list and contact information of convention delegates would be available to interested parties for $250; and

WHEREAS, There is great public concern today about the selling of personal information, including email and physical addresses; and

WHEREAS, There are “Increasing concerns that [the requirement that delegate mailing addresses be published in the Workbook and posted on the Internet] invades the privacy of delegates and runs increasing risk of inviting coercion or harassment” (LCMS Secretary to the Board of Directors, Minutes, August 24–25, 2018, 158); and

WHEREAS, The Board of Directors has prepared an overture to the 2019 Synod convention addressing the requirement that convention delegate mailing addresses be published in the Workbook (“To Amend Bylaw 3.1.8 To No Longer Require Publication of Delegate Mailing Addresses’’); therefore be it

Resolved, That effective following the 2019 Synod convention, convention delegates have an option to not have their contact information shared or sold on any outside list.

Ov. 9-32

To Adopt Data Privacy Best Practices

WHEREAS, The Synod collects personal identity and contact information from convention delegates; and

WHEREAS, Best practices for data privacy include the safeguarding of such personal information, its use only in the official conduct of business, and strict limitations on its disclosure; and

WHEREAS, Our delegates in convention take positions at odds with the culture, making disclosure of their personal information a security concern. For example, the Family Research Council in Washington, DC and donors to California Prop 8 were attacked professionally and personally for the same positions on marriage that our delegates enacted in 2016 Resolution 14-02A, Res. 14-03A, and Res. 14-04; and

WHEREAS, The Synod openly publishes the street addresses of national delegates as part of the Convention Workbook, which is posted on the internet and easily downloaded; and

WHEREAS, The Secretary of Synod’s office provides copies of this list to interested parties, which use them mainly for political ends (In 2016, some of those distributions disclosed national delegate email addresses without prior consent); therefore be it

Resolved, That the Synod in convention adopt data privacy best practices that stops the public disclosure of delegate personal information other than name and congregational membership and 2019 Convention Workbook
to require prior consent for any distribution of their personal contact information.

New Jersey District

Ov. 9-33  

To Amend Bylaw 3.1.7 regarding the Formation of Floor Committees

WHEREAS, The consultation of the full membership of the Council of Presidents will provide the greatest diversity of qualified candidates to serve on the floor committees of Synod; and

WHEREAS, A diversity of individuals across the broad spectrum of Synod would be the most helpful in providing God-pleasing results in the formation and writing of resolutions to be considered by the Synod convention; and

WHEREAS, The Presidents of the various districts would know the members of their district that would be the best qualified to be considered for appointment to the floor committees of Synod; and

WHEREAS, The Church operates most productively when rostered members and lay members work side by side with a singular purpose; therefore be it

Resolved, That Bylaw 3.1.7 be amended as follows:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

Convention Committees

3.1.7 All reports and overtures accepted by the President in accordance with the foregoing paragraphs shall be referred by him to convention floor committees. Such floor committees shall be appointed by the President in consultation with and the majority consent of the full number of the Council of Presidents and the majority consent of the Presidium.

(a) Appointments will be made from among the voting delegates (Bylaw 3.1.2ff), advisory delegates (Bylaw 3.1.3ff), and advisory representatives (Bylaw 3.1.4ff).

(b) An equal balance of ordained ministers, commissioned ministers, and laypersons shall be represented on all committees.

(c) Appointments to floor committees shall be made with regard to the fairest and most balanced aggregate representation of all districts of Synod.

(a) The President shall notify floor committee members of their appointment and of the time and place of their first meeting no later than 16 weeks before the start of the convention.

(b) The committee rosters shall be published in an official periodical at least 10 weeks before the convention.

(c) If the President deems it advisable, he may convene floor committees prior to the opening of the convention.

(d) After due consideration of the matters referred to it, each floor committee will report its findings and recommendations to the convention.

(e) Each proposed resolution involving expenditures, prior to its consideration on the floor of the convention, shall be presented to the floor committee on financial matters, which in consultation with the accounting department shall attach to the recommended resolution accompanying information on estimated cost on an annual or project basis.

Circuit 11  
Michigan District

Ov. 9-34  

To Implement Term Limits for the Synod President and First Vice-President

WHEREAS, The saints of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod give thanks for the men willing to use their gifts and abilities to serve as Synod President and First Vice-President; and

WHEREAS, The positions of Synod President and First Vice-President are full-time elected positions recognized as solemn calls in the Handbook (Bylaw 3.11.1[a]); and

WHEREAS, Term limits provide an opportunity to utilize the gifts and abilities of a greater number of qualified men; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Minnesota South District memorialize Synod to implement term limits for the Synod President and First Vice-President; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod President and First Vice-President may serve a maximum of four consecutive three-year terms; and be it finally

Resolved, That the appropriate changes be made to the Handbook.

Minnesota South District

Ov. 9-35  

To Amend Synod Bylaw 3.2.4.1 regarding Term Limits

WHEREAS, In many of our districts throughout Synod, district presidents are term limited; and

WHEREAS, Offices of presidents in districts are not called nor biblically mandated, but rather elected as our governance structure; and

WHEREAS, There is an optimal balance between experience in office and healthy turnover in office; therefore be it

Resolved, That Bylaw 3.2.4.1 be amended as follows:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

3.2.4.1 The offices of President, the First Vice-President, regional vice-presidents, and Secretary shall be without limitation limited to four 3-year terms as to reelection.

... 

Michigan District

Ov. 9-36  

To Amend Bylaw 3.2.4.1 To Limit Terms of Office for Synod President, First Vice-President, Regional Vice-Presidents, and Secretary of Synod

WHEREAS, The Church has been provided, by God, many men who are equipped to serve in the various administrative positions of Synod; and

WHEREAS, The infusion of new vitality may help invigorate the Synod to meet the challenges it daily confronts; and

WHEREAS, The primary responsibility of our ordained ministers is to proclaim the Gospel and serve and equip the members of the royal priesthood; and

WHEREAS, The Synod has already seen wisdom in limiting the tenure of those who serve in office by Bylaw 3.2.4.1, which limits board and commission members of Synod to two consecutive six-year terms; and

2019 Convention Workbook
WHEREAS, There are districts of Synod that already term limit their district president and/or Praesidium; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Synod in convention adopt term limits to the offices of Synod President, First Vice-President, regional vice-presidents, and the Secretary of Synod, amending Bylaw 3.2.4.1, regarding terms of office, as follows:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

3.2.4.1 The offices of President, the first Vice-President, regional vice-presidents, and Secretary shall be without limitation as to reelection, limited to serve not more than a total of four consecutive three-year terms. Those elected to these offices shall be ineligible for reelection or re-appointment to the same office after serving a total of twelve years unless otherwise provided in the Bylaws.

(a) If the President, First Vice-President, or Secretary are not reelected or do not stand for re-election, they shall continue to receive full salary for a period of six (6) months while rendering transitional service.

(b) Such service and salary will cease at the time such person accepts another full-time position.

(c) Before his successor assumes office, the outgoing President shall use the intervening time to settle the affairs of his administration and assist the newly elected President as requested to become acquainted with the responsibilities of the office.

Circuit 11
Michigan District

Ov. 9-37

To Set Term Limits for All Synod and District Offices

WHEREAS, God has granted our Synod with many gifted people; and

WHEREAS, It is beneficial for the people of God to serve; therefore be it

Resolved, That the bylaws of Synod be amended to limit the terms of office of all three-year offices to three full terms and the terms of office of all six-year offices to two full terms; and be it further

Resolved, That the bylaws of Synod be amended to limit an individual from serving more than twelve consecutive years across elected offices.

Grace
Lexington, MO

Ov. 9-38

To Amend Bylaws to Clarify Call and Roster Matters

Preamble

The Council of Presidents (COP), and in particular its Clergy, Call, and Roster committee, have noted a variety of uncertainties in the bylaws dealing with district membership and ecclesiastical supervision of individual members of the Synod. Bylaws have not taken into account the increasing number of members whose calls simultaneously involve multiple calling bodies, or even multiple types of calling bodies, those whose call(s) may involve multiple districts, etc. Accumulation of changes to related bylaws over the years have created redundancies and left gaps, and have dispersed across multiple bylaw sections the answers to simple questions like “to what district will this member belong?”

Certain other items, such as the criteria for obtaining and retaining candidate status, and the administrative procedures associated with such status, were also noted as requiring attention.

The Clergy, Call, and Roster Committee working with the Secretary of Synod and Commission on Handbook (COH 16-003), and in consultation with the plenary COP, has therefore produced a bylaw proposal intended to rearrange and restate the contents of several bylaw sections, which changes treat three broad topics:

A. DISTRICT MEMBERSHIP AND ECCLESIASTICAL SUPERVISION

Rationale

Bylaw 2.11.1 and Bylaw section 2.12, together in certain circumstances with Bylaws 2.10.3 and 4.4.3, have all come to deal with district membership and ecclesiastical supervision of members of the Synod, in some instances in a confusing or conflicting manner. Workers having calls involving multiple calling entities, multiple types of calling entity, or multiple districts are not handled with clarity. Bylaw changes are necessary to restore order, so that Bylaw 2.11.1 will deal in a more orderly way and exclusively with categories of active roster service, and Bylaw section 2.12 will deal exclusively and conclusively with the question of to which district a member will belong.

For some time there have been confusing instances in which a member’s membership and ecclesiastical supervision have rested with different districts. It is proposed that, except for those few members under the ecclesiastical supervision of the President of the Synod, a member should be supervised by the president of the district to which he or she belongs. Changes of district membership imposed by these changes are designed to be applied in an orderly and gradual way, at the time of a call to new service (proposed Bylaw 2.12.1.9).

With Bylaw sections 2.11 and 2.12 delivering conclusive answers about district membership and ecclesiastical supervision, Bylaws 2.10.3 and 4.4.3 can be simplified and generalized.

In one substantive change (Bylaw 2.12.1.4), missionaries called to foreign service will retain membership in, and ecclesiastical supervision by, the district in which they were located before such calls, meaning that the Missouri District will no longer be required to oversee all installations into foreign fields. (Procedures have been improved since 2016, to ensure that the Office of International Mission will be able to work with every district office to see that the appropriate installations are carried out.)

In another substantive change (Bylaw 2.12.1.6, proposed numbering), an emeritus or candidate member exercising his or her ministry within a given district may be transferred to that district upon request of that district president, with approval of the member’s present district president.

In each instance where the proposed bylaws will change the district membership and/or ecclesiastical supervision of the members, the design is intended to improve the practical ability of the district presidents to carry out their evangelical supervision, counsel and care of the individual members of the Synod.

Therefore be it

Resolved, That Bylaw 2.11.1 and Bylaw section 2.12 be amended as follows, to clarify matters of district membership and ecclesiastical supervision:

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PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDBING

2.11.1 To remain on the roster of the Synod as an active member, an ordained or commissioned minister of religion must be a communicant member of a congregation which is a member of the Synod (except as provided in paragraph [c] below) and be regularly performing the duties of one of the following:

(a) An ordained minister serving a congregation of the Synod.
(b) A commissioned minister serving a congregation of the Synod.
(c) An ordained or commissioned minister serving an educational institution (an "association school") solely governed by congregations of the Synod and recognized by a district of the Synod.
(d) An officer, executive, or professional staff member of the Synod, including a district, or other agency of the Synod.
(e) An executive or professional staff member serving the Synod, including a district or other agency of the Synod.
(f) An executive or professional staff member serving a national inter-Lutheran entity of which the Synod is a member referred to in Bylaw 1.3.8.
(g) A missionary serving under a call by the Synod, including a call by a district.
(h) A person serving on the faculty or professional staff of an educational institution of the Synod.
(i) A military or institutional chaplain endorsed by the Synod.
(j) A person serving in a specialized ministry endorsed by the Synod, including a religious educational institution solely governed by congregations of the Synod and recognized by a district of the Synod.

2.12 District Membership and Ecclesiastical Supervision

2.12.1 Except as otherwise provided in this section, a member shall be under the ecclesiastical supervision of the President of the Synod (Const. Art. XIII, B 1 and Bylaw section 2.15), a member shall be under the ecclesiastical supervision of the president of the district through which membership in the Synod is held.

2.12.1.1 The district through which an individual holds membership and the district through which a member is ecclesiastically supervised will not be determined in any case on the basis of district membership of the congregation to which the individual belongs. A member may serve multiple concurrent assignments that would, if held individually, be under the supervision of different districts. Prior to any such installation, the involved district presidents shall, by mutual agreement, assign such a member to one of the involved districts.

2.12.1.2 An individual member of the Synod who is serving a member congregation shall hold membership in the Synod through the district of which the congregation is a member, whether the congregation is domestic or foreign.

2.12.1.3 An individual member of the Synod who is serving a district shall hold membership in the Synod through that district.

2.12.1.4 A missionary or chaplain: An individual member serving under a call by the Synod in a foreign location or as an active-duty military chaplain shall hold membership in the Synod through the district designated by the missionary or chaplain the district in which membership was held prior to installation as such, or in the case of an initial call to foreign service, the Missouri District, if approved by the president of that district after consultation with the president of the district through which membership is currently held and the Office of National Mission or the Office of International Mission, as appropriate.

2.12.1.5 An individual member of the Synod who is serving in any other position serving an agency other than a district and other than a missionary or chaplain serving under call by the Synod shall hold membership through the district designated by that person if approved by both the president of that district and the president of the district in which the agency is located, but shall be subject to the ecclesiastical supervision of the president of the geographical district in which the agency/place of service is located. When all voting members of the agency are members of, unless serving an agency or mission of a non-geographical district, in which case membership shall be held through that district.

2.12.1.6 An individual member of the Synod who is an executive or professional staff member called or appointed by an auxiliary or other recognized service organization shall hold Synod membership in the geographical district in which the member resides or the non-geographical district in which he/she holds membership.

2.12.1.7 An emeritus member having candidate or emeritus status shall continue to hold membership in the Synod through the district through which membership was held at the inception of emeritus status unless the president of the district through which membership is held approves a transfer;

(a) requested by the member and approved by both the president of that district and the president of the district to which membership would be transferred; or

(b) requested by the president of a district within which the member has come to reside or is involved in his or her ministry.

2.12.1.8 An inactive member having candidate status shall continue to hold membership in the Synod through the district through which membership was held at the inception of candidate status, except when a transfer is approved by both the president of that district and the president of the district to which membership would be transferred.

2.12.1.9 A member having restricted status while not serving a congregation or other eligible calling body shall continue to hold membership through the district through which membership was held at the inception of restricted status unless a transfer is approved by both the president of that district and the president of the district to which membership would be transferred.

2.12.1.10 A member having suspended status shall continue to hold membership through the district through which membership was held at the time of the suspension.

2.12.1.11 Service performed within the boundaries of any geographical district is domestic. Service performed outside the boundaries of every geographical district is foreign.

2.12.1.12 Amendments to Bylaw section 2.12 are to be applied to members at the time of their next installation (whether full- time) or request for transfer.

and be it finally

Resolved, That Bylaws 2.10.3, 4.4.3, and 4.4.7 be amended as follows, to further clarify matters of district membership and ecclesiastical supervision:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDBING

2.10.3 The president of the district of which the calling congregation is a member or in which the eligible calling agency or
other calling body, it is located or with which it is otherwise identified that will have supervision of the worker (see Bylaw section 2.12) shall be responsible for the rites of ordination and commissioning of candidates for the ministry called to that congregation, agency, or other calling body.

(a) The rite of ordination or commissioning should normally take place in the presence of the congregation, agency, or other calling body by which the candidate has been called.

(b) In the case of missionaries called by the Synod, members of a faculty of an institution of the Synod, or non-foreign specialized ministers called by the Synod, the rite shall take place in a setting approved by the district president of the calling entity.

(c) If an unusual circumstance warrants it, as in the case of missionaries and non-foreign specialized ministers, the district president may authorize that the rite take place in the home congregation of the candidate, or another appropriate congregation, with the permission of the calling congregation or other agency or calling body.

(d) A service of celebration on the part of the candidate’s home congregation is encouraged.

(e) The district president shall issue a diploma of ordination or commissioning.

4.4.3 The district president of the calling congregation, agency, or other calling body (e.g., in the case of corporate-Synod issued calls, the president of the Missouri District) shall represent the Synod shall be represented, in connection with all ordinations, calls, the president of the Missouri District) shall represent the Synod for that purpose, by the president of the district in which the institution is located, or by his representative.

(c) Second and subsequent installations of ministers: Rostered ordained and commissioned ministers who have been duly called to positions of full- or part-time service shall be installed upon authorization provided by the president of the district from which the call originates. Each installation shall be conducted, in accordance with forms and practices developed by the Synod for that purpose, by the district president or by an ordained minister designated by the district president.

(b) He shall remove the names of those who have died or have resigned their membership or have had their membership in the Synod duly terminated.

(c) An ordained or commissioned minister accepting a call to a congregation in a sister district or to an institution which relates to such district shall immediately report such decision to his district president and ask for such request his district membership be evaluated, transfer of membership (Bylaw 2.12.1.1). The district president shall forward such any requisite transfer to the president of the sister-receiving district.

(d) Upon receipt of the transfer and of a request for installation from the minister of religion, the district president of the sister-receiving district shall install or authorize installation of such minister.

(e) He shall regularly forward roster reports to the Secretary of the Synod for publication in The Lutheran Annual.

B. CALLING BODY CONSULTATION WITH DISTRICT PRESIDENT

Rationale

It was also found to be desirable for bylaws dealing with call, ordination/commissioning, and installation to deal more uniformly and completely with all types of called service (not simply congregational calls), including a clearer requirement of consultation with the supervising district in every call situation, for the protection of both calling bodies and called workers and for the more effective exercise of ecclesiastical supervision. Obtaining a district president’s counsel in the call process is essential for many reasons, most apparently because he has access to ecclesiastical supervisory information on call candidates (including any restrictions that may be in place, Bylaws 2.13.2–2.13.2.4).

Therefore be it

Resolved, That Bylaw section 2.5 be amended as follows, to clarify and extend the requirement of a calling body’s consultation with the appropriate district president when it begins the call process:

2.5 Calling Ministers of Religion by Congregations

2.5.1 Congregations, school associations, agencies, auxiliaries, and recognized service organizations of the Synod shall seek the counsel of their respective appropriate district presidents when calling ordained or commissioned ministers.

(a) A congregation or school association shall seek the counsel of its own district president.

(b) An agency, auxiliary, or recognized service organization shall seek the counsel of the district president who would, by
vital. The call to assume supervision of the minister (Bylaw section 2.12). If the call is such that the district president to assume supervision is not known, the counsel of the president of the district within which the entity is located or with which it is associated shall be sought.

(c) If such a call involves multiple districts (such as by entity location or connection and/or position locale), the presidents of all such districts shall be consulted and mutually agree on which one of them will counsel the entity regarding the call and assume supervision of the worker called.

2.5.2 Congregations that are members of the Synod, association schools, agencies, auxiliaries, and recognized service organizations shall call and be served only by (1) ordained ministers who have been admitted to their respective ministries in accordance with the rules and regulations set forth in these Bylaws and have thereby become members of the Synod; (2) candidates for the pastoral ministry who have satisfied the qualifications and requirements for assignment of first calls by the Council of Presidents acting as the Board of Assignments; or (3) ordained ministers who are members in good standing of church bodies that have been formally recognized to be in altar and pulpit fellowship with the Synod when agreements for such calls are in place.

2.5.3 Congregations that are members of the Synod, association schools, agencies, auxiliaries, and recognized service organizations shall call only (1) commissioned ministers who have been admitted to their ministries in accordance with the rules and regulations set forth in these Bylaws and have thereby become members of the Synod; (2) candidates for the pastoral ministry who have satisfied the qualifications and requirements for assignment of first calls by the Council of Presidents acting as the Board of Assignments; or (3) commissioned ministers (or those holding positions comparable to commissioned ministers) who are members in good standing of church bodies that have been formally recognized to be in altar and pulpit fellowship with the Synod when agreements for such calls are in place.

2.5.4 Congregations that violate these requirements and persist in such violation shall, after due admonition, forfeit their membership in the Synod.

C. PROCEDURAL CLARIFICATIONS REGARDING INACTIVE STATUS

Rationale
Elimination of non-candidate status and the adjustment of parameters for candidate status (2016 Res. 12-03) left lingering procedural questions, compounded by unclarity in related bylaws. Workers whose calls terminate without having another call in hand also often do not apply timely for candidate status, sometimes for years after their calls have terminated. Bylaws have not dealt with the status of these members between the time their active status terminates (with the conclusion of a call) and the time their candidate status is granted. It is proposed to require candidate status to be applied for and granted within 30 days of call termination, in the case of ordained, and 120 days, in the case of commissioned ministers (the longer period for the latter, because of the number of teachers whose continuation over the summer is in question). Finally, it is proposed to clarify the qualifications for granting or annual continuation of candidate status, and to provide an explicit procedure (namely, reinstatement, Bylaw section 2.18) by which a member can seek to reverse a decision not to grant or not to extend candidate status.

Therefore be it
Resolved, That Bylaws 2.11.2–2.11.2.2 be amended to clarify qualifications and procedures regarding inactive status:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

2.11.2 Inactive members are advisory members of the Synod.
(a) As such, they have all the rights, privileges, and responsibilities of advisory membership in the Synod as defined in the Constitution and Bylaws of the Synod.
(b) To remain on the roster of the Synod as an inactive member, an ordained or commissioned minister of religion must be a communicant member in good standing of a congregation which is a member of the Synod and must qualify and make application for one of the following categories.
(c) A member whose active service terminates while awaiting installation to another accepted call to active service shall have candidate status.
(d) A member whose active service terminates without prior acceptance of another call to active service has 30 days, if ordained, and 120 days, if commissioned to apply for and be granted inactive status (candidate or emeritus, as appropriate). Should inactive status not be granted within said period, membership in the Synod is forfeited.
(e) A member may seek to reverse a denial of emeritus or candidate status, whether initial or continuing, by application for reinstatement to the roster of the Synod (Bylaw 2.18.1). Emeritus
2.11.2.1 An “emeritus” member is one whose membership is held for retention on the roster upon retirement after reaching the age of 55 or for reasons of total and permanent disability. Any unusual case shall be decided by the Council of Presidents if the appropriate district president so requests.
(a) The emeritus member or a representative identified by his district president shall, by January 31, make an annual report to the member’s district president.
(b) This report shall include current contact information and address the criteria for remaining an inactive member of the Synod.
Candidate
2.11.2.2 A “candidate” member is one who is eligible to perform the duties of any of the offices of ministry specified in Bylaw section 2.11 but who is not currently an active member or an emeritus member.
(a) A candidate may be continued on the roster for a period not to exceed ten years by act of the president of the district through which the person holds membership. A candidate may be further continued on the roster for a period not to exceed five additional years upon recommendation of the applicant’s district president and approval of three fourths (75%) of the Council of Presidents.
(b) The candidate shall, by January 31, make an annual report to the district president who shall evaluate and determine the member’s eligibility for remaining to remain on candidate status. The candidate’s report shall include current contact information and address the criteria for remaining on candidate status.
(c) Among criteria for determining whether candidate status should be granted or continued are: The district president shall determine whether or not to grant or, upon annual review, continue candidate status based on the following criteria:
(1) The health of the applicant/member’s health;
(2) A spirit of cooperation in any The member’s efforts to address any unresolved issues involving fitness for ministry;
(3) The extent of current involvement on a part-time and assisting basis in his/her respective ministry. The member’s current involvement in ministry;
(4) A demonstrated willingness to consider a call or appointment. The member’s written statement addressing any impediments to consideration and acceptance of a call to any of the offices of ministry specified in Bylaw section 2.11, and
Ov. 9-39  

To Amend the Constitution to Simplify Handling of Commissioned Categories  

Rationale  
After its introduction of the list in the opening paragraph of Constitution Article V, the Constitution reiterates the list of categories of commissioned ministers, in whole or in part, seven times. This unnecessary repetition clutters the Constitution and complicates changes (which have occurred with some frequency). In Const. Art. XII 9 c, for example, additions to the list of commissioned categories have never been incorporated. 

As yet another proposal for revision of the list of categories of commissioned service is before the convention, this time to change the title of “commissioned lay minister” to “director of church ministries,” acknowledging completion of a gradual transformation of this curricular program at Concordia University Wisconsin, the commission proposes that the Constitution be streamlined to reflect both the categories of ordained and commissioned ministry within the roster, and at the same time to reflect the essential connection of these categories to the Office of the Holy Ministry and its auxiliary offices, as delineated in Walther’s Church and Ministry. 

Were this proposal to be adopted, modifications to the categories of commissioned ministry would still require convention action, informed by appropriate recommendations from the Concordia Colleges and Universities and the Concordia University System, but would not require individual congregational ratification as constitutional amendments. 

The commission notes its separate proposal, “To Amend the Constitution to Address District Convention Representation,” which has the effect of further simplifying and clarifying Const. Art. XII 10 in its real task, which is adjusting official representation at district conventions. If both this amendment and the other were to be adopted, the language of that proposal would be the final text of Const. Art. XII 10. 

Therefore be it

Resolved, That Synod Constitution Article V be amended as follows:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

Article V Membership  

Membership in the Synod is held and may be acquired by congregations, ministers of religion—ordained and ministers of religion—commissioned, such as teachers, directors of Christian education, directors of Christian outreach, directors of family life ministry, directors of parish music, deaconesses, parish assistants, and certified lay ministers as further specified in the Bylaws of the Synod, of the Evangelical Lutheran Church who confess and accept the confessional basis of Article II. 

A. Voting Members  

All organized congregations that have joined the Synod hold voting membership. At the meetings of the districts of the Synod every congregation or parish is entitled to two votes, one of which is to be cast by the pastor and the other by the lay delegate. At the meetings of the Synod a number of congregations shall form a group which shall be represented by two voting delegates, one a pastor and one a lay delegate. 

B. Advisory Members  

Advisory members only are the following: 

1. Pastors whose congregations do not hold membership in the Synod 
2. Ministers not in charge of congregations 
3. Professors at the Synod’s educational institutions 
4. Teachers of the Evangelical Lutheran Church 
5. Directors of Christian education 
6. Directors of Christian outreach 
7. Directors of family life ministry 
8. Directors of parish music 
9. Deaconesses 
10. Parish assistants 
11. Certified lay ministers, commissioned ministers, as specified in the Bylaws of the Synod 
12. Candidates for the office of the ministry (ordained ministers), for that of a teacher of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, for director of Christian education, for director of Christian outreach, for director of family life ministry, for director of parish music, for deaconess, for certified lay minister, or for parish assistant or for the auxiliary offices (commissioned ministers); and be it further

Resolved, That Const. Art. VI be amended as follows:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

Article VI Conditions of Membership  

Conditions for acquiring and holding membership in the Synod are the following:

3. Regular call of pastors, teachers, directors of Christian education, directors of Christian outreach, directors of family life ministry, directors of parish music, deaconesses, certified lay ministers, parish assistants and any commissioned ministers and regular election of lay delegates by the congregations, as also the blamelessness of the life of such. 

6. Pastors, teachers, directors of Christian education, directors of Christian outreach, directors of family life ministry, directors of parish music, deaconesses, certified lay ministers, ordained and commissioned ministers, or candidates for these offices not coming from recognized orthodox church bodies must submit to a colloquium before being received. 

and be it further

Resolved, That Const. Art. XII be amended as follows:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

Article XII Districts of the Synod and Their Regulation  

9. Furthermore, the district presidents shall

...
installation of all ministers and teachers, ordained or commissioned, called by the congregations into serve within their districts;

10. The meetings of the districts of the Synod are composed of the following:

A. Voting Representatives

The pastors of such congregations as hold voting membership in the Synod and the lay delegates elected and deputed by these congregations shall be voting representatives.

B. Advisory Members

Advisory members are:

a. Pastors whose congregations do not hold membership in the Synod

b. Ministers not in charge of congregations
c. Professors at the Synod’s educational institutions
d. Teachers of the Evangelical Lutheran Church
e. Directors of Christian education
f. Directors of Christian outreach
g. Directors of family life ministry
h. Directors of parish music
i. Deaconesses
j. Parish assistants
k. Certified lay ministers

and be it finally

Resolved, That Bylaws 2.6.1–2.6.1.1 be amended as follows:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

2.6 Individual Membership

2.6.1 “Ministers of the Gospel,” designated by the Synod as “ministers of religion—ordained” (ordained ministers) or “ministers of religion—commissioned” (commissioned ministers), are eligible for membership in the Synod.

2.6.1.1 The roster of commissioned ministers shall admit eligible teachers, directors of Christian education, directors of Christian outreach, directors of family life ministry, directors of parish music, deaconesses, parish assistants, and certified lay ministers.

Commission on Handbook

Ov. 9-40

To Amend Various Bylaws to Address Practical Considerations

Preamble

The Commission on Handbook, responding to a variety of observations from officers, agencies, and members of the Synod, has proposed substantive corrections to bylaws which created significant practical issues in their implementation:

A. COMMISSION MEETING SCHEDULE (COH 16-005)

Rationale

2016 Resolution 11-12 (C) included a new provision in Bylaw 3.9.1.1 to spare the Commission on Handbook (COH) from meeting quarterly (or seeking an excuse), but this provision conflicts with the Commission on Doctrinal Review’s meeting frequency provision in Bylaw 3.9.3.2. The general meeting frequency provision of Bylaw 1.5.3 applies to commissions without a specific directive of their own. To resolve apparent conflicts, the provision added as Bylaw 3.9.1.1 should be applied only to the COH.

Therefore be it

Resolved, That Bylaw 3.9.1.1 be struck, and Bylaw 3.9.4 be amended as follows, to apply this meeting frequency provision only to the COH:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

2.9.1.1 Commissions of The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod shall meet as they deem necessary but at least two times per year to carry out their assigned responsibilities.

Commission on Handbook

3.9.4 The Commission on Handbook provides for the ongoing maintenance and management of the Handbook, that is, the Constitution, Bylaws, and Articles of Incorporation of the Synod. The commission shall meet as it deems necessary but at least two times per year to carry out its assigned responsibilities.

B. INAUGURATION OF DISTRICT-ELECTED BOARD OF REGENTS MEMBERS (COH 16-018B)

Rationale

The COH has performed a non-substantive revision of Bylaw 3.2.4 (a–c) to clarify when appointed members of boards and commissions take up their offices. In that process, it was noted that Bylaw 3.2.4 does not specify a date when regents elected by districts take office, an omission that may affect the schedule for appointment of board-appointed regents.

Therefore be it

Resolved, That Bylaw 3.2.4 (a) be amended as follows, to specify a time at which district-elected regents take office:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

Terms of Office

3.2.4 The term of office of all elected officers of the Synod (Bylaw 3.2.1) shall be three years; of the elected members of the Board of Directors and all other boards and commissions of the Synod six years; of all members of college and university boards of regents three years; and of all appointed members of boards, commissions, and standing committees three years, unless these Bylaws specifically provide otherwise.

(a) The President, First Vice-President, regional vice-presidents, Secretary, and members of all boards and commissions of the Synod who are elected by the Synod convention shall assume office on September 1 following the convention and shall be inducted into office on a date subsequent to September 1 following the convention. Members of college and university boards of regents elected by district conventions shall assume office upon the close of the convention at which they are elected.

C. COMMITTEE FOR CONVENTION NOMINATIONS (CCN) (COH 16-024)

Rationale

2016 Res. 11-14, noting that the final report of the Committee for Convention Nominations (CCN) is presented at least five months
prior to the convention (Bylaw 3.12.3.6 [b]) and that modifications to the slate are often required subsequent to that date, with limited ability of the CCN to reassemble to deal with them (leading to various improvised solutions over the years), resolved that “the Bylaw 3.2.5 committee selected by the CCN be empowered to act on behalf of and in the name of the CCN for actions needed subsequent to the issuing of the CCN’s final report prior to the convention.” This provision should be formalized in the bylaws. The handling of the reserve list and the appointment of the “Bylaw 3.2.5” standing committee also require clarification.

Therefore be it

Resolved, That Bylaws 3.2.5 and 3.12.3.5–7 be amended as follows, to clarify the function of the CCN:

PRESENT PROPOSED WORDING

Vacancies

3.2.5 Unless otherwise specified in these Bylaws, vacancies that occur on elected boards or commissions of the Synod shall be filled by the Board of Directors of the Synod.

... (c) This list shall be determined by the chairman and two members of the Committee for Convention Nominations of the Synod as determined by the committee Standing Committee on Nominations (Bylaw 3.12.3.5 [b]). The Synod’s Director of Human Resources shall be consulted in developing the candidate list.

... 3.12.3.5 The first meeting of the Committee for Convention Nominations shall be at the call of the Secretary of the Synod at least six months prior to the convention of the Synod.

... (b) The committee shall elect its own chairman, vice-chairman, and secretary and shall organize its work in whatever way it deems necessary. It shall designate two of its members to serve with the chairman on the Standing Committee on Nominations.

... 3.12.3.6 The Committee for Convention Nominations shall select candidates for all elective offices, boards, and commissions except President, First Vice-President, and vice-president positions requiring regional nominations (Bylaws 3.12.2.7–8; 3.3.4.1; 3.8.2.2; 3.8.3.2).

(a) At least two candidates and at least one alternate shall be selected for each position.

(b) The committee shall determine its complete list of candidates and alternates, obtain the consent of the persons it proposes to select as candidates, and transmit its final report at least five months prior to the convention to the Secretary of the Synod, who shall post the list on the Synod’s Website and provide for its publication in a pre-convention issue of an official periodical of the Synod and in the Convention Workbook.

(c) The committee’s report shall list the qualifications of various positions used in the solicitation of nominees and contain pertinent information concerning each candidate, such as occupation or profession, district affiliation, residence, specific experience, number of years as a member of an LCMS congregation, present position, offices previously held in a congregation, district or the Synod, and qualifications for the office in question, and, if the candidate so desires, also a brief personal statement.

(d) The committee shall prepare a reserve list of nominees for use by the chairman at the convention, should the need arise.

(e) The committee shall, whenever possible, prepare and hold in readiness a slate of candidates for any new board or commission likely to be established at a convention of the Synod, and of these the committee should, whenever possible, be informed in advance.

(f) Any changes to the complete list of candidates and alternates necessitated by unavailability, declination, or ineligibility of candidates occurring after the last meeting of the committee on Convention Nominations may be affected by the Standing Committee on Nominations. As much as possible, this shall be accomplished by advancing available alternates and by making use of the reserve list of nominees approved by the plenary committee.

3.12.3.7 The chairman of the Committee for Convention Nominations shall submit the committee’s report in person to the convention at one of its earliest sessions and shall facilitate the amendment of the slate from the floor.

... (c) Whenever possible, chairman of the Committee for Convention Nominations shall have on hand at the convention a reserve list of nominees, approved by the committee, for use if required.

(f) Whenever possible, the Committee for Convention Nominations shall be informed in advance if any new board or commission is likely to be established at a convention of the Synod, so that it may have a slate of candidates in readiness.

D. EXCUSE PROCEDURE FOR ADVISORY DISTRICT CONVENTION ATTENDANCE (COH 16-039)

Rationale

Bylaws 3.1.3 and 4.2.3 for district conventions, like Bylaw 4.8.2 for official district conferences, require attendance of advisory members. Unlike Bylaw 4.8.2, they do not acknowledge that there may be legitimate excuses for non-attendance or suggest that there should be a process for handling such excuses. Changes are proposed along these lines, for the practical reason that attendance of advisory members at conventions is not always possible and that the reasons for their absence should be made known to the district president, whether the result will be to evangelically encourage attendance as an obligation and benefit of Synod membership, or to seek amelioration of whatever circumstances are hindering advisory member attendance.

Therefore be it

Resolved, That Bylaws 3.1.3 and 4.2.3 be amended as follows:

PRESENT PROPOSED WORDING

Nonvoting Advisory Delegates

3.1.3 Advisory members of the Synod shall, unless they present a valid excuse, attend district conventions, but they shall not be elected by any congregation or by any group of congregations as lay delegates to a national convention of the Synod.

4.2.3 All nonvoting ordained and commissioned ministers who are members of the Synod within the district shall, unless they present a valid excuse, serve as advisory delegates.

(a) They are entitled to voice and vote on a floor committee, if appointed, and to voice in the convention.

(b) All advisory members are expected to attend all sessions of the convention.

(c) Those advisory members whose office in the Synod, district, or other agency imposes professional or service requirements on which full and regular convention attendance makes undue demands, shall nevertheless, in consultation with their supervisory boards, arrange for their own partial or occasional
The bylaws include two definitions of the collective *faculty* (one for a seminary and one for a college or university), with one clarification/restriction related strictly to the faculty’s role in qualification of candidates for first call:

3.10.5.7 The faculty of each theological seminary of the Synod shall consist of the president, the full-time faculty, and the part-time faculty.

   (a) Part-time or temporary faculty members are distinguished by an appropriate prefix or suffix (“visiting, guest, adjunct, emeritus”) or the term “graduate assistant.”

   (b) Part-time or temporary faculty members shall hold nonvoting membership on the faculty.

3.10.6.7 The faculty of each college or university of the Synod shall consist of the president, the full-time faculty and the part-time faculty.

   *provisions like those of 3.10.5.7 [a-b] were removed in 2013 along with many other details of the college/university section*

2.8.2 It shall be the responsibility of colloquy committees or the faculties of educational institutions of the Synod to declare colloquy candidates qualified for first calls. For purposes of declaring candidates qualified for placement and recommending them for membership in the Synod, the Synod considers the “faculty” of an educational institution to be defined as follows: (a) Seminaries: all full-time faculty members who are in good standing on the Synod’s roster of ordained ministers. (b) Colleges and universities: all full-time faculty members who are in good standing as individual members of the Synod or are members in good standing as a member congregation of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

To alleviate significant confusion, the commission proposes clarifications to the following two bylaws.

Therefore be it

Resolved, That Bylaw 3.1.4.2 be amended as follows:

**PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING**

3.1.4.2 Each educational institution of the Synod shall be represented at conventions of the Synod.

   (a) Educational institutions of the Synod shall be represented by one board member in addition to the district president, by their presidents, and by one faculty member for every 30 full-time faculty members who are members of the Synod.

   (b) Fractional groupings shall be disregarded except that each institution having any full-time faculty members on the roster of the Synod shall be entitled to at least one faculty representative.

and be it further

Resolved, That Bylaw 3.10.6.7 be amended as follows:

**PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING**

3.10.6.7 The faculty of each college or university of the Synod shall consist of the president, the full-time faculty and the part-time faculty.

   (a) Part-time or temporary faculty members are distinguished by an appropriate title.

   (b) Part-time or temporary faculty members shall hold nonvoting membership on the faculty.

**C. SCOPE OF DOCTRINAL REVIEW STATUS APPEAL**

**PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING**

(COH 16-035)

Rationale

Synod’s Commission on Doctrinal Review (CDR) received an appeal to the doctrinal review certification of an item published
under Bylaw 1.9.1.1 (d). Since the current bylaws do not deal specifically with this situation, a member of CDR requested an opinion from the Commission on Constitutional Matters (CCM).

The resultant opinion (CCM Op. 17-2869) stated that all material referenced in Bylaw 1.9.1.1 is subject to the appeal processes noted in Bylaw 3.9.3.2.1 (Appeals prior to publication) and Bylaw 3.9.3.2.2 (Appeals after publication). Since pre-publication appeal is explicitly mentioned in Bylaw 1.9.2 (l), the commission has recommended that the bylaws make explicit that post-publication appeals are also to be directed to CDR.

Therefore be it

Resolved, That Bylaw 1.9.3 be added as follows:

**PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING**

1.9.3 After publication any challenge to material that is subject to doctrinal review, no matter which process is used as listed in Bylaw 1.9.2, shall be handled according to the procedure and criteria specified in Bylaw 3.9.3.2.2.

**D. PARTNER CHURCH BODY TRANSFER (COH 16-041)**

**Rationale**

Bylaws do not mention any procedure for transfer of individual members to or from partner churches (they do mention transfer of congregations in Bylaw 4.1.1.5). The practice has been not to require members who have transferred to a partner church, remained in good standing, and desire to transfer back, to go through reinstatement, so long as there is a procedure for transfer from the partner church body. That this is possible is not evident from existing bylaws.

Therefore be it

Resolved, That Bylaw 2.6.4 be added as follows:

**PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING**

2.6.4 Transfers of an individual member to or from the roster of a partner church shall be conducted according to the operating agreement established between the Synod and that partner church, and as further implemented in policies of the Council of Presidents. A former member of the Synod who applies for re-rostering with the Synod after transferring to a partner church shall, provided the member remained continuously in good standing on the roster of a partner church, and insofar as agreements and policies allow, be handled by transfer and shall not require reinstatement (Bylaw section 2.18).

**E. INTERIM PLACEMENT BY THE COUNCIL OF PRESIDENTS (COH 16-042)**

**Rationale**

The Council of Presidents of necessity conducts interim placements of church workers (placements between its regular meetings). Placement is a bylaw-assigned duty of the Council, so the delegation of such a responsibility to a committee is questionable. On this account, the practice has been for the full council to ratify the placements that occurred in the interim prior to the meeting. This raises the question of what would happen if ratification failed of being granted. It would be best to allow explicitly in the bylaws regarding placement for interim placement authority to be delegated.

Therefore be it

Resolved, That Bylaw 3.10.1.3 be amended as follows:

**PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING**

3.10.1.3 The Council of Presidents shall serve as the Board of Assignments of the Synod. It shall assign first calls to candidates for the offices of ordained and commissioned ministers and handle or assist with placement of other professional church workers. The Council may in its policies delegate authority for interim placement (between its regular meetings) to a committee of its own members or the chairman of that committee.

**F. CLARIFICATION OF BOARD MEMBERSHIP LANGUAGE (COH 16-046)**

**Rationale**

The Commission on Constitutional Matters noted in its Sept. 14–15, 2018, meeting (Op. 17-2808A) that there is a potential unclarity in the language of Bylaw 3.10.6.2, regarding the membership of college and university boards of regents, referring the matter to the Commission on Handbook:

The commission notes, for the attention of … the Commission on Handbook, one potential issue in relation to the language of advisory [board] members. Synod’s bylaws specify that boards of regents, like other governing boards “of the Synod,” have members “elected and appointed as otherwise prescribed in these Bylaws [of the Synod]” (Bylaw 3.2.2.1). While Bylaw 3.10.6.2 treats ostensibly only of voting members, Synod’s bylaws make no provision for addition of advisory members to governing boards. While boards may have many advisors, the language of board membership has important consequences (e.g., Bylaw 1.5.1’s requirement that board members be members of member congregations, and Bylaw 3.10.6.5’s requirement that boards not commingle authority with bodies containing non-board members.) Likewise, the commission has identified other instances of officers and staff of agencies being regarded as advisory members of the boards they serve, despite the absolute prohibition of Bylaw 1.5.1.1, which does not distinguish voting from advisory membership. This commission refers this issue to the Commission on Handbook for clarification.

It is proposed that the inference from Bylaw 3.2.2.1—that the total membership of these boards is established by existing provisions of the Synod Bylaws, and that the boards are not free to add non-voting members as they desire (though they may appoint advisors and committees involving non-members, etc., as otherwise provided)—be more clearly embodied in the language of Bylaw 3.10.6.2 and other bylaws evidencing similar unclarity, as follows.

Therefore be it

Resolved, That Bylaws 3.3.4.1, 3.7.1.3, 3.9.2.1, 3.10.5.2, and 3.10.6.2 be amended as follows:

**PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING**

3.3.4.1 The Board of Directors shall consist of no more than 16 voting members, 15 of them voting, as follows:

… The First Vice-President of the Synod shall be the nonvoting member.

3.7.1.3 The Board of Trustees of Concordia Plans and the Board of Directors of Concordia Plan Services shall consist of 16 voting members. The 15 voting members shall be appointed by the Board of Directors of the Synod. The Chief Financial Officer of the Synod shall be the nonvoting member. Voting members shall be appointed to three-year terms, which shall not exceed four terms in a successive period. The 15 voting members shall include:

…

3.9.2.1 The Commission on Constitutional Matters shall consist of six voting members, all voting.
To Add Bylaw 3.3.4.10 to Clarify Access by the Board of Directors to Information of Synod Agencies

WHEREAS, The Board of Directors of the Synod has oversight responsibilities over all of the property of the Synod under Article XI E of the Constitution; and
WHEREAS, It is necessary for the Board of Directors to have accurate and complete information when carrying out its responsibilities to the Synod; and
WHEREAS, There have been circumstances in which the Board of Directors has faced challenges when attempting to obtain accurate and complete information and this has hindered the Board of Directors’ efforts to carry out its responsibilities to the Synod; and
WHEREAS, The Board of Directors desires to fulfill its responsibilities to the Synod in an efficient and effective manner so that the overall coordination of the Synod affairs can be accomplished, and so that the Synod in convention also is fully informed of the Synod’s affairs and when taking action in convention; therefore be it
Resolved, That the Board of Directors memorialize the 2019 convention of the Synod, upon the above rationale, to add Bylaw 3.3.4.10 as follows:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

3.3.4.10 To carry out its obligations under Article XI E of the Constitution and these Bylaws, the Board of Directors may obtain from any agency of the Synod all records and other information relating to property of the Synod, the financial records and legal affairs of the agency of the Synod, and other operations relating to the agency of the Synod, except records or information that the agency of the Synod is legally prohibited under applicable state or federal law from providing to the Board of Directors. All agencies of the Synod shall cooperate fully with the Board of Directors when responding to requests to provide records and information.

LCMS Board of Directors

To Amend Synod Bylaw 3.4.1.3 (e)

WHEREAS, As the Chief Financial Officer of Synod is required to serve on many governing boards of Synod entities; and
WHEREAS, These boards may schedule their meetings in a manner that overlaps with other board’s meetings making it impossible for the Chief Financial Officer to satisfy the requirements of Bylaw 3.4.1.3 (e); therefore be it
Resolved, That Bylaw 3.4.1.3 (e) be revised as follows:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

3.4.1.3 The Chief Financial Officer also serves as the Treasurer of the corporation and shall

(e) personally or by way of a representative serve as a nonvoting member of the governing boards of the Concordia University System, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod Foundation, The Lutheran Church Extension Fund—Missouri Synod, the Concordia Plans, Concordia Plan Services, and Concordia Publishing House, and on the investment committee of the Concordia Plans and Concordia Plan Services;

Commission on Handbook

Messiah
Sartell, MN

To Amend Bylaws to Change the Board of Directors’ Means of Representation on Synodwide Corporate Entities Boards of Directors

WHEREAS, The Chief Financial Officer (CFO) currently is required by Bylaw 3.4.1.3 (e), among others, to serve “as a nonvoting member of the governing boards of the Concordia University System, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod Foundation, The Lutheran Church Extension Fund—Missouri Synod, the Concordia Plans, Concordia Plan Services, and Concordia Publishing House, and on the investment committee of the Concordia Plans and Concordia Plan Services” (Bylaw 3.4.1.3[e]); and
WHEREAS, Attendance and meaningful participation in so many corporate boards, along with several others not listed, could be expected to consume the majority of the CFO’s time and energy, leaving, humanly speaking, only a diminished capacity for other aspects of the office; and
WHEREAS, The CFO is charged not only with the task of serving on entity boards, but with important roles of analyzing, planning, guiding, monitoring, and reporting on the financial and stewardship aspects of corporate Synod and Synod-at-large—these roles demanding an increased proportion of time and effort in periods of demographic and economic change; and
WHEREAS, Already in 2010 the Synod convention called for an evaluation of “all assets, taking action to assure that they are being expected to use effectively to carry out the Synod’s mission and ministry” (2010 Res. 4-02, Proceedings, 119) and for the CFO to annually use “widely available means … to state the financial position of the Synod in a format easily understood by persons unfamiliar with financial terminology” (2010 Res. 4-03, Proceedings, 120), and these tasks continue to demand heightened time and attention; and
WHEREAS, The Synodwide corporate entities today operate with a much greater degree of operational independence, reducing the necessity of direct, personal, and continuous participation of the CFO of the Synod; and

WHEREAS, The oversight (Bylaws 1.2.1 [o] and 3.3.4.4-6; Constitution Article XI E 2) and coordination (Bylaw 3.3.4.3) roles of the Board of Directors of the Synod, on behalf of the convention (Bylaw 3.3.4), could, in the board’s estimation, be better exercised if the CFO’s board attendance responsibility could be shared with others, while maintaining regular documentary reporting by the entities and the board’s authority to make inquiries and expect response; and

WHEREAS, A suitable model for such an approach may be identified in the President’s authority to “personally or by way of a representative have the option to attend all meetings of all commissions (except the Commission on Constitutional Matters), the boards of all synodwide corporate entities, and the Board of Trustees—Concordia Plans (Board of Directors—Concordia Plan Services), including executive sessions (the President or his representative already serves as a voting member of the mission boards and serves as a voting member of the Board of Directors of the Synod and the Board of Directors of Concordia Publishing House” (Bylaw 3.3.1.3 [d]); and

WHEREAS, Such an approach could free the CFO from a significant primary responsibility, allowing more time for the analytic, strategic, and reporting work that has become increasingly important for the long-term financial well-being of corporate and broader Synod; therefore be it

Resolved, That Bylaw 3.3.4.6 be amended by the addition of subparagraph (d) as follows:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

Reports and Overtures

3.3.4.6 The Board of Directors shall exercise general oversight over the operations and activities of the synodwide corporate entities, the Concordia Plans, and Concordia Plan Services as required of it in the Constitution of the Synod and specified in these Bylaws.

…

(d) The board shall have the right to designate a representative (by default, the Chief Financial Officer) to attend, as a non-voting member, all meetings of the boards of the Concordia University System, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod Foundation, The Lutheran Church Extension Fund—Missouri Synod, the Concordia Plans, Concordia Plan Services, and Concordia Publishing House, and on the investment committee of the Concordia Plans and Concordia Plan Services;

…

3.6.6.3 The Board of Directors of Concordia University System shall be composed of nine voting members and four nonvoting members …:

…

Nonvoting Advisory Members:

…

2. The Chief Financial Officer of the Synod—representative designated by the Board of Directors of the Synod

…

3.6.5.2.1 The Board of Trustees of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod Foundation shall consist of:

…

5. The Chief Financial Officer of the Synod—representative designated by the Board of Directors of the Synod as a nonvoting member

…

3.6.4.3 The board of directors for the Lutheran Church Extension Fund—Missouri Synod shall consist of:

…

3. The Chief Financial Officer of the Synod—representative designated by the Board of Directors of the Synod shall also be a nonvoting member of the board.

3.7.1.3 The Board of Trustees of Concordia Plans and the Board of Directors of Concordia Plan Services shall consist of 15 voting members appointed by the Board of Directors of the Synod. The Chief Financial Officer of the Synod—representative designated by the Board of Directors of the Synod shall be a nonvoting member.

…

3.6.3.1 Concordia Publishing House … shall be operated by a board of directors consisting of:

…

5. The Synod’s Chief Financial Officer—representative designated by the Board of Directors of the Synod, who will be a nonvoting member and be it finally

Resolved, That where the Chief Financial Officer presently serves on other boards and commissions of agencies of the Synod, the Chief Financial Officer have the option of sending a designee.

LCMS Board of Directors

Ov. 9-45

To Amend Bylaw 3.7.1 to Clarify the Commencement Date for Members of the Board of Trustees—Concordia Plans/Board of Directors—Concordia Plan Services and Eliminate Obsolete Provisions

WHEREAS, Bylaw 3.7.1.3 does not specify when newly appointed members of the Board of Trustees—Concordia Plans (BOT—CP)/Board of Directors—Concordia Plan Services (BOD—CPS) begin service, thereby creating uncertainty, so such specificity should be added; and
WHEREAS, The Pension Plan for Pastors and Teachers (PPPT) was established in 1937 by The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS); and

WHEREAS, The Concordia Retirement Plan (CRP) began in 1965 as the then-new retirement plan established by the Synod; and

WHEREAS, In 1965 the 46th Regular Convention of the Synod resolved that the PPPT be integrated with the CRP if permissible; and

WHEREAS, No new participants have entered the PPPT since 1964; and

WHEREAS, The Protecting Americans from Tax Hikes Act was enacted in late 2015, which for the first time allowed the merger of the PPPT into the CRP; and

WHEREAS, The Synod Board of Directors approved the merger of the PPPT into the CRP, and this merger was effective December 31, 2017; and

WHEREAS, The merger of the PPPT into the CRP means that legally the PPPT no longer exists, with the assets and obligations of the PPPT being absorbed into the CRP; and

WHEREAS, Now obsolete references to the PPPT in Bylaw 3.7.1 should be eliminated; and

WHEREAS, Requirements in Bylaw 3.7.1 that each of the Concordia Plans are to be published “in booklet form” have been made obsolete by technological advances; and

WHEREAS, Each of the Concordia Plans is available online and Concordia Plan Services (CPS) will print copies of the Concordia Plans upon request, but to produce significant cost savings annually it is desired that the requirements to publish the Concordia Plans “in booklet form” be eliminated; and

WHEREAS, In Bylaw 3.7.1.4 (c) the reference to “Synod’s policies governing trust funds” is obsolete and inaccurate with respect to the Concordia Plans, as Resolution 12-12 of the 1981 Synod convention eliminated the Board of Trustees of Trust Funds (formerly responsible for drafting said policies) and transferred its employee benefit plan investment responsibilities to the Board of Managers—Worker Benefit Plans, the predecessor to the BOT—CP/BOD—CPS; and

WHEREAS, Such policies have not been maintained for, or applicable to, the Concordia Plans, apparently as a result of Res. 12-12; and

WHEREAS, Per Bylaw 3.7.1, the BOT—CP/BOD—CPS is appointed by the Synod Board of Directors (BOD), and includes the Chief Financial Officer of the Synod and laypersons “experienced in the management of benefit plan investments,” and is authorized to “make investment decisions at its own discretion,” and has been so appointed, comprised, and authorized since 1981; and

WHEREAS, Per applicable Bylaws, the BOT—CP/BOD—CPS operates under the oversight of the Synod BOD and CPS is accountable to the Synod for all of its actions, negating the need for such policies and the reference to such in Bylaw 3.7.1.4 (c); and

WHEREAS, The following proposed amendments to Bylaw 3.7.1 were reported to the Synod BOD at its November 2018 meeting, with input prior thereto from the Secretary of the Synod; and

WHEREAS, At its November 2018 meeting, a resolution was adopted by the BOT—CP/BOD—CPS to request the 2019 Synod convention to amend Bylaws 3.7.1.1–4 as described hereafter; therefore be it

Resolved, That Bylaw 3.7.1.1 be amended as follows:  

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

The Concordia Plans

3.7.1.1 Concordia Plan Services is responsible for managing the benefit plans/trusts of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, including the Concordia Retirement Plan, Concordia Disability and Survivor Plan, Concordia Health Plan, and Concordia Retirement Savings Plan, and Pension Plan for Pastors and Teachers, each of which is a separate trust operated under trust laws but collectively known as the Concordia Plans.

(a) The “Concordia Retirement Plan for Ministers of Religion and Lay Workers of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, Its Member Congregations, Controlled Organizations, and Affiliated Agencies” is the retirement plan adopted by the Board of Directors of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod pursuant to Res. 10-02 of the 45th convention of the Synod, as such plan has been heretofore or may hereafter be amended. The text of the plan, as amended from time to time, shall be published in booklet form under the supervision of the Board of Trustees—Concordia Plans.

(b) The “Concordia Health Plan for Ministers of Religion and Lay Workers of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, Its Member Congregations, Controlled Organizations, and Affiliated Agencies” is the health plan adopted by the Board of Directors of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod pursuant to Res. 10-02 of the 45th convention of the Synod, as such plan has been heretofore or may hereafter be amended. The text of the plan, as amended from time to time, shall be published in booklet form under the supervision of the Board of Trustees—Concordia Plans.

(c) The “Concordia Disability and Survivor Plan for Ministers of Religion and Lay Workers of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, Its Member Congregations, Controlled Organizations, and Affiliated Agencies” is the plan adopted by the Board of Directors of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod in accord with directives adopted at a prior convention of the Synod (Res. 10-02 of the 45th convention) to provide for surviving widows and children those benefits previously provided under the Concordia Retirement Plan. This Plan also provides for disability benefits for such workers. The text of the plan, as amended from time to time, shall be published in booklet form under the supervision of the Board of Trustees—Concordia Plans.

(d) The “Pension Plan for Pastors and Teachers of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod” is the pension plan established by the Synod as of Oct. 1, 1932, as heretofore or hereafter amended. The text of the plan, as amended from time to time, shall be published in booklet form under the supervision of the Board of Trustees—Concordia Plans.

(e) The “Concordia Retirement Savings Plan” is the tax-sheltered annuity retirement savings plan adopted by the Board of Directors in August 2003, effective October 1, 2005, as such plan has been heretofore or may hereafter be amended. The text of the plan, as amended from time to time, shall be published in booklet form under the supervision of the Board of Trustees—Concordia Plans.

(f) The lists of ordained and commissioned ministers appearing on the official roster of the Synod shall be official lists for the purpose of the Board of Trustees—Concordia Plans.

(g) National inter-Lutheran entities will be eligible to be “employers” under the Concordia Plans of the Synod unless the policies of such a plan preclude such organization as an eligible employer.

and be it further

Resolved, That Bylaw 3.7.1.3 be amended as follows:
PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

3.7.1.3 The Board of Trustees of Concordia Plans and the Board of Directors of Concordia Plan Services shall consist of 15 voting members appointed by the Board of Directors of the Synod. All newly appointed members shall begin service on the September 1 following appointment, except with an appointment to fill a vacancy, when service shall begin on the first day of the month in which the next regular meeting of members occurs after appointment. The Chief Financial Officer of the Synod shall be a nonvoting member. Voting members shall be appointed to three-year terms, which shall not exceed four terms in a successive period. The 15 voting members shall include:

1. Two ministers of religion—ordained
2. One minister of religion—commissioned
3. Twelve laypersons, at least five of whom shall be experienced in the design of employee benefit plans, at least five of whom shall be experienced in the management of benefit plan investments, and at least one of whom shall have significant financial/audit experience.

and be it finally
Resolved, That Bylaw 3.7.1.4 be amended as follows:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

3.7.1.4 The Board of Trustees—Concordia Plans and the Board of Directors—Concordia Plan Services shall have all general and incidental powers and duties appropriate for the performance of their functions. In addition, the Board of Trustees—Concordia Plans will have the powers and duties set forth in the respective plans, as amended from time to time. It may create or amend any plan within limits established by the Board of Directors of the Synod so long as such changes are reported to the Synod’s Board of Directors, since such power is finally vested in the Synod’s Board of Directors.

(a) When the Board of Trustees—Concordia Plans is carrying out its functions with respect to any such separate plan, it may be designated as the board of trustees of such separate plan.

(b) When the board is carrying out its functions generally, it may be designated as the “Board of Trustees—Concordia Plans of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.”

(c) The board shall, at its own discretion, make investment decisions at its own discretion, or select and utilize investment counsel and select agents and actuaries, in accordance with the Synod’s policies governing the investment of trust funds.

(d) It shall design for the Board of Directors of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod’s approval benefit plans which compare favorably with other similar plans while meeting unique needs of the full-time church workers in the Synod.

(e) It shall provide copies of all audit reports to the Board of Directors of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod for information, advice, and counsel.

(f) It shall settle disputes which arise in enrollment in the plans and the payment of claims and benefits.

Board of Trustees/Directors
Concordia Plans / Concordia Plan Services

Ov. 9-46
To Raise the Number of Official Conferences

WHEREAS, Synod Bylaw 4.8.2 (b) limits the number of major sections of worker conferences to four; and

WHEREAS, There are geographic regions in the Synod that cover vast areas that make this limit of four impractical; and

WHEREAS, The spirit of this bylaw is to provide opportunity for workers to regularly gather for study and for fellowship; and

Resolved, That Bylaw 4.8.2 (b) be amended as follows:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

4.8.2 Official conferences for all ordained and commissioned ministers on the respective rosters of the Synod shall meet, if possible, in plenary sessions at least once each year.

(b) Such conferences may meet more frequently in major sections (not more than fourfive sections) whose geographical boundaries shall be established by the district in convention.

Board of Directors
Northwest District
10. Ecclesiastical Supervision and Dispute Resolution

REPORTS
R1, R1.1, R1.2, R5, R6–6.2, R9, R58, R61, R62

OVERTURES

Ov. 10-01
To Clarify the Relationship of the Synod to its Members Affirming Article VII

WHEREAS, Article VII of the Constitution of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod states regarding the relation between Synod and its members:

1. In its relation to its members the Synod is not an ecclesiastical government exercising legislative or coercive powers, and with respect to the individual congregation’s right of self-government it is but an advisory body. Accordingly, no resolution of the Synod imposing anything upon the individual congregation is of binding force if it is not in accordance with the Word of God or if it appears to be inexpedient as far as the condition of a congregation is concerned.

2. Membership of a congregation in the Synod gives the Synod no equity in the property of the congregation.

and

WHEREAS, From the very beginning of our beloved Synod and her districts, clear and correct instructions regarding our Synod’s constitution and the relationship between the Synod and its individual congregations were presented as follows (in the text of a constitutional amendment submitted by the 1847 Synod convention for congregational ratification, in Der Lutheraner ed. C.F.W. Walther, vol. 3 no. 25, 136): “Since the Synod is only an advisory body with respect to self-governance of the individual congregation, no resolution of the former, if it imposes anything upon the individual congregation, has binding authority on the latter. So such a Synod resolution can only be binding if the individual congregation has examined and willingly accepted and affirmed it through an official resolution of the congregation. If a congregation finds the resolution is not in keeping with God’s Word or is not appropriate to its situation, she has the right to reject the resolution”; and

WHEREAS, From the very beginning our national framework has always been advisory. The Synod was structured as a visitational, exhortational, and encouraging partnership focused on the bonds of unity from our firm and loving connection to the Word of God. The relation of the Synod to its members is described in its constitution, Article VII, as the Augsburg Confession describes the Church in its Article VII: “Our churches teach that one holy Church is to remain forever. The Church is the congregation of saints (Ps. 149:1) in which the Gospel is purely taught and the Sacraments are correctly administered. For the true unity of the Church it is enough to agree about the doctrine of the Gospel and the administration of the Sacraments. It is not necessary that human traditions, that is, rites or ceremonies instituted by men, should be the same everywhere. As Paul says, ‘One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and father of all,’ etc. (Eph. 4:5–6)”;

WHEREAS, C.F.W. Walther at the First Iowa District convention, beginning August 20, 1879, delivered his essay on the Duties of an Evangelical Lutheran Synod, where in Thesis II(a) he clearly and correctly defines the relation of the Synod to its members as follows: the Synod should not assume a dictatorial role over its congregations but only help them in an advisory way; and

WHEREAS, We are commanded by scripture to “love our neighbor as ourselves” (Matt. 22:39) “and to be his witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8), yes even into our own communities; and

WHEREAS, It is the local congregation that can best determine the course and effectiveness of their ministry as they follow their scriptural mandates quoted above; therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Northwest District in convention memorialize the Synod in convention to affirm and uphold this resolution and to re-affirm Const. Art. VII as true and right, clearly and correctly defining the role of Synod and her districts in relation to the individual congregations as advisory in nature, recognizing the congregation’s right to self-governance and that the Synod and her districts may not impose anything upon an individual congregation that is inexpedient to the ministry of that congregation.

Northwest District

Ov. 10-02
To Amend LCMS Constitution Article XI

WHEREAS, The 2016 Synod convention in its Resolution 12-14, “Regarding the Right of an Accuser to Appeal When a District President or President of the Synod Fails to Act or Declines to Suspend” (2016 Proceedings, p. 233) and according to Bylaw 7.1.2, deferred its rightful legislative authority and directed the Board of Directors of the Synod to draft bylaws to resolve a situation where, it claimed, “portions of the expulsion processes of the Synod’s Bylaws are presently in an unconstitutional state with respect to Constitution Article XI B 1–3 and Const. Art. XIII 2”; and

WHEREAS, Res. 12-14 resolves, “That a consultation process shall be designed by mutual agreement of the chairman of the Council of Presidents and the President of the Synod, by which the Council of Presidents shall have the opportunity to offer to the Secretary of the Synod input as to proposed mechanisms to implement expulsion processes consistent with and not contradicting the Constitution of the Synod”; and

WHEREAS, Res. 12-14 states that the Commission on Constitutional Matters (CCM) in Op. 16-2791 “has indicated portions of the expulsion processes of Synod’s Bylaws are presently in an unconstitutional state with respect to Const. Art. XI B 1–3 and Const. Art. XIII 2,” such bylaws having been adopted by the Synod in the 2004 convention, acting as the “principal legislative assembly” (Bylaw 3.1.1) of the Synod; and

WHEREAS, In 2004, those Bylaws were regarded as constitutional by the CCM prior to the convention, as they fulfilled their function to “examine all reports, overtures, and resolutions of the Synod asking for amendments to the Constitution and Bylaws of the Synod or which in any manner affect the Constitution and Bylaws, to determine their agreement in content and language with the Constitution and Bylaws of the Synod” (Bylaw 3.9.2.1) and to “be represented at the meetings of national convention floor committees considering constitution and bylaw matters to ensure that they are
in accord with the Constitution, Bylaws, and resolutions of the Synod” (Bylaw 3.9.2.2.2); and

WHEREAS, At no time since the adoption of the Bylaw provisions in 2004 until CCM Op. 16-2791 had a commission opined that these expulsion process bylaws were in an unconstitutional state; and

WHEREAS, The 2004 CCM and the 2016 CCM clearly provided different opinions on the constitutional state of the Bylaws with respect to Const. Art XI B 1–3 and Const. Art XIII 2 prior to the 2016 Synod convention; and

WHEREAS, The Board of Directors, acting under Bylaw 7.1.2 and at the express direction of the 2016 Res. 12-14, in May 2017 adopted changes to the Bylaws regarding ecclesiastical supervision; and

WHEREAS, The Secretary of the Synod, on Nov. 3, 2017, published an article on the Synod’s website, recognizing the need to “relieve any confusion regarding these changes”; and

WHEREAS, The Constitution defines clearly, precisely, and fully the supervisory role of the President of Synod, wherein the President of Synod has the “the supervision regarding the doctrine and the administration of: a. All officers of the Synod; b. All such as are employed by the Synod; c. The individual districts of the Synod; d. All district presidents” (Const. Art. XI B 1); and

WHEREAS, The President of Synod, as ecclesiastical supervisor, may assume “only such rights as have been expressly conferred” (Const. Art. XI A 1); and

WHEREAS, The duties are expressly conferred to be “... the power to advise, admonish, and reprove ... conscientiously use all means at his command to promote and maintain unity of doctrine and practice in all the districts of the Synod” (Const. Art. XI B 3); and

WHEREAS, Synod’s Constitution expressly confers upon the district presidents the duty “to exercise supervision over” their district’s ministers and to “visit and ... hold investigations in the congregations” (Const. Art. XII 7), including the district presidents being empowered “to suspend from membership” their district’s ministers (Const. Art. XII 8); and

WHEREAS, Prior to the year 2016 and CCM Op. 16-2791, numerous CCM opinions (to wit Ag. 1970, Op. 15-2750; 13-2669; 10-2581; 03-2354; 03-2338A and C) interpreted the President of Synod’s scope of ecclesiastical supervision not to include supervision over a district’s individual members and congregations as expressed in Const. Art. XII 7–8; and

WHEREAS, C. F. W. Walther, the first President of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod said that “We have merely the power to advise one another, that we have only the power of the Word and of convincing” (1848 Presidential address to the Synod) [See Const. Art. XI B 4 below in the third resolve]; and

WHEREAS, The Bylaws define ecclesiastical supervision as including “… visitation, evangelical encouragement and support, care, protection, counsel, advice, admonition, and when necessary, appropriate disciplinary measures ...” (Bylaw 1.2.1 [i]); therefore be it

Resolved, That it is this assembly’s formal declaration that such supervision should take place in relationship between the supervisor and the supervised, as close to the supervised as possible, and not carried out by a centralized authority; and be it further

Resolved, That it is this assembly’s formal declaration that this was and is the intent of the Constitution; and be it further

Resolved, That for the sake of clarification, Const. Art. XI be amended as follows:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

Article XI Rights and Duties of Officers

A. In General

1. The officers of the Synod must assume only such rights as have been expressly conferred upon them by the Synod, and in everything pertaining to their rights and the performance of their duties they are responsible to the Synod.

2. The Synod at all times has the right to call its officers to account and, if circumstances require it, to remove them from office in accordance with Christian procedure.

3. The Synod reserves the right to abolish any office it has established.

4. Conventions of the Synod and of the districts have the right, in extraordinary cases, to elect a chairman other than the regular presiding officer.

B. Duties of the President

1. The President has the ecclesiastical supervision as limited in Article XI B 2 regarding the doctrine and the administration of: a. All officers of the corporate Synod; b. All such individual members of the Synod as are employed by the corporate Synod; c. The individual assembled corporate districts of the Synod in convention and through the ecclesiastical supervision of the district president when not in convention; d. All district presidents.

2. The President shall have no ecclesiastical supervision over individual and congregational members of the Synod except as listed in Article XI B 1 a–d and shall have the power to exercise disciplinary, suspension, and expulsion provisions only of district presidents (Article XI B 1 d).

3. The President has the administrative supervision of all such as are employed by Corporate Synod.

4. It is the President’s duty to see to it that all the aforementioned act in accordance with the Synod’s Constitution, to admonish all who in any way depart from it, and, if such admonition is not heeded, to report such cases to the Synod.

5. The President has and always shall have and be limited to the power to advise, admonish, and reprove. He shall conscientiously use all these means at his command to promote and maintain unity of doctrine and practice in all the districts of the Synod. Such means and authority shall be limited to those rights and duties specifically laid out in this article (Article XI A, B).

6. The President shall see to it that the resolutions of the Synod are carried out.

7. When the Synod meets in convention the President shall give a report of his administration. He shall conduct the sessions of the convention so that all things are done in a Christian manner and in accord with the Constitution and Bylaws of the Synod.

8. It is the duty of the President, or an officer of the Synod appointed by the President, to be present at the meetings of the districts, to advise them, and to report at the next session of the Synod.

9. The President shall perform all additional duties assigned to him by the Bylaws or by special resolution of the Synod in convention, provided that such duties do not conflict with other provisions of the Constitution.

10. When matters arise between meetings of the Synod in convention which are of such a nature that action thereon cannot be delayed until the next convention, the President is authorized
to submit them to a written vote of the member congregations of the Synod only after full and complete information regarding the matter has been sent to member congregations by presidential letter and has been published in an official periodical of the Synod. If such matters are related to the business affairs of the Synod, such a vote shall be conducted only after the President has consulted with the synodical Board of Directors. In all cases at least one-fourth of the member congregations must register their vote and be it further

Resolved, That when the amendment process is complete, the Bylaws of the Synod regarding ecclesiastical supervision (Bylaw sections 2.14–2.17) be returned to the wording of the 2013 Handbook of the Synod to bring the Bylaws into harmony with this Constitutional amendment (Bylaw 3.9.4.2 [b]); and be it finally

Resolved, That the Texas District in convention memorialize the Synod in convention with this resolution.

Christ, Juniata, NE; Christ, Scituate, MA; Concordia, Lakewood, CO; Our Savior, Rehoboth Beach, DE; Trinity, Houston, TX; Trinity, Roselle, IL; Zion, Mayer, MN; Texas District; Board of Directors, Pacific Southwest District

Ov. 10-03

To Address Ecclesiastical Supervision

WHEREAS, The Constitution of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod indicates that “The officers of the Synod must assume only such rights as have been expressly conferred upon them by the Synod” (Article XI A1); and

WHEREAS, The Synod defines the scope of the ecclesiastical supervision of the President of Synod as the officers of the Synod, all such as are employed by the Synod, the individual districts of the Synod, and all district presidents (Art. XI B1); and

WHEREAS, The Constitution of the Synod defines the scope of the ecclesiastical supervision of district presidents as the ordained and commissioned ministers of their respective districts (Art. XII 7) and entrusts them with the authority to suspend ordained and commissioned members from membership in the Synod (Art. XII 8); and

WHEREAS, The Synod has viewed itself as primarily congregational in nature (Art. VII 1; Bylaw 1.3.3); and

WHEREAS, The Commission on Constitutional Matters (CCM) has affirmed the sole responsibility of the district presidents for ecclesiastical supervision of members in their respective districts (CCM Opinions Ag. 1970; Op. 13-2669); and

WHEREAS, The 2004 Synod convention amended the bylaws to eliminate the possibility of an accuser appealing a complaint that has been terminated by a district president to the Praesidium of the Synod; and

WHEREAS, The amendment recognized the nonhierarchical nature of the Synod and affirmed that complaints and accusations are best handled locally by those most familiar with the circumstances and individuals involved, in keeping with the constitutional authority given only to the district presidents; and

WHEREAS, The Synod’s Board of Directors (BOD), following the 66th Regular Convention held in Milwaukee, amended the bylaws to provide opportunity for an accuser to appeal to the President of the Synod if the district president does not suspend a member of Synod; and

WHEREAS, The original resolution proposing the bylaw amendment was never adopted by the 66th Regular Convention and was replaced by Resolution 12-14; and

WHEREAS, The adopted Res. 12-14 stated the expectation that the Council of Presidents (COP) would be included in subsequent discussions; and

WHEREAS, There was no consensus among the COP, and in fact, there was significant disagreement among the COP’s members; and

WHEREAS, The Synod’s BOD approved Bylaw 2.14.5 without consultation or conversation with the COP irrespective of Res. 12-14; and

WHEREAS, Bylaw 2.14.5 is in direct conflict with the Constitution of the Synod, Art. XI B1; and

WHEREAS, Permitting an appeal of an accusation or complaint against a member of the Synod after a district president has terminated the matter undermines the ecclesiastical supervision of the district president, tends to centralize authority for ecclesiastical supervision in the President of the Synod, and requires the accused to defend him/herself twice (first, before their district president, and second, before the President of Synod), thus placing the accused in double jeopardy; and

WHEREAS, The necessity of the accused potentially having to defend more than once costs an immense amount of time, energy, emotion, and money—resources that are best expended upon mission and ministry opportunities; and

WHEREAS, Misuse of an appeal by an accuser to the President of the Synod, at best, might be described as mischief and, at worst, described as harassment, defaming the good name of a member of the Synod and bearing false witness; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Circuit 15 Pastors Conference of the Southeastern District petition the 2019 convention of the Synod to remove Bylaw 2.14.5; and be it further

Resolved, That the 2019 convention of the Synod reaffirm the prior method of ecclesiastical supervision that was adopted in the Bylaw changes enacted by the 2004 convention of the Synod

Grace, Concord, NC; Circuit 15, Southeastern District

Ov. 10-04

To Strengthen the Pastoral Relationship between District Presidents and Those under Their Ecclesiastical Supervision

WHEREAS, The Synod Bylaw 4.4.5 says, “Each district president, in accordance with the Constitution of the Synod, shall supervise the doctrine, the life, and the official administration on the part of the ordained or commissioned ministers who are members through his district or are subject to his ecclesiastical supervision, and shall inquire into the prevailing spiritual conditions of the congregations of his district”; and

WHEREAS, A district president faces obstacles (such as geography, time constraints, and other administrative duties) to supervising the doctrine and life of rostered workers, particularly when there is a large number of congregations in his district; and

WHEREAS, The district presidents would be better able to perform their supervisory duties and more effectively provide

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pastoral care to all of their rostered workers, if districts consisted of
a more manageable number of congregations; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Montana District memorialize the 2019
Synod convention to direct the President of the Synod to appoint a
task force to develop a plan to resize the districts of the Synod, such
that no district would consist of more than 100 congregations, and
propose it to the next Synod convention.

Montana District

Ov. 10-05

To Reorganize The Lutheran Church—Missouri
Synod into Smaller Districts

WHEREAS, The Wyoming District of the Lutheran Church—
Missouri Synod (LCMS) consists of 60 congregations and has
observed great success in having visitations conducted by the
district president to every congregation each triennium; and

WHEREAS, Visitations is a priority in the LCMS, and has been
made so even more by the work of Floor Committee #7—Structure
and Ecclesiastical Matters of the 2013 Synod convention in
Resolutions 7-01A, 7-02A, and 7-03A; and

WHEREAS, 2010 Res. 8-07 and the 2013 Res. 7-04A both
expressed interest in considering reorganization of districts; and

WHEREAS, A smaller district containing fewer congregations is
preferable to make a visitation by the district president possible each
triennium; therefore be it

Resolved, That the High Plains Circuit of the Wyoming District
memorialize the 2019 Synod convention to begin the process
leading to the formation of smaller districts consisting of 35–70
congregations by creating a Redistricting Task Force; and be it
further

Resolved, That the Redistricting Task Force be composed of the
President of the Synod, First Vice-President, the Secretary of the
Synod, one district president from a district containing over 200
congregations, one district president from a district containing in
between 100–199 congregations, one district president from a non-
geographic district and two district presidents from districts
containing fewer than 100 congregations, a member of the Synod
Board of Directors, and up to three others chosen by the members
of the task force for their expertise in organizational restructuring,
financial matters, or legal matters; and be it further

Resolved, That district presidents in this new arrangement be
required to actively serve as called pastors in a congregation;
and be it further

Resolved, That the Board of Directors in consultation with the
Council of Presidents be given the task of reorganizing the Council
of Presidents tasks and duties to accommodate having a greater
number of district presidents and make suggestions for changes to
bylaws to the 2022 Synod convention; and be it finally

Resolved, That the Redistricting Task Force propose
the boundaries and guidelines for the re-districting of the LCMS to the
2022 Synod convention.

High Plains Circuit
Wyoming District

Ov. 10-06

To Permit Access by Rostered Workers and
Formerly Rostered Workers to Own Personnel
Records

WHEREAS, The districts of the Synod maintain personnel records
on rostered workers; and

WHEREAS, The purpose of record keeping is to benefit the church
as a whole and to ensure that all things are done decently and in
order; and

WHEREAS, It is appropriate that rostered workers and formerly
rostered workers be able to review their personnel records to ensure
that they are accurate or that they are up to date; therefore be it

Resolved, That all currently or formerly rostered workers of the
Synod shall have the right from time to time and upon reasonable
advance notice to inspect their personnel records maintained by the
district within which they currently have or last had a call or
wherever such records are kept and maintained; and be it further

Resolved, That if any currently or formerly rostered worker
disputes information therein contained and is unable to resolve such
dispute by fraternal consultation within 60 days after request to the
district maintaining the records, then as his or her sole remedy he or
she may institute a dispute resolution complaint against the district
president of such district with respect thereto; and be it finally

Resolved, That the Commission on Handbook modify relevant
bylaws accordingly.

Redeemer
Fort Wayne, IN

Ov. 10-07

To Affirm the Advisory Role of District Presidents
in Their Service of Calling Congregations of the
LCMS

WHEREAS, The district presidents of The Lutheran Church—
Missouri Synod (LCMS) and their staff provide a valuable service
in guiding and assisting congregations in the process of calling a
new pastor, and an important part of that process is providing
congregations with information on potential pastoral candidates at
their request; and

WHEREAS, According to LCMS polity, district presidents and
their staff serve the congregations of their district in an advisory
capacity; and

WHEREAS, Many congregations are not aware of their rights and
privileges with regard to the sacred task of calling a pastor; therefore
be it

Resolved, That all congregations of the LCMS be reminded that
district presidents and their staff serve in an advisory role only when
it comes to the calling of pastors; and be it further

Resolved, That calling congregations of the LCMS, at the start
of their call process, be reminded by their district presidents of their
rights and privileges to call any rostered pastor in the LCMS,
excluding those who have limited calls or are under discipline.

Circuit 15
Southeastern District

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To Allow the Use of the Term Bishop in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

WHEREAS, The biblical term of an overseer (ἐπίσκοπος; Greek: ἐπίσκοπος) is usually translated as bishop (1 Tim. 3:1; Acts 20:28); and

WHEREAS, This biblical word is used in the New Testament to describe the pastoral office (1 Peter 5:2–4) but has been used in Church history since the early days of the Church Fathers to recognize one set in rightful authority of oversight of congregations and pastors; and

WHEREAS, The term bishop is used by most Evangelical Lutheran church bodies, including those in communion with The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) in the International Lutheran Council, worldwide; and

WHEREAS, Even in American secular society the term bishop is understood to imply a position of responsibility of oversight, even while the office is to be exercised with humility, Lutheran confessional loyalty, and great care; and

WHEREAS, The term president in our LCMS may be confused with simple administrative authority positions in government, business, and service organizations (Rotary, Kiwanis, etc.) instead of its use among us as an office of ecclesiastical responsibility and oversight for the good of Christ’s Church on earth; and

WHEREAS, Both our Synod and her districts operate in both the kingdom of the right and the kingdom of the left; and

WHEREAS, The term president was selected in 1847 in the founding documents of the German Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio, and Other States (LCMS) in reaction to the misuse of the term bishop during the 1839 Saxon immigration under Martin Stephan, but now that history is far in the past; and

WHEREAS, The districts of the LCMS are not confederated to form the Synod but rather are Synod in any given place, meaning the district president is in the stead of the Synod President; and

WHEREAS, The term bishop is practically used by many of our congregations and pastors across the LCMS in deferring to those serving as district presidents and indeed has had long usage in several synod districts, some for decades (English, Atlantic, New Jersey, etc.); and

WHEREAS, The term president is rightly used in LCMS auxiliaries such as the Lutheran Women’s Missionary League (LWML), but often this presents terminology problems at LWML conventions when talking about district presidents who are bishops in distinction from women district presidents who are LWML district presidents; and

WHEREAS, The term bishop is more reflective of the responsibilities and respect for the office held by a pastor elected to such a position in his synod district and could be beneficial in the Synod’s public witness for Christ in North America, including through the new Lutheran Center for Religious Liberty office; therefore be it

Resolved, That the English District memorialize Synod to make this nomenclature change at the 2019 convention of the LCMS to allow the use of the term bishop alongside president for both the Synod President and the district presidents, so that they be called Synod President/Bishop and District President/Bishop respectively; and be it finally

Resolved, That the Handbook (Constitution and Bylaws) reflect this change in terminology.

Missouri District

To Memorialize Synod to Revise Eligibility to Serve as Circuit Visitor

WHEREAS, Synod Bylaw 4.3.1 states “…a circuit visitor for each circuit established by the district shall be elected from the clergy roster of the district …”; and

WHEREAS, Synod Bylaw 5.2.2 (d) restricts eligibility to serve as a circuit visitor to “… nominated pastors serving congregations and emeriti pastors …”; and

WHEREAS, Many rostered pastors of the Synod serving in capacities other than parish ministry are well qualified but deemed ineligible by Synod Bylaw 5.2.2 (d) to serve as circuit visitor, therefore be it

Resolved, That the Missouri District in convention memorialize the Synod in convention to revise Bylaw 5.2.2 (d) as follows:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

5.2.2 The circuit visitor shall hold his position by virtue of his selection by the circuit forum and ratification by the district convention.

…

(d) All nominated pastors serving congregations and emeriti pastors who are on the clergy roster of the district whose names were nominated prior to the day of the circuit forum shall be eligible for election in accordance with section 4.3 of these Bylaws.

…

Missouri District

To Encourage Proper Pastoral Oversight in Administration of Lord’s Supper through Visitation of Ecclesiastical Supervisors

WHEREAS, The Synod has consistently encouraged its pastors and congregations to exercise communion practices which are faithful to the Holy Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions; and

WHEREAS, Pastors are called to be faithful in their stewardship of the mysteries of God (1 Cor. 4:1–2; 2 Tim. 4:3–4) and need encouragement to carry out this important stewardship; and

WHEREAS, St. Paul admonishes the Corinthians against eating the Lord’s Supper with divisions among them (1 Cor. 11:17–18); and

WHEREAS, The Synod in convention has commended for study the 1999 report of the Commission on Theology and Church Relations, “Admission to the Lord’s Supper: Basics of Biblical and Confessional Teaching”; and

WHEREAS, Concerns about communion practice still come before district and Synod conventions for resolution; and

WHEREAS, The practice of inviting all baptized believers who merely affirm the real presence, while neglecting to address the necessity of unity of confession, is not consistent with the biblical and confessional position of the Synod; and
WHEREAS, The Constitution and Bylaws of the Synod direct the district president to “supervise the doctrine, the life, and the official administration on the part of the ordained or commissioned ministers who are members of his district or are subject to his ecclesiastical supervision” (Bylaw 4.4.5); and

WHEREAS, The Constitution and Bylaws of the Synod make provision for official congregational visits by the respective district president or his representative; and

WHEREAS, In the Bylaws of the Synod it states that the district president is to “seek to bring about to the greatest possible degree the achievement of the Synod’s objectives as expressed in Article III of its Constitution” (Bylaw 4.4.4 [b]); and

WHEREAS, The Constitution of the Synod states that the district president is to “[s]ee to it that all resolutions of the Synod which concern the districts are made known to the districts and are carried out by them.” (Constitution Article XII 9 a; along with Bylaw 1.3.6); and

WHEREAS, The Bylaws of the Synod state that “He shall conduct his official visits in an evangelical manner” (Bylaw 4.4.4 [c]) and “come to the pastor as a brotherly advisor” (Bylaw 4.4.4 [d]); therefore be it

Resolved, That during this next triennium the district president (or his representative) address each district congregation’s administration of the Lord’s Supper in his official visitations, spending time in the Word of God and studying the Synod’s position on “closed communion”; and be it further

Resolved, That those practices which are not in harmony with the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions be addressed fraternally and evangelically with the goal of bringing about harmony and consistent practice especially as that applies to the Lord’s Supper; and be it further

Resolved, That the district president shall report in writing the progress of his visitation regarding proper communion practices to the district no less than 90 days before the 2021 district convention; and be it finally

Resolved, That the South Wisconsin District present this resolution as an overture to the 2019 Synod convention requesting that during the next triennium, each district president (or his representative) be directed to address each congregation’s administration of the Lord’s Supper in his official visitations, spending time in the Word of God and studying the Synod’s position on “closed communion,” to the end that those practices which are not in harmony with the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions be addressed fraternally and evangelically with the goal of bringing about harmony and consistent practice especially as that applies to the Lord’s Supper; that the President of the Synod be exhorted to see that the district presidents apply themselves faithfully to this task in accord with his responsibility as detailed in Const. Art. XI B, especially paragraphs 2, 3, and 4; and that in accord with Const. Art. XII 9 a–b, each district president shall report the progress of this visitation regarding proper communion practices to the President of the Synod no less than 90 days before the 2022 Synod convention so that the President of the Synod can report regarding this visitation resolution at that convention.

South Wisconsin District

Ov. 10-11
To Address the Election of the Chairman for the Council of Presidents,
The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

WHEREAS, The Council of Presidents (COP) met April 20–26, 2018, and elected their chairman; and

WHEREAS, Twenty-seven districts had not yet had their district convention, and of those that did some had elected new men to serve as district presidents, thus allowing outgoing and retiring officers to elect a chairman for the incoming newly elected officers; and

WHEREAS, The COP is defined in the following manner in Bylaw 1.2.1 (g) as “Council: An officially established group elected or appointed as an advisory body. The council of the Synod is the Council of Presidents.”; and

WHEREAS, The purpose and function of the COP is essential to proper ecclesiastical supervision of the members of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) as defined in Bylaws 3.10.1.2 and 3.10.1.3:

3.10.1.2 The Council of Presidents shall provide opportunity for the President of the Synod to advise and counsel his representatives in the regions and districts and for the regional vice-presidents and district presidents in turn to give counsel to the President. The Council of Presidents also exists to provide opportunity for the presidents of the districts and the Praesidium of the Synod to counsel with one another on matters regarding the doctrine and administration of the Synod, its regions, and its districts, and to edify and support one another in the work they share.

3.10.1.3 The Council of Presidents shall serve as the Board of Assignments of the Synod. It shall assign first calls to candidates for the offices of ordained and commissioned ministers and handle or assist with placement of other professional church workers.

WHEREAS, The chairman of the COP establishes the agenda for the council, and chairs the meetings of the council; and

WHEREAS, The chairman of the COP represents the council in various disciplinary and reconciliation processes, as in Bylaw 2.13.3 and Bylaw sections 2.14, 2.15, 2.16, 2.17, etc.; and

WHEREAS, The chairman of the COP represents the council in the prior approval process for potential seminary professors, as well as theological professors at our Concordia Universities (see Bylaw 3.10.5.7.3; 3.10.6.7.3); and

WHEREAS, The chairman of COP is elected by a majority vote of the COP; and

WHEREAS, Regarding the election of a chairman of such a council, Robert’s Rules of Order states that, “A board that is not an instrumentality of a parent assembly or membership body is organized as any deliberative assembly, with a chairman or president, a secretary, and other officers if the authority under which the board is constituted makes no other provision as to how the officers are to be determined. A board that is to elect its officers should meet for this purpose as soon possible after the selection of its members.” (Robert’s Rules of Order, 11th Edition [Da Capo Press] p. 484, ll. 14–22); and

WHEREAS, Regarding the election of a chairman of such a council, Robert’s Rules of Order also states under “Effect of Partial Change of Board Membership” that “if the board is one that elects its own officers or appoints standing committees, it chooses new officers and committees as soon as the new board members have
taken up their duties, just as if the entire board membership had changed.” (Robert’s Rules of Order, p. 489, ll. 10–14); and

WHEREAS, All other boards and commissions of the LCMS follow the guidelines spelled out in Robert’s Rules of Order, as do district conventions and boards of directors; and

WHEREAS, The chairman of COP represents the members of the council in so many and varied important matters as noted above; and

WHEREAS, It is clear from Robert’s Rules of Order that, since some district conventions had been held but others had not (the last LCMS district convention met July 8–10, 2018, to elect its president), electing a chair for the COP in the April 2018 COP meeting disenfranchised those newly elected district presidents from selecting their own chairman; and

WHEREAS, Some newly elected district presidents had the privilege of voting for the chairman, while others not (at least one of whom was elected [at the time of the meeting] but would not assume the office until June 2018), resulting again in some disenfranchised; and

WHEREAS, The new Council of Presidents (2018–2021) met for the first time in September 2018; and

WHEREAS, Synod Bylaw 1.5.3.1 reads “At the initial meeting after election or appointment, all mission boards, commissions, and governing boards shall organize themselves as to chair, vice-chair, secretary, and other committees and positions as necessary or mandated by these Bylaws and shall conduct business in accordance with accepted parliamentary rules”; therefore be it

Resolved, That the South Wisconsin District in convention recommend to the LCMS in convention 2019 that Bylaw 1.5.3.1 be amended as follows:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

Organization

1.5.3.1 At the initial meeting after election or appointment, all mission boards, commissions, and governing boards shall organize themselves as to chair, vice-chair, secretary, and other committees and positions as necessary or mandated by these Bylaws and shall conduct business in accordance with accepted parliamentary rules. The Council of Presidents shall, after the round of district conventions is completed, comply with this bylaw.

South Wisconsin District

Ov. 10-12

To Align the Voting Practice of the Council of Presidents

with the LCMS Constitution and Bylaws

WHEREAS, Bylaw 3.10.1 of the Synod has determined that “The President, the First Vice-President, the regional vice-presidents, and the district presidents shall comprise the Council of Presidents”; and

WHEREAS, Bylaw 3.3.2 of the Synod has determined that “The vice-presidents shall be elected advisors of the President and, upon the President’s request or as provided by the Synod, shall assist him in discharging his responsibilities or represent him”; and

WHEREAS, Bylaw 3.10.1.2 of the Synod has determined that among the several reasons for existence, “The Council of Presidents shall provide opportunity for the President of the Synod to advise and counsel his representatives in the regions and districts and for the regional vice-presidents and district presidents in turn to give counsel to the President”; and

WHEREAS, The vice-presidents are not ecclesiastical supervisors under the Constitution. Rather, Article XI B 1 of the Constitution of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod limits ecclesiastical supervision to “the President of the Synod, who has the supervision regarding the doctrine and the administration of a. All officers of the Synod; b. All such as are employed by the Synod; c. The individual districts of the Synod; and d. All district presidents” and according to Constitution Article XII 7, to the district presidents of the Synod who have “moreover, especially…supervision over the doctrine, life, and administration of office of the ordained and commissioned ministers of their district and acquaint themselves with the religious conditions of the congregations of their district”; and

WHEREAS, The vice-presidents are not ecclesiastical supervisors under the Constitution. Rather, Bylaw 1.2.1 (i), in harmony with the Constitution, defines ecclesiastical supervision as “The responsibility, primarily of the President of the Synod and district presidents, to supervise on behalf of the Synod the doctrine, life, and administration of its members, officers, and agencies… Further, those constitutional articles [such as Articles XI B 1 and XII 7] and Bylaws [such as Bylaws 3.1.1.1.1 and 4.4.4–4.4.6] pertaining to ecclesiastical supervision shall determine the full definition of ecclesiastical supervision”; and

WHEREAS, The vice-presidents of the Synod have not been given the authority and responsibility of ecclesiastical supervision in the Constitution of the Synod; and

WHEREAS, Constitution Article XI A 1 states, “The officers of the Synod must assume only such rights as have been expressly conferred upon them by the Synod, and in everything pertaining to their rights and the performance of their duties they are responsible to the Synod”; and

WHEREAS, The Commission of Constitutional Matters ruled in opinion CCM 16-2791 (June 20, 2016), “The term Praesidium does not occur in the Constitution of the Synod. Article XI C lists the duties of the vice-presidents: “The vice-presidents shall upon request of the President represent him in all his functions.” The Constitution does not assign ecclesiastical supervision to the office of vice-president or to the Praesidium as a whole, but to the President and the district presidents (Constitution Art. XI B 1–3; XII 6–8); therefore be it

Resolved, That Bylaw 3.10.1 be revised to include additional Bylaw 3.10.1.5 as follows:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

3.10 Other Councils, Committees, and Boards

A. Council of Presidents

3.10.1 The President, the First Vice-President, the regional vice-presidents, and the district presidents shall comprise the Council of Presidents.

3.10.1.5 The vice-presidents shall be elected advisors of the President and shall not have a vote on issues before the Council of Presidents, but shall serve in their advisory capacity. The power to vote on any agenda item, when a vote on the Council of Presidents is required, is limited to the President and district presidents (Council of Presidents) only, with the vice-presidents having no vote and limited to the “advice and counsel” role.

Board of Directors
Pacific Southwest District
Ov. 10-13

To Improve the Transparency of the Council of Presidents by Making its Minutes Public

WHEREAS, The Roman Catholic Church in America in modern times has created great harm to the Church and its members by its hierarchical secrecy that enabled it to hide and protect abusive priests that committed the vilest of crimes; and

WHEREAS, The scandal created by that secrecy has not only harmed the faith and bodies of many Christians but has also hindered evangelism and the work of the Gospel in the United States since the public is prone to thinking that all organized religion keeps secret documents from its own members and the public; and

WHEREAS, The Council of Presidents (COP) is directed by Bylaw 3.10.1.2 to counsel with one another on matters regarding the doctrine and administration of the Synod, its regions, and its districts, and to edify and support one another in the work they share; and

WHEREAS, The Synod has also entrusted significant additional responsibilities to the COP, including matters of adjudication, candidate placement, and roster status; and

WHEREAS, The COP currently maintains a handbook of procedures that assists it in its work; and

WHEREAS, The handbook of procedures is not currently a public document, even though it and the related activities of the COP relating to church workers have significant impact on every member of the Synod (both called church workers and the congregations they serve); and

WHEREAS, Similar procedural documents used by districts of the Synod and by circuit visitors are not uniformly available; and

WHEREAS, It is right that the work of God’s kingdom be done with openness toward all, to enable rostered members of the Synod to understand the standards and procedures by which they are to be measured and judged, and to enable congregations to understand the processes by which they are to walk together; and

WHEREAS, God’s Word says in 2 Cor. 6:11–12, “We have spoken freely to you Corinthians; our heart is wide open. You are not restricted by us, but you are restricted in your own affections”;

and

WHEREAS, Insofar as Christian love permits, it is right that the processes of the Synod and its districts be made known to those to whom they apply; therefore be it

Resolved, That the minutes of each meeting of the COP, redacted only as privacy requires for matters relating to specific persons, be provided to the Secretary of the Synod no later than the conclusion of the next regular meeting of the COP, to be made available upon request to any member of the Synod; and be it further

Resolved, That the Commission on Handbook modify relevant bylaws accordingly.

Resoleved
Reedeemer
Fort Wayne, IN

Ov. 10-14

To Make the Policies of the Council of Presidents Public

WHEREAS, The Roman Catholic Church in America in modern times has created great harm to the Church and its members by its hierarchical secrecy that enabled it to hide and protect abusive priests that committed the most vile of crimes; and

WHEREAS, The scandal created by that secrecy has not only harmed the faith and bodies of many Christians but has also hindered evangelism and the work of the Gospel in the United States since the public is prone to thinking that all organized religion keeps secret documents from its own members and the public; and

WHEREAS, The Council of Presidents (COP) is directed by Bylaw 3.10.1.2 to counsel with one another on matters regarding the doctrine and administration of the Synod, its regions, and its districts, and to edify and support one another in the work they share; and

WHEREAS, The Synod has also entrusted significant additional responsibilities to the COP, including matters of adjudication, candidate placement, and roster status; and

WHEREAS, The Synod currently maintains a handbook of procedures that assists it in its work; and

WHEREAS, The handbook of procedures is not currently a public document, even though it and the related activities of the COP relating to church workers have significant impact on every member of the Synod (both called church workers and the congregations they serve); and

WHEREAS, Similar procedural documents used by districts of the Synod and by circuit visitors are not uniformly available; and

WHEREAS, It is right that the work of God’s kingdom be done with openness toward all, to enable rostered members of the Synod to understand the standards and procedures by which they are to be measured and judged, and to enable congregations to understand the processes by which they are to walk together; and

WHEREAS, God’s Word says in 2 Cor. 6:11–12, “We have spoken freely to you Corinthians; our heart is wide open. You are not restricted by us, but you are restricted in your own affections”;

and

WHEREAS, Insofar as Christian love permits, it is right that the processes of the Synod and its districts be made known to those to whom they apply; therefore be it

Resolved, That the COP’s handbook of procedures and any similar procedural documents now or hereafter in use for the general administration or governance of the COP, each district, and circuit visitors be provided to the Commission on Handbook (COH) to be made publicly available; and be it further

Resolved, That the COH modify relevant bylaws accordingly.

Resoleved
Reedeemer
Fort Wayne, IN

Ov. 10-15

To Direct the Council of Presidents to Include Questions concerning Genesis 1–2, the Six-Day Creation, and the Teaching of Evolutionary Theory as Fact in the Self-Evaluation Tool (SET), Used for Pastors and Pastoral Candidates, and in the Commissioned Minister Information Form (CMIF)

WHEREAS, The Synod in convention in 1932 found it necessary to adopt A Brief Statement of the Doctrinal Position of the Missouri Synod, to deal with some errors that had arisen that were not
specifically addressed by our Lutheran Confessions (lcms.org/about/beliefs/doctrine/brief-statement-of-lcms-doctrinal-position); and

WHEREAS, A Brief Statement contains concise articles concerning the Holy Scriptures and the Biblical creation account, among other things, yet this statement is not part of the confessional subscription of our pastors; (ibid., Paragraph 5, under “Creation”); and

WHEREAS, The teaching of evolution, theistic evolution, day-age theory, and death before sin, and other such errors as factual and true, continues to pose a significant threat to the integrity of our confession and the spiritual welfare of our people; and

WHEREAS, The current Council of Presidents (COP) Self-Evaluation Tool (SETs) includes questions about the charismatic movement, worship practices, and other similar issues that remain contentious in our Synod; and

WHEREAS, The current COP Commissioned Minister Information Form (CMIF) includes other doctrinal questions of concern in our Synod; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Montana District in convention memorialize the Synod in convention to direct the COP to include clarifying questions in the Self-Evaluation Tool (SET) of pastors and pastoral candidates of the Synod so that the congregations, schools and other calling institutions of the Synod can clearly hear what they confess regarding creation and the teaching of different evolutionary theories; and be it further

Resolved, That the Montana District in convention memorialize the Synod in convention to direct the COP to include clarifying questions in the Commissioned Minister Information Form (CMIF) so that the congregations, schools and other calling institutions of the Synod can clearly hear what commissioned ministers confess regarding creation and the teaching of different evolutionary theories.

Montana District

Ov. 10-16
To Overrule Board of Directors’ May 2017 Resolution Regarding 2016 Resolution 12-14 and Bylaw 7.1.2

WHEREAS, The Board of Directors, acting under Bylaw 7.1.2 and at the express direction of the 2016 Res. 12-14, in May of 2017 adopted changes to the Bylaws of the Synod regarding ecclesiastical supervision; and

WHEREAS, The Constitution of Synod defines clearly, precisely, and fully the supervisory role of the President of Synod, wherein the President of Synod has “the supervision regarding the doctrine and the administration of: a. All officers of the Synod; b. All such as are employed by the Synod; c. The individual district of the Synod; d. All district presidents” (Const. Art. XI B 1); and

WHEREAS, The President of Synod, as ecclesiastical supervisor, is limited in the exercise of said power, assuming “only such rights as have been expressly conferred” (Const. Art. XI A 1: “The officers of the Synod must assume only such rights as have been expressly conferred upon them by the Synod, and in everything pertaining to their rights and the performance of their duties, they are responsible to the Synod.”), which are expressly conferred to be “the power to advise, admonish, and reprove … conscientiously use all means at his command to promote and maintain unity of doctrine and practice in all the districts of the Synod” (Const. Art. XI B 3); and

WHEREAS, Synod’s Constitution expressly confers upon the district presidents the duty to “exercise supervision over” their district’s ministers and to “visit and, … hold investigations in the congregations” (Const. Art. XII 7), including the district presidents being empowered “to suspend from membership” their district’s ministers (Const. Art. XII 8); and

WHEREAS, Prior to the year 2016 and CCM Op. 16-2791, numerous CCM opinions [to wit Ag. 1970, Op.15-2750, 13-2669, 10-2581, 03-2354, and 03-2338, A and C] interpreted the President of Synod’s scope of ecclesiastical supervision does not include supervision over individual workers and congregations expressed in Const. Art. XII 7–8; therefore be it

Resolved, That Synod in convention, as the ultimate legislative body of Synod (Bylaw 1.4.1: “The delegate convention of the Synod is the legislative assembly that ultimately legislates policy, program, and financial direction to carry on the Synod’s work on behalf of and in support of the member congregations. It reserves to itself the right to give direction to all officers and agencies of the Synod. Consequently, all officers and agencies, unless otherwise specified in the Bylaws, shall be accountable to the Synod for all their actions, and any concerns regarding the decisions of such officers or agencies may be brought to the attention of the Synod in convention for appropriate action. This provision does not apply to specific member appeals to the Concordia Plans, which has its own appeal process for such cases.”) considers the following to be steps to the resolution of this matter; and be it further

Resolved, That changes, subsequent to 2016 Res. 12-14, made under Bylaw section 2.14 “Expulsion of Congregations or Individuals from Membership in the Synod,” under Bylaw section 2.15 “Expulsion of a District President or Officer from Membership in the Synod,” under Bylaw section 2.16 “Expulsion of a President of Synod from Membership in the Synod,” and under Bylaw section 2.17 “Expulsion of Individuals from Membership in the Synod as a Result of Sexual Misconduct or Criminal Behavior,” as a result of 2016 Res. 12-14, as adopted by the Board of Directors (May 2017) be overruled and of no effect; and be it further

Resolved, That a Blue Ribbon Task Force of seven members, with four members appointed by the 35 district presidents, three of whom shall be district presidents, and three members appointed by
the President of Synod, be authorized and formed to conduct a thorough study of the ecclesiastical supervision matter, including Const. Arts. III, VI, VII (studies of Articles VI and VII were previously resolved by the 2010 convention), XI, XII, and XIII, and make recommendations to the 2022 Synod convention, including any necessary revisions of constitutional provisions, with the purpose of evangelically resolving the current difficulty and division among us; and be it finally

Resolved, That the convention pray for peace and harmony in the Synod as it moves forward in mission and ministry.

Rocky Mountain District

Ov. 10-17

To Overrule Board of Directors’ May 2017 Resolution Regarding 2016 Resolution 12-14 and Bylaw 7.1.2

WHEREAS, The 2016 convention of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, in its Resolution 12-14 “Regarding the Right of an Accuser to Appeal When a District President or President of the Synod Fails to Act or Declines to Suspend,” and according to Bylaw 7.1.2 deferred its rightful and legislative authority regarding the development of ecclesiastical supervision bylaws with respect to and inclusion of the President of the Synod, the decision given to Synod’s Board of Directors; and

WHEREAS, Res. 12-14, in accordance with Bylaw 7.1.2, set forth a specific path and timeline for consideration, negotiation, and counsel to be conducted with the Council of Presidents, with any proposed amendments to the bylaws to be reviewed by the Commission on Constitutional Matters (CCM) and the Commission on Handbook; and

WHEREAS, Res. 12-14 states that the CCM in Op. 16-2791 “has indicated portions of the expulsion processes of Synod’s Bylaws are presently in an unconstitutional state with respect to Constitution Articles XI B 1-3 and Const. Art. XIII 2”; and

WHEREAS, The Board of Directors, acting under Bylaw 7.1.2 and at the express direction of the 2016 Res. 12-14, in May of 2017 adopted changes to the Bylaws of the Synod regarding ecclesiastical supervision; and

WHEREAS, The Constitution of Synod defines clearly, precisely, and fully the supervisory role of the President of Synod, wherein the President of Synod has “the supervision regarding the doctrine and the administration of: a. All officers of the Synod; b. All such as are employed by the Synod; c. The individual districts of the Synod; d. All district presidents” (Const. Art. XI B 1); and

WHEREAS, The President of Synod, as ecclesiastical supervisor, is limited in the exercise of said power, assuming “only such rights as have been expressly conferred” (Const. Art. XI A 1: “The officers of the Synod must assume only such rights as have been expressly conferred upon them by the Synod, and in everything pertaining to their rights and the performance of their duties, they are responsible to the Synod.”), which are expressly conferred to be “the power to advise, admonish, and reprove … conscientiously use all means at his command to promote and maintain unity of doctrine and practice in all the districts of the Synod” (Const. Art. XI B 3); and

WHEREAS, Synod’s Constitution expressly confers upon the district presidents the duty to “exercise supervision over” their district’s ministers and to “visit and … hold investigations in the congregations” (Const. Art. XII 7), including the district presidents being empowered “to suspend from membership” their district’s ministers (Const. Art. XII 8); and

WHEREAS, Prior to the year 2016 and CCM Op. 16-2791, numerous CCM opinions (to wit Ag. 1970, Op.15-2750, 13-2669, 10-2581, 03-2354, and 03-2338, A and C) interpreted the President of Synod’s scope of ecclesiastical supervision to not include supervision over individual workers and congregations expressed in Const. Art. XII 7–8; therefore be it

Resolved, That Synod in convention, as the ultimate legislative body of Synod (Bylaw 1.4.1: “The delegate convention of the Synod is the legislative assembly that ultimately legislates policy, program, and financial direction to carry on the Synod’s work on behalf of and in support of the member congregations. It reserves to itself the right to give direction to all officers and agencies of the Synod. Consequently, all officers and agencies, unless otherwise specified in the Bylaws, shall be accountable to the Synod for all their actions, and any concerns regarding the decisions of such officers or agencies may be brought to the attention of the Synod in convention for appropriate action. This provision does not apply to specific member appeals to the Concordia Plans, which has its own appeal process for such cases.”) considers the following to be steps to the resolution of this matter; and be it further

Resolved, That Synod in convention, including the district presidents, three of whom shall be district presidents, and three members appointed by the President of Synod, be authorized and formed to conduct a thorough study of the ecclesiastical supervision matter, including Const. Arts. III, VI, VII (studies of Articles VI and VII were previously resolved by the 2010 convention), XI, XII, and XIII, and make recommendations to the 2022 Synod convention, including any necessary revisions of constitutional provisions, with the purpose of evangelically resolving the current difficulty and division among us; and be it further

Resolved, That Blue Ribbon Task Force of seven members, with four members appointed by the 35 district presidents, three of whom shall be district presidents, and three members appointed by the President of Synod, be authorized and formed to conduct a thorough study of the ecclesiastical supervision matter, including Const. Arts. III, VI, VII (studies of Articles VI and VII were previously resolved by the 2010 convention), XI, XII, and XIII, and make recommendations to the 2022 Synod convention, including any necessary revisions of constitutional provisions, with the purpose of evangelically resolving the current difficulty and division among us; and be it further

Resolved, That all relevant CCM opinions such as 16-2791, 16-2793, 16-2794, 16-2797, 17-2822, 17-2828 and 17-2836 be placed in abeyance until the 2022 convention and any necessary action at the 2022 convention; and be it further

Resolved, That Synod in convention affirm the powers provided to the President of Synod “to advise, admonish and reprove … conscientiously use all means at his command to promote and maintain unity of doctrine and practice in all the districts of the Synod” do not include direct supervisory responsibilities of individual members of Synod, since such individuals are under the ecclesiastical supervision of district presidents; and be it finally
Resolved, That the convention pray for peace and harmony in the Synod as it moves forward in mission and ministry.
Zion, Kalamazoo, MI; Eastern District; Pacific Southwest District

Ov. 10-18

**To Overrule Board of Directors’ May 2017 Resolution Regarding 2016 Resolution 12-14 and Bylaw 7.1.2**

WHEREAS, The 2016 convention of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, in its Resolution 12-14 “Regarding the Right of an Accuser to Appeal When a District President or President of the Synod Fails to Act or Declines to Suspend,” and according to Bylaw 7.1.2, deferred its rightful and legislative authority regarding the development of ecclesiastical supervision bylaws with respect to and inclusion of the President of the Synod, the decision given to Synod’s Board of Directors; and

WHEREAS, Res. 12-14, in accordance with Bylaw 7.1.2, set forth a specific path and timeline for consideration, negotiation and counsel to be conducted with the Council of Presidents, with any proposed amendments to the Bylaws to be reviewed by the Commission on Constitutional Matters (CCM) and the Commission on Handbook; and

WHEREAS, Res. 12-14 states that the CCM in Op. 16–2791 “has indicated portions of the expulsion processes of Synod’s Bylaws are presently in an unconstitutional state with respect to Constitution Articles XI B 1–3 and Const. Art. XIII 2”; and

WHEREAS, The Board of Directors, acting under Bylaw 7.1.2 and at the express direction of 2016 Res. 12-14, in May of 2017 adopted changes to the Bylaws of the Synod regarding ecclesiastical supervision; and

WHEREAS, The Constitution of Synod defines clearly, precisely, and fully the supervisory role of the President of Synod, wherein the President of Synod has “the supervision regarding the doctrine and the administration of: a. All officers of the Synod; b. All such as are employed by the Synod; c. The individual districts of the Synod; d. All district presidents” (Const. Art. XI B 1); and

WHEREAS, The President of Synod, as ecclesiastical supervisor, is limited in the exercise of said power, assuming “only such rights as have been expressly conferred” (Const. Art. XI A 1: “The officers of the Synod must assume only such rights as have been expressly conferred upon them by the Synod, and in everything pertaining to their rights and the performance of their duties, they are responsible to the Synod.”), which are expressly conferred to be “the power to advise, admonish, and reprove … conscientiously use all means at his command to promote and maintain unity of doctrine and practice in all the districts of the Synod” (Const. Art. XI B 3); and

WHEREAS, Synod’s Constitution expressly confers upon the district presidents the duty to “exercise supervision over” their district’s ministers and to “visit and, … hold investigations in the congregations” (Const. Art. XII 7), including the district presidents being empowered “to suspend from membership” their district’s ministers (Const. Art. XII 8); and

WHEREAS, Prior to the year 2016 and CCM Op. 16-2791, numerous CCM opinions (to wit Ag. 1970, Op.15-2750, 13-2669, 10-2581, 03-2354, and 03-2338, A and C) interpreted the President of Synod’s scope of ecclesiastical supervision to not include supervision over individual workers and congregations expressed in Const. Art. XII 7–8; therefore be it

Resolved, That Synod in convention, as the ultimate legislative body of Synod (Bylaw 1.4.1: “The delegate convention of the Synod is the legislative assembly that ultimately legislates policy, program, and financial direction to carry on the Synod’s work on behalf of and in support of the member congregations. It reserves to itself the right to give direction to all officers and agencies of the Synod. Consequently, all officers and agencies, unless otherwise specified in the Bylaws, shall be accountable to the Synod for all their actions, and any concerns regarding the decisions of such officers or agencies may be brought to the attention of the Synod in convention for appropriate action. This provision does not apply to specific member appeals to the Concordia Plans, which has its own appeal process for such cases.”) considers the following to be steps to the resolution of this matter; and be it further

Resolved, That changes, subsequent to 2016 Res. 12-14, made under Bylaw section 2.14 “Expulsion of Congregations or Individuals from Membership in the Synod,” under Bylaw section 2.15 “Expulsion of a District President or Officer from Membership in the Synod,” under Bylaw section 2.16 “Expulsion of a President of Synod from Membership in the Synod,” and under Bylaw section 2.17 “Expulsion of Individuals from Membership in the Synod as a Result of Sexual Misconduct or Criminal Behavior,” as a result of 2016 Res. 12-14, as adopted by the Board of Directors (May 2017) be overruled and of no effect; and be it further

Resolved, That Bylaw sections 2.14, 2.15, 2.16 and 2.17 be returned to and replaced by the same corresponding Bylaw sections as set forth in the 2013 Handbook; and be it further

Resolved, That a Blue Ribbon Task Force of seven members, with four members appointed by the 35 district presidents, three of whom shall be district presidents, and three members appointed by the President of Synod, and one member appointed by each LCMS seminary (Concordia Theological Seminary and Concordia Seminary) be authorized and formed to conduct a thorough study of the ecclesiastical supervision matter, including Const. Art. III, VI, VII (studies of Articles VI and VII were previously resolved by the 2010 convention), XI, XII, and XIII, and make recommendations to the 2022 Synod convention, including any necessary revisions of constitutional provisions, with the purpose of evangelically resolving the current difficulty and division among us; and be it further

Resolved, That all relevant CCM opinions such as 16-2791, 16-2793, 16-2794, 16-2797, 17-2822, 17-2828 and 17-2836 be placed in abeyance until the 2022 convention and any necessary action at the 2022 convention; and be it further

Resolved, That Synod in convention affirm the powers provided to the President of Synod “to advise, admonish and reprove … conscientiously use all means at his command to promote and maintain unity of doctrine and practice in all the districts of the Synod” do not include direct supervisory responsibilities of individual members of Synod, since such individuals are under the ecclesiastical supervision of district presidents; and be it finally

Resolved, That the convention pray for peace and harmony in the Synod as it moves forward in mission and ministry.

Atlantic District
Ov. 10-19

To Create an Ecclesiastical Supervision Task Force to Accomplish the Will and Spirit of Milwaukee Resolution 12-14

WHEREAS, Resolution 12-14 of the 2016 LCMS convention [adopted by a vote of Yes: 996; No: 67] directed that a consultation process regarding ecclesiastical supervision be accomplished by mutual agreement of the chairman of the Council of Presidents and the President of Synod, stating in part:

Resolved, That a consultation process shall be designed by mutual agreement of the chairman of the Council of Presidents and the President of the Synod, by which the Council of Presidents shall have the opportunity to offer to the Secretary of the Synod input as to proposed mechanisms to implement expulsion processes consistent with and not contradicting the Constitution of the Synod; and be it further

Resolved, That said consultation be accomplished within six months of the close of the 2016 Synod convention, unless extended by agreement of said chairman of the Council of Presidents and the President of the Synod (2016 Proceedings, p. 233);

and

WHEREAS, There is disagreement between the Synod President and the immediate past chair of the Council of Presidents, Rev. Ken Hennings, as well as other district presidents as to whether that consultation actually or effectively took place; and

WHEREAS, The Board of Directors, acting under Bylaw 7.1.2 and at the direction of 2016 Res. 12-14 in May of 2017, adopted changes to the Bylaws of Synod regarding ecclesiastical supervision; and

WHEREAS, Each resolved clause of 2016 Res. 12-14 was not accomplished before the action was taken by the Board of Directors; and

WHEREAS, Synod’s Constitution expressly confers upon the district presidents the duty to “exercise supervision over” their district’s ministers and to “visit and ... hold investigations in the congregations” (Constitution Article XII 7), including the district presidents being empowered “to suspend from membership” their district’s ministers (Const. Art. XII 8); and

WHEREAS, Prior to the year 2016 and CCM Op. 16-2791, numerous CCM opinions (to wit Ag. 1970, Op.15-2750; 13-2669; 10-2581; 03-2354; 03-2338A and 03-2338C) interpreted the President of Synod’s scope of ecclesiastical supervision not to include supervision over individual workers and congregations expressed in Const. Art. XII 7, 8; and

WHEREAS, Studies of Const. Art. VI and VII previously directed by the 2010 Synod convention have not been accomplished; therefore be it

Resolved, That Synod in convention, as the ultimate legislative body of Synod (Bylaw 1.4.1: “The delegate convention of the Synod is the legislative assembly that ultimately legislates policy, program, and financial direction to carry on the Synod’s work on behalf of and in support of the member congregations. It reserves to itself the right to give direction to all officers and agencies of the Synod. Consequently, all officers and agencies, unless otherwise specified in the Bylaws, shall be accountable to the Synod for all their actions, and any concerns regarding the decisions of such officers or agencies may be brought to the attention of the Synod in convention for appropriate action. This provision does not apply to specific member appeals to the Concordia Plans, which has its own appeal process for such cases.”) considers the following to be steps to the resolution of this matter; and be it further

Resolved, That changes, subsequent to 2016 Res. 12-14, made under Bylaw section 2.14 “Expulsion of Congregations or Individuals from Membership in the Synod”; under Bylaw section 2.15, “Expulsion of a District President or Officer from Membership in the Synod”; under Bylaw section 2.16, “Expulsion of a President of Synod from Membership in the Synod”; and under Bylaw section 2.17, “Expulsion of Individuals from Membership in the Synod as a Result of Sexual Misconduct or Criminal Behavior,” as a result of 2016 Res. 12-14, as adopted by the Board of Directors (May 2017) be overruled and of no effect; and be it further

Resolved, That Bylaw sections 2.14, 2.15, 2.16, and 2.17 be returned to and replaced by the same corresponding bylaws as set forth in the 2013 Handbook; and be it further

Resolved, That the 2019 Synod convention affirm the 2010 Synod convention’s direction for a study of Const. Art. VI and VII; and be it further

Resolved, That a blue ribbon task force of seven members, with four members appointed by the 35 district presidents, three of whom shall be district presidents, and three members appointed by the President of the Synod, be authorized and formed to conduct a thorough study of the ecclesiastical supervision matter, including Const. Arts. III, VI, VII (studies of Const. Art. VI and VII being previously resolved by the 2010 convention), XI, XII, and XIII, and to make recommendations to the 2022 Synod convention, including any necessary revisions of constitutional provisions, with the purpose of evangically resolving the current difficulty and division among us; and be it further

Resolved, That all relevant CCM opinions such as 16-2791, 16-2793, 16-2794, 16-2797, 17-2822, 17-2828 and 17-2836 be placed in abeyance until the 2022 convention and any necessary action at the 2022 convention; and be it further

Resolved, That Synod in convention affirm the powers provided to the Synod President “to advise, admonish, and reprove ... conscientiously use all means at his command to promote and maintain unity of doctrine and practice in all the districts of the Synod” do not include direct supervisory responsibilities of individual members of Synod, since such individuals are under the ecclesiastical supervision of district presidents; and be it finally

Resolved, That the convention pray for peace and harmony in the Synod as it moves forward in mission and ministry.

Trinity
Roselle, IL

Ov. 10-20

To Reverse the Synod Bylaw Changes Made by Synod Board of Directors Regarding Ecclesiastical Supervision

WHEREAS, The Constitution of the Synod states in Article XII 7 that “district presidents shall, moreover, especially exercise supervision over the doctrine, life, and administration of office of the ordained and commissioned ministers of their district ...” and in Const. Art. XII 8 that “District presidents are empowered to suspend from membership ordained and commissioned ministers for
WHEREAS, The Constitution of the Synod states regarding the President of Synod in Const. Art. XI A 1 regarding all of its officers, “The officers of the Synod must assume only such rights as have been expressly conferred upon them by the Synod ...”; and

WHEREAS, The Constitution of the Synod states in Const. Art. XI A 1 regarding all of its officers, “The officers of the Synod must assume only such rights as have been expressly conferred upon them by the Synod ...”; and

WHEREAS, The Constitution of the Synod states in Const. Art. XII 6. stating, “All officers of the districts have the same rights and duties as those outlined in this Constitution for the officers of the Synod but only insofar as these apply to the district and only within the boundaries of their districts”; and

WHEREAS, The decentralization of ecclesiastical authority is followed in the Synod Bylaws as well, such as in Bylaw 3.3.1.1 which states, “The President of the Synod has ecclesiastical supervision of all officers of the Synod and its agencies, the individual districts of the Synod, and all district presidents. ... (b) In the districts of the Synod, he shall carry out his ecclesiastical duties through the district’s president ...”; and

WHEREAS, Bylaws regarding the districts and district president likewise follow this pattern, such as in Bylaw 4.1.1.1 which states, “A district is the Synod itself performing the functions of the Synod,” Bylaw 4.4.2 which states, “The district president shall represent the Synod in his district,” and Bylaw 4.4.5 which states “Each district president, in accordance with the Constitution of the Synod, shall supervise the doctrine, the life, and the official administration on the on the part of the ordained or commissioned ministers who are members through his district or are subject to his ecclesiastical supervision”; and

WHEREAS, Pursuant to 2016 convention Resolution 12-14 the Board of Directors in May 2017 amended Bylaw sections 2.14, 2.15, 2.16, and 2.17 extending the ecclesiastical supervision of the Synod President to the level of individual members of the Synod within a district, in contradiction of the previously mentioned Constitution Articles and Bylaws of the Synod; and

WHEREAS, Bylaws changes by the Board of Directors are only allowed “In exceptional circumstances and upon the express direction of a convention of the Synod,” as per Bylaw 7.1.2. and primary responsibility for the Synod’s Bylaws and their amendment resides with the conventions of the Synod; and

WHEREAS, These bylaw changes made by the Board of Directors, in May 2017, pursuant to 2016 convention Res. 12-14 benefit the accuser in a dispute over doctrine and practice, allowing the accuser an additional avenue to appeal for suspension or expulsion of a member of the Synod when district level action has not led to formal proceedings to suspend or expel that individual member; and

WHEREAS, In these matters the church follows Matt. 18:15–16, for example Bylaw 2.14.4 (b) directs the district president to “proceed in the manner described in Matt. 18:15–16 as the required admonition in Article XIII of the Constitution, if applicable, continues to be carried out”; and

WHEREAS, Matt. 18:15–16 emphasizes winning the brother, “If he listens to you, you have gained your brother,” and emphasizes repeated action in order to bring the erring brother back to the fellowship before resorting to expulsion/excommunication in Matt. 18:17 and Jesus, in Matthew 18, offers no additional appeals for those interested in pressing for expulsion, rather his emphasis is on reconciliation and restoration; and

WHEREAS, The Constitution of the Synod states regarding “ecclesiastical supervision” in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod were “unconstitutional,” giving the accuser the right to appeal the decision of a district president when he fails to act or declines to suspend a worker’s membership in the Synod; and

WHEREAS, The Commission on Constitutional Matters (CCM) rendered Opinion 16-2791 the CCM brought forward Resolution 12-01A, “To Restore the Right of Accuser to Appeal When a District President Fails to Act or Declines to Suspend,” to the 2016 convention which was postponed indefinitely; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Northwest District memorialize the Synod in convention to reverse bylaw changes of the Board of Directors pursuant to 2016 Res. 12-14, and restore Bylaw sections 2.14, 2.15, 2.16 and 2.17 to the wording in the 2013 Handbook.

Northwest District

Ov. 10-21

To Rescind Commission on Constitutional Matters Opinion 16-2791

WHEREAS, The Commission on Constitutional Matters (CCM) rendered Opinion 16-2791 stating that then-current bylaws regarding “ecclesiastical supervision” in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod were “unconstitutional,” giving the accuser the right to appeal the decision of a district president when he fails to act or declines to suspend a worker’s membership in the Synod; and

WHEREAS, The CCM refused to accept the clear language of Constitution Article XI that does not give the Synod President the specific authority to suspend, where Article XII 8 gives specific authority to district presidents to suspend from membership ordained and commissioned ministers; and

WHEREAS, The Constitution Articles XI A 1 and XIV give no explicit constitutional authority to suspend or expel members, thus, the Bylaws of Synod cannot confer such a right to the President of Synod; and

WHEREAS, Upon the basis of Op. 16-2791 the CCM brought forward Resolution 12-01A, “To Restore the Right of Accuser to Appeal When a District President Fails to Act or Declines to Suspend,” to the 2016 convention which was postponed indefinitely; therefore be it

Resolved, That the CCM Op. 16-2791 is hereby rendered null and void; and be it further

Resolved, That the CCM Op. 16-2791 is hereby rendered null and void; and be it finally
Resolved, That the changes to the Bylaws authorized through Resolution 12-14, but based on this opinion, are also rendered null and void by Synod in convention in 2019.

Ov. 10-22

To Remove Synod Bylaw 2.14.5

WHEREAS, The Constitution of the Synod indicates: “The officers of the Synod must assume only such rights as have been expressly conferred upon them by the Synod” (Const. Art. XI A 1); and

WHEREAS, The Constitution of the Synod defines the scope of the ecclesiastical supervision of the President of the Synod as the officers of the Synod, all such as are employed by the Synod, the individual districts of the Synod, and all district presidents (Const. Art. XI B 1); and

WHEREAS, The Constitution of the Synod defines the scope of the ecclesiastical supervision of district presidents as the ordained and commissioned ministers of their districts (Const. Art. XII 7) and entrusts them with the power to suspend ordained and commissioned members from membership in the Synod (Const. Art. XII 8); and

WHEREAS, The Synod was created to be as primarily congregational in nature (Const. Art. VII 1; Bylaw 1.3.3); and

WHEREAS, The Commission on Constitutional Matters (CCM) has previously affirmed the sole responsibility of the district presidents for ecclesiastical supervision of members in their respective districts (CCM Ag. 1970; Op. 13-2669); and

WHEREAS, The 2004 Synod convention rescinded Bylaw 2.27 (g) to eliminate the possibility of an accuser appealing a complaint that has been terminated by a district president; and

WHEREAS, This amendment recognized the congregational nature of the Synod and affirmed that complaints and accusations are best handled locally by those most familiar with the circumstances and individuals involved, in keeping with the constitutional authority given only to the district presidents; and

WHEREAS, Resolution 12-14 authorized the Board of Directors, following the 2016 Synod convention held in Milwaukee, to amend the Bylaws in consultation with the Council of Presidents (COP), to provide opportunity for an accuser to appeal to the President of the Synod if the district president fails to act in a matter regarding a member of Synod; and

WHEREAS, In fact there was no consensus among the COP as reported in the minutes of the November 2017 LCMS Board of Directors, in fact significant disagreement among the COP members; and

WHEREAS, Bylaw 2.14.5 is in conflict with the Constitution of the Synod Article XI B 1; and

WHEREAS, Permitting an appeal of an accusation or complaint against a member of the Synod after a district president has terminated the matter undermines the ecclesiastical supervision of the district president, tends to centralize power for ecclesiastical supervision in the President of the Synod; and

WHEREAS, Such action requires the accused to defend him or herself twice (before the district president and the President of the Synod), placing the accused in double jeopardy, and potentially costing an immense amount of time, energy, emotion, and money—resources that are best expended upon ministry needs; therefore be it

Resolved, That Bylaw 2.14.5 is hereby deleted; and be it finally

Resolved, That the 2019 Synod convention reinstate the previous method of ecclesiastical supervision adopted by the Bylaw changes by the 2004 Synod convention are hereby reinstated.

Ov. 10-23

To Remove Synod Bylaw 2.14.5 on Ecclesiastical Supervision

WHEREAS, The Constitution of the Synod indicates: “The officers of the Synod must assume only such rights as have been expressly conferred upon them by the Synod …” (Constitution Article XI A 1); and

WHEREAS, The Constitution of the Synod defines the scope of the ecclesiastical supervision of the President of the Synod as: the officers of the Synod; all such as are employed by the Synod; the individual districts of the Synod; and all district presidents (Const. Art. XI B 1); and

WHEREAS, The Constitution of the Synod defines the scope of the ecclesiastical supervision of district presidents as the ordained and commissioned ministers of their districts (Const. Art. XII 7) and entrusts them with the power to suspend ordained and commissioned members from membership in the Synod (Const. Art. XII 8); and

WHEREAS, The Commission on Constitutional Matters (CCM) has affirmed the sole responsibility of the district presidents for ecclesiastical supervision of members in their respective districts (CCM Op. 13-2669); and

WHEREAS, The 2004 convention amended the bylaws to eliminate the possibility of an accuser appealing a complaint that has been terminated by a district president to the Praesidium of the Synod; and

WHEREAS, The LCMS Board of Directors (BOD), following the 66th Regular Convention held in Milwaukee, Wisc., amended the bylaws to provide opportunity for an accuser to appeal to the President of the Synod if the district president does not suspend a member of Synod; and

WHEREAS, Bylaw 2.14.5 was added outside of a Synod convention, contrary to Const. Art. XIV of the Synod’s Constitution which provides that “[t]he Synod in convention may adopt bylaws that are consistent with and do not contradict the Constitution of the Synod, which controls and supersedes such bylaws and other rules and regulations of the Synod. . . .”; and

WHEREAS, Const. Art. XIV of the Synod’s Constitution makes binding only those bylaws “… adopted, revised, or eliminated by a simple majority vote of a national convention. . . .” and not bylaws adopted by any subset of the Synod, such as the BOD of the Synod; and

WHEREAS, Bylaw 2.14.5 is in conflict with Const. Art. XI B 1; and

WHEREAS, The existing LCMS Handbook now exposes the accused worker to the undue burden of defending himself/herself repeatedly; therefore be it
Resolved, That Bylaw 2.14.5 on ecclesiastical supervision be removed; and be it further

Resolved, That the 2019 convention reaffirm the method of ecclesiastical supervision adopted in the bylaw changes by the 2004 convention.

Michigan District

Ov. 10-24

To Reestablish the District President as Supervisor of Individual Members of Synod

WHEREAS, The 2016 convention of the Synod, in Resolution 12-14, “Regarding the Right of an Accuser to Appeal when a District President or President of the Synod Fails to Act or Declines to Suspend,” according to Bylaw 7.1.2, deferred its rightful legislative authority regarding the development of ecclesiastical supervision bylaws with respect to and inclusion of the President of the Synod, giving the decision to the Synod’s Board of Directors rather than to the legislative assembly; and

WHEREAS, The decision of the Board of Directors, as well as the most recent opinion of the Commission of Constitutional Matters (CCM) in this matter (CCM Op. 16-2791, “Constitutionality of Historical Appeal to President and Praesidium in Expulsion Cases”) diverges from historic opinions of CCM (CCM Op 15-2750, “Ecclesiastical Supervision Responsibilities of the President of the Synod”; CCM Op. 13-2669, “Ecclesiastical Supervision”; 10-2581, “Ecclesiastical Supervisory Responsibilities of a District President”; 03-2354, “CCM Rulings, Dissent, and Ecclesiastical Supervision”; 03-2338, “Reconsideration of Opinions re Ecclesiastical Supervision”), and of historical understandings of the role of the Synod President in the ecclesiastical supervision of individual members of Synod (creation of districts, 1852 Synod convention; giving the district president the obligation to visit congregations of their districts, 1864 Synod convention; appointing the President of Synod, suspension and appeals process,” 1890 Synod convention), and the correspondence of Synod Presidents such as C.F.W. Walther and H.C. Schwann; and

WHEREAS, This decision has caused undue confusion around the procedures concerning the serious matters of ecclesiastical supervision, leaving districts, district presidents, and individual members of Synod unsure of how to proceed in matters that require swift, contextual, and Biblical understanding; therefore be it

Resolved, That CCM Op. 16-2791 be nullified and sent for review with clear reference to the historical precedent of Synod’s practices and rules since its inception; and be it further

Resolved, That the decision of the Board of Directors concerning Res. 12-14 be nullified and sent for review; and be it further

Resolved, That Synod with proposed constitutional and bylaw changes that would seek to clarify and return to Synod’s historic position; and be it finally

Resolved, That the Synod pray for peace and harmony, providing a witness to God’s powerful work of reconciliation in our lives.

Florida-Georgia District

Ov. 10-25

To Reaffirm 2016 Resolution 12-14 and Synod Bylaw Sections 2.14–2.17

WHEREAS, The 2016 Synod convention passed Resolution 12-14 “Regarding the Right of an Accuser to Appeal When a District President or President of the Synod Fails to Act or Declines to Suspend,” as follows:

WHEREAS, CCM Opinion 16-2791 has indicated that portions of the expulsion processes of the Synod’s Bylaws are presently in an unconstitutional state with respect to Constitution Article XI B 1–3 and Const. Art. XIII 2; and

WHEREAS, The Council of Presidents (district presidents and Praesidium) has expressed an interest in having input in developing bylaws that would address this in a manner consistent with the Constitution and Bylaws of the Synod and its resolutions; and

WHEREAS, The Synod in convention has the authority, under exceptional circumstances, to direct the Synod’s Board of Directors to amend bylaws under Bylaw 7.1.2, which directs the Secretary of the Synod to draft such amendments for review by the CCM and the Commission on Handbook prior to adoption; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Synod in convention direct the Board of Directors to act in this manner in order to implement clear bylaw procedures regarding this aspect of ecclesiastical supervision; and be it further

Resolved, That a consultation process shall be designed by mutual agreement of the chairman of the Council of Presidents and the President of the Synod, by which the Council of Presidents shall have the opportunity to offer to the Secretary of the Synod input as to proposed mechanisms to implement expulsion processes consistent with and not contradicting the Constitution of the Synod; and be it further

Resolved, That said consultation be accomplished within six months of the close of the 2016 Synod convention, unless extended by agreement of said chairman of the Council of Presidents and the President of the Synod; and be it finally

Resolved, That these bylaw changes become effective upon adoption by a two-thirds majority of the Synod’s Board of Directors, as specified in Bylaw 7.1.2.

and

WHEREAS, The following parenthetical notation is included in the 2016 Proceedings, p. 233, following the text of the resolution: President Harrison explained the purpose of Res. 12-14 and then called on Council of Presidents Chairman Kenneth Hennings to assure the assembly of the council’s unanimous support. A proposed amendment to insert “or President of the Synod” after “District President” in the resolution’s title was received by the committee as a friendly amendment. After brief discussion, the chair called for a show of hands and debate was ended. Res. 12-14 was adopted as changed [Yes: 996; No: 67].

and

WHEREAS, The Synod’s Board of Directors at their May 2017 meeting fulfilled their responsibilities per directive of the convention resolution and under Bylaw 7.1.2 to amend the Bylaws regarding the ecclesiastical supervision of the Synod by the President should a district president fail to act; therefore be it
Resolved, That the 2019 Synod convention reaffirm 2016 Res. 12-14 and Bylaw sections 2.14–2.17; and be it further

Resolved, That the Southern Illinois District Board of Directors submit this resolution as an overture to the 2019 Synod convention.

Board of Directors
Southern Illinois District

Ov. 10-26

To Affirm the Results of 2016 Resolution 12-14 Regarding Ecclesiastical Supervision

WHEREAS, The Commission on Constitutional Matters (CCM) Opinion 16-2791, answering a preconvention question of 2016 Floor Committee 12, concurred with the 1956 convention that when a district president has failed to act or declined to suspend an accused member, the Synod president has a constitutional authority (Constitutional Article XI B 1–3) to hear an accuser’s appeal for action and act as the district president might have; and

WHEREAS, After considerable discussion of the floor committee’s proposal [Resolution 12-01A], the convention adopted Res. 12-14, directing the Secretary of the Synod to consult with the Council of Presidents for at least six months and develop bylaw language to “implement expulsion processes consistent with and not contradicting the Constitution of the Synod” on this particular point, with the language to be adopted under the procedure of Bylaw 7.1.2; and

WHEREAS, An extended consultation was held with the Secretary at each of the four meetings of the Council of Presidents following the convention; in April 2017, a draft was presented and comments received. The draft received the input and approval of the CCM and the Commission on Handbook and was finally adopted by the Board of Directors, May 19, 2017, completing the Bylaw 7.1.2 bylaw amendment process; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Synod in convention thank the parties involved in this process to bring the Synod’s Bylaws into line with the Constitution; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod in convention affirm the results of 2016 Res. 12-14 regarding ecclesiastical supervision.

Grace, Lexington, MO; St. Matthew, Bonne Terre, MO

Ov. 10-27

To Study the Question of Ecclesiastical Supervision

WHEREAS, A number of districts of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) received numerous overtures regarding CCM Op. 16-2791 and suggested/requested changes to Synod Bylaw 2.14.5 with regard to ecclesiastical supervision; and

WHEREAS, There has been much conversation and concern expressed across the LCMS since these bylaw changes were announced; therefore be it

Resolved, That the chairman of the Council of Presidents shall appoint a task force of district presidents to study the history of the exercise of ecclesiastical supervision within the Synod as well as to authorize the study of the Scriptures and Confessions among the members of Synod to speak to this matter formally by the 2022 convention.

Board of Directors
Southeastern District

Ov. 10-28

To Revise the Synod Dispute Resolution Process

WHEREAS, It is a valuable benefit for our district in convention to be able to request that the Commission on Constitutional Matters (CCM) conduct additional study of this matter; therefore be it

Resolved, That we continue to walk together “with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Eph. 4:2–3); and be it finally

Resolved, That the Missouri District in convention request the Synod to use the CCM to study the dispute resolution process and propose changes as needed.

Missouri District

Ov. 10-29

To Amend Bylaws to Clarify Dispute Resolution Processes

Preamble
The Commission on Handbook, responding to a variety of observations from officers, agencies, and members of the Synod, has proposed substantive revisions of bylaws regarding dispute resolution processes of the Synod:

A. CONSULTATION IN DISPUTE BETWEEN MEMBER AND ECCLESIASTICAL SUPERVISOR (COH 16-012)

Rationale
Bylaw 2.14.4.1 acknowledges that a district president may be disqualified from handling an expulsion case, but the dispute resolution section (Bylaw section 1.10) makes no such explicit allowance. If a member’s dispute is with the member’s district president there should be allowance for someone else to conduct the required consultation (CCM Op. 16-2799).

Therefore be it

Resolved, That Bylaw 1.10.5 be amended as follows, to allow an alternate to conduct a dispute resolution consultation if the district president is the respondent:

PRESENT PROPOSED WORODING

1.10.5 Before any matter is submitted to the formal reconciliation process, the parties involved in a dispute must meet together, face-to-face, in a good-faith attempt to settle their dispute in the manner described in Matthew 18:15 and may involve the informal use of a reconciler. And further, before any matter is submitted to the formal reconciliation process, the complainant must meet and consult with the appropriate ecclesiastical supervisor to seek advice and also so that it can be determined whether this is the appropriate bylaw procedure (Bylaw section 1.10) or whether the matter falls under Bylaw sections 1.8, 2.14, 2.15, 2.16, or 2.17, or Bylaws 3.10.5.7.9, 3.10.6.7.1, and 3.10.6.7.5.2. In regard to this consultation:
... (f) Should the otherwise appropriate ecclesiastical supervisor be the intended respondent, or be disqualified due to conflict of interest, the next qualified district officer without such a conflict shall conduct the consultation and provide the attendant evangelical supervision, counsel, and care.

B. CONSISTENCY OF DISPUTE RESOLUTION AND DISCIPLINE PANEL TIMELINES (COH 16-014)

Rationale
The Bylaw section 1.10 process has a minor unclarity in its timeline, regarding the appointment of the panel, setting of hearing date, and conduct of the hearing. That unclarity can be resolved by reconciliation of the Bylaw section 1.10 timeline with that for Bylaw sections 2.14 and 2.17.

Therefore be it

Resolved, That Bylaws 1.10.7.2–3 be amended as follows, to clarify the timeline for dispute resolution and to increase its consistency with the timelines for discipline panels:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

1.10.7.2 Each Dispute Resolution Panel shall have a nonvoting hearing facilitator who will serve as chairman of the panel. Within 15 days of the announcement of the hearing, the hearing facilitator shall confer with the parties to the dispute and the Dispute Resolution Panel for the purpose of choosing a location and a date for the formal hearing of the matter.

1.10.7.3 The formal hearing before the Dispute Resolution Panel, conducted by a hearing facilitator, shall take place within 45 days after the selection of the location and date of the formal hearing, unless there is unanimous consent by the panel members for a short delay beyond such 45 days for reasons the panel deems appropriate. The formal hearing before the Dispute Resolution Panel shall be conducted by the hearing facilitator within 45 days after the Hearing Panel was constituted. The hearing facilitator shall, within 15 days of panel formation, confer with the parties and the Dispute Resolution Panel to select the date and location of the formal hearing. The formal hearing may be delayed for a short time beyond the 45-day period with the unanimous consent of the panel members.

C. PROCESSES FOR SEMINARY AND COLLEGE / UNIVERSITY CAMPUS COMPLAINTS (COH 16-013)

Rationale
Seminary complaint bylaws (Bylaw 3.10.5.7.9) should, like Bylaw section 2.17, omit the requirement of a face-to-face meeting in an allegation of sexual misconduct or criminal behavior. They should also include a reminder to notify the member’s ecclesiastical supervisor, to provide evangelical supervision, counsel, and care, as required by Bylaws 2.14.3 and 2.17.3. They should also indicate that they are for handling complaints arising from the faculty or administration member’s conduct of seminary office, not for complaints regarding any off-campus service (to a congregation, etc.) of the member.

The “standing hearings committee” is a vestigial remnant of an older mechanism for handling complaints (in the days of boards of control) and should be removed (Bylaws 3.10.5.6 [d] and 3.10.5.7.10 [b][3]).

Colleges and universities once had the same bylaw-specified complaint policy as the seminaries, but today have no mandated complaint policy; they are required to develop their own. Inquiries of the Commission on Constitutional Matters (CCM) and Concordia University System (CUS) indicate that these have not been developed by the campuses. In the interests of the Synod and of employment liability protection on the campuses, a standard policy should exist. This has been developed as a Model Operating Procedure Manual, for adoption (subject to a degree of local customization) by the institutions. Inclusion of a mention of this manual in Bylaw 3.10.6.7.5.2 will direct institutions to adopt it (customizing as necessary) and clarify that the appeal process for faculty termination specified in that bylaw is also provided according to these procedures.

Therefore be it

Resolved, That Bylaw 3.10.5.7.9 be amended as follows, to clarify the scope of the board’s authority, to omit the requirement of a face-to-face meeting in an allegation of sexual misconduct or criminal behavior, and to require notice be given to the relevant ecclesiastical supervisor:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

3.10.5.7.9 The board of regents shall have authority to investigate, hear, and act on any complaint regarding the conduct of office of seminary faculty and administration, including those arising out of Bylaw 3.10.5.7.5.

(a) If the board of regents receives a complaint against a member of that seminary’s faculty or administration concerning any matter, including those specified under Bylaw 3.10.5.7.5, except in a matter of sexual misconduct or criminal behavior, it shall direct the complainant first to meet face-to-face with the respondent in an attempt to resolve the issue (in the manner described in Matthew 18:15).

(1) The president of the seminary shall assist in this attempt.

(2) If the president himself is the respondent, the chairman of the board shall act in his stead.

(b) Should allegations involve information that could lead to the expulsion of the member from the Synod under Article XIII of the Constitution, the member’s ecclesiastical supervisor is to be informed immediately of the accusation (Bylaws 2.14.3 and 2.17.3).

(bc, etc.) …

and be it further

Resolved, That Bylaws 3.10.5.6 (d) and 3.10.5.7.10 (b)[3] be amended as follows, to remove reference to the faculty hearings committee, which is a vestigial remnant of former bylaw procedures for handling complaints:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

3.10.5.6 The president of a theological seminary shall be the executive officer of the board of regents. He shall serve as the spiritual, academic, and administrative head of the seminary.

…

(d) He shall be the academic head of the faculty, preside at its meetings, and be an ex officio member of all standing committees of the faculty and its departments with the exception of the standing hearings committee or of another standing committee to which the functions of such a committee have been assigned.

…

3.10.5.7.10 Each seminary shall have established policies and procedures related to salary, faculty organization, faculty involvement in establishing education policies, dispute resolution, modified service, sabbaticals and leaves. It shall also have policies and procedures related to student discipline.

…
(b) The board of regents, on recommendation of the president of the seminary, shall establish an effective faculty organizational structure.

... 

(2) The faculty shall elect a standing hearings committee or assign the functions of such a committee to another standing committee.

and be it finally

Resolved, That Bylaw 3.10.6.7.5.2 be amended as follows, to make reference to the Model Operating Procedure Manual under refinement by the CCM and the CUS:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

3.10.6.7.5.2 An appeal process established by the board of regents of the institution, consistent with the Model Operating Procedure Manual for Faculty and Administration Complaints and Appeal of Termination: Colleges and Universities (developed by the Commission on Constitutional Matters in consultation with the Concordia University System) shall be in place for use by faculty members who wish to challenge a termination decision. Notwithstanding the provisions of any such policy, any person connected with an institution who is a member of Synod shall also remain under the ecclesiastical supervision of the Synod, and nothing in any such CUS institution policy shall be construed to limit or constrain any action that may be taken, or the rights or responsibilities of any party, pursuant to the Synod’s Handbook with respect to a member of Synod.

D. BLIND DRAW BY SECRETARY OF COUNCIL OF PRESIDENTS (COH 16-033)

Rationale

In its review of the Bylaw section 2.16 Standard Operating Procedures Manual (SOPM; Op. 17-2840, Nov. 10–11, 2017), the CCM noted that the blind draw in this bylaw should, for consistency with the rest and in avoidance of any potential appearance of conflict, be conducted by the secretary of the Council of Presidents (COP) (who is functioning as “process administrator”) instead of the chairman of the COP (who is functioning in the place of a “suspension ecclesiastical supervisor”). This is consistent with 2.16.7.2 and the section, generally—and it has been the approach recommended in the SOPM, even contrary to the standing bylaw. Therefore be it

Resolved, That Bylaw 2.16.7.1 be amended as follows:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

2.16.7.1 A Hearing Panel consisting of three district presidents, excluding the chairman of the Council of Presidents and any district president that is party to the matter, shall conduct the hearing. The Panel shall be selected as follows:

(a) One district president selected by the President of the Synod.

(b) One district president selected by the vice-chairman of the Council of Presidents.

(c) The third district president selected by the other two Hearing Panel members. If the two Hearing Panel members cannot agree on the third Hearing Panel member, then such third member shall be chosen by blind draw from among the remaining district presidents, with the blind draw administered by the chairman/secretary of the Council of Presidents and audited by witnesses.

Ov. 10-30

To Restore Right of Appeal to Disciplinary Proceedings

WHEREAS, Termination or suspension of membership in the Synod is a serious matter involving both the doctrine and life of members and should be taken only as a final step following advice, counsel, encouragement, and, when necessary, admonition regarding teaching and/or practice; and

WHEREAS, Consistent with basic principles of fairness and due process and the supreme goodness of the 8th Commandment, we should avoid the example of those in Acts 6:11 who “secretly instigated men who said, ‘We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and God,’” but instead, in accordance with scriptural guidance on rebuking one’s brother, give any member who is subject to discipline access to all materials that are to be relied upon by the Dispute Resolution Panel, district president, or other adjudicatory body in considering the charges; and

WHEREAS, Synod Bylaws provide for the further protection of members by including provisions for challenging the decisions of ecclesiastical supervisors in these matters, and for substituting another district officer where the district president has a conflict of interest, as well as provisions for restoration of membership that has been suspended or terminated; and

WHEREAS, In order to ensure fair and consistent treatment of all members of the Synod in a Christian and fraternal manner, and to ensure prompt resolution of disputes for the best interests of all concerned, it is appropriate that this right of appeal be restored and granted to all parties; therefore be it

Resolved, That any member of the Synod or any member who has been removed from the roster shall have the right to a copy of all materials relied upon by the Dispute Resolution Panel, district president, or other adjudicatory body considering or acting upon such charges, and that the Commission on Handbook modify relevant bylaws accordingly.

Redeemer
Fort Wayne, IN

2019 Convention Workbook
11. Church and Culture

REPORTS
R1, R1.1, R1.2, R1.3, R7, R12, R17, R60, R61, R62

OVERTURES
Ov. 11-01

To Give Guidance and Encourage Action on Beginning-of-Life Issues

Preamble
The 66th Regular Convention of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) adopted Resolution 3-04, “To Create Task Force for Study of Issues Relating to Procreation, Fertility, and Care for the Unborn” (2016 Proceedings, 143), which affirms the Bible’s teaching that God’s creation of human life begins at conception and that “Children are a blessing from the Lord” (Ps. 127:3, 5). This resolution also identified the complexities and ever-changing landscape of procreation, fertility, and care for the unborn. It noted that science and technology have significantly changed since the publication several decades ago of various Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR) documents and reports on life issues.

The adopted resolution called for the President of Synod to appoint a task force to take up these issues and report back to the next convention. The members of this task force (including representatives from pertinent Synod offices and entities, Lutherans For Life, the seminaries, and laypersons who have expertise in the fields of medicine, procreative science, theology, ethics, etc.) were specifically asked to do the following:
- identify the important issues to be addressed to best help and support families and parents dealing with the issues of procreation, fertility and care of the unborn;
- identify specific actions leading to the production of appropriate LCMS responses to these issues.

The task force was appointed by the Synod President and met three times during the past triennium. At those meetings, it carefully assessed its assignment from the Synod and heard and discussed reports on specific issues such as procreation, medical advances in areas such as genomics, questions raised by medical consent forms, and questions and concerns about procreative technologies such as in vitro fertilization.

The task force also determined that while the items raised in the resolution all relate to human reproduction and tend toward a consideration of technological “advances,” there are underlying cultural assumptions and questions that challenge the Christian. The task force agreed that it was important to try to address “foundational matters” relative to these questions and assumptions. For example, the biblical view that parents are blessed with a child as a gift of God today faces a competing view wherein children are viewed more as a parental reproductive project and an entitlement. In response to this specific concern, one member of the task force, Dr. Gilbert Meilaender, was asked and agreed to prepare a paper for study and discussion. This paper, titled “The Child as a Gift of God,” was thoroughly discussed by the task force, and all members agreed that the paper identifies fundamental issues that deserve broader dissemination, study and discussion.

WHEREAS, The 2016 Resolution 3-04 Task Force was formed with the mandate to study issues relating to procreation, fertility, and care for the unborn in order to identify actions leading to the production of appropriate LCMS responses to these issues, and to make recommendations in the form of appropriate overtures to the Synod’s 2019 national convention; and

WHEREAS, The task force met on three occasions during the past triennium for careful deliberation and discussion of beginning-of-life issues; and

WHEREAS, The task force has identified certain proposed “actions” for the Synod to consider; therefore be it

Resolved, That the following specific recommendations of the task force be adopted and implemented:
- to commend the paper “The Child as a Gift of God” to members of the Synod and Synod congregations for reflection, study and discussion;
- to urge filling as soon as fiscally possible the vacant position of LCMS Director of Life and Health Ministry since leadership in this office is crucial for moving forward on these critical and time-sensitive issues;
- to urge the CTCR, as it seeks to complete its assignment from the Synod to update its 1981 report on Human Sexuality (2016 Res. 14-03A, Proceedings, 242–3), to give new or renewed attention to the virtue of chastity in relation to specific issues such as 1) the vocation of singleness; 2) the nature and significance of Christian marriage; 3) a theology of procreation (including issues relating to contraception); 4) the reality and burden of infertility;
- to ask the CTCR to review and revisit its various documents on beginning of life issues (e.g., Christians and Procreative Choices: How Do God’s Chosen Choose? [adopted 1996]; What Child is This? Marriage, Family, and Human Cloning, [adopted 2002]; Christian Faith and Human Beginnings: Christian Care and Pre-Implantation Human Life [adopted 2005]) to determine whether and/or where updates to these documents are needed and how such potential updates might best and most effectively be communicated to the Synod;
- to request the Synod’s office of Life and Health Ministries, in collaboration with supportive entities (e.g., Lutherans For Life, the Concordia University Wisconsin Center for Bioethics), to continue to sponsor and coordinate conferences and other education on issues such as embryo adoption, methods of contraception, genomics and other new technologies, surrogacy, and medical consent, for the purpose of enhancing the church’s understanding of and response to these issues;
- to encourage our seminaries and colleges to give increased attention and priority to beginning-of-life issues through coursework, continuing education, and other means;
- to request the Office of National Mission (ONM) to prepare educational resources on beginning-of-life issues for LCMS campus ministries and youth ministries;
- to encourage districts, circuits, congregations and schools to address these issues as they are able;
- to request the ONM to identify resources and individuals for consultation on beginning-of-life issues.

2016 Resolution 3-04 Task Force
Ov. 11-02

**To Condemn the Abortion Rights Ideology as Heresy**

*WHEREAS*, The Scriptures teach that man, both male and female, is made in God's image (Gen. 1:27); and

*WHEREAS*, The Scriptures teach that God knits man in his mother's womb (Ps. 139:13–14); and

*WHEREAS*, The fifth commandment condemns murder, and God says that murder is condemned because God created man in his own image (Gen. 9:6); and

*WHEREAS*, Children are not something we choose for ourselves, but more correctly a heritage from the Lord, which God freely gives and takes away in his own grace and wisdom (Ps. 127; Gen. 30:2; Job 1:21); and

*WHEREAS*, The eternal Word became flesh in the womb of the Virgin (Luke 1:31–32); and

*WHEREAS*, The joy of Christ's birth is also for the child inside his mother's womb (Acts 2:39), as attested by the account of John leaping in Elizabeth's womb (Luke 1:41, 44); and

*WHEREAS*, The eternal Word becoming flesh in the womb of the Virgin is essential to how sinful man is saved (Gal. 4:4–5; 1 Tim. 2:5), since, as Gregory of Nazianzus put it, “For that which He has not assumed He has not healed; but that which is united to His Godhead is also saved (Critique of Apollinarism, par. 5).”; and

*WHEREAS*, Jesus died also for unborn babies who are made in God's image (1 John 2:2); and

*WHEREAS*, Saying that the value of an unborn baby's life is dependent upon the choice of the mother, rather than on the will of God who created and redeemed the child, is a heresy, which attacks the very heart of the Gospel (Rom. 9:16); therefore be it

Resolved, That The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod in convention declare the pro-choice and abortion-rights ideology to be a heresy, which no Christian in good conscience can hold; and be it further

Resolved, That Synod in convention condemn all so-called Christian ministers who sanctify abortion in their teaching and other rituals as heretics preaching a false gospel, calling on them to repent lest they face God's fierce judgment, as Paul directs us to do to those teaching a different gospel (Gal. 1:8–9); and be it further

Resolved, That we see the atrocity of abortion in our country as a sign of God's coming judgment and therefore a time for us to repent of our own sin, as Isaiah says in the presence of the Lord, “I am a man of unclean lips who comes from a people of unclean lips (Is. 6:5)”; and be it further

Resolved, That we continue to pray fervently for all who are affected by abortion, both for the victims to be spared and for those who have committed this evil to repent and find the great comfort of the forgiveness of sins through Jesus' blood and merit (1 Tim. 2:1–4); and be it finally

Resolved, That we affirm that God is the one who kills and makes alive, who gives and takes away, so that we might receive all good gifts, especially children, with fear, love, trust, and thanksgiving (1 Sam. 2:6).

St. Paul, McGregor, IA; Trinity, Guttenberg, IA

Ov. 11-03

**To Condemn the Pro-Choice Ideology as Heresy**

*WHEREAS*, The Scriptures teach that man, both male and female, is made in God’s image (Gen. 1:27); and

*WHEREAS*, The Scriptures teach that God knits man in his mother’s womb (Ps. 139:13–14); and

*WHEREAS*, The Fifth Commandment condemns murder and God says that murder is condemned because God created man in His own image (Gen. 9:6); and

*WHEREAS*, Children are not something we choose for ourselves, but more correctly a heritage from the Lord, which God freely gives and takes away in His own grace and wisdom (Ps. 127; Gen. 30:2; Job 1:21); and

*WHEREAS*, The eternal Word became flesh in the womb of the Virgin Mary (Luke 1:31–32); and

*WHEREAS*, The joy of Christ’s birth is also for the child inside his mother’s womb (Acts 2:39), as attested by the account of John leaping in Elizabeth’s womb (Luke 1:41, 44); and

*WHEREAS*, The eternal Word becoming flesh in the womb of the Virgin Mary is essential to how sinful man is saved (Gal. 4:4–5; 1 Tim. 2:5), since, as Gregory of Nazianzus put it, “For that which He has not assumed He has not healed; but that which is united to His Godhead is also saved (Critique of Apollinarism, par. 5).”; and

*WHEREAS*, Jesus died also for unborn babies who are made in God’s image (1 John 2:2); and

*WHEREAS*, Saying that the value of an unborn baby’s life is dependent upon the choice of the mother, rather than on the will of God who created and redeemed the child, is a heresy, which attacks the very heart of the Gospel (Rom. 9:16); therefore be it

Resolved, That The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) in convention declare the pro-choice and abortion-rights ideology to be a heresy, which no Christian in good conscience can hold; and be it further

Resolved, That the LCMS in convention condemn all so-called Christian ministers who sanctify abortion in their teaching and other rituals as heretics preaching a false gospel, calling on them to repent lest they face God’s fierce judgment, as Paul directs us to do to those teaching a different gospel (Gal. 1:8–9); and be it further

Resolved, That we see the atrocity of abortion in our country as a sign of God's coming judgment and therefore a time for us to repent of our own sin, as Isaiah says in the presence of the Lord, “I am a man of unclean lips who comes from a people of unclean lips” (Is. 6:5); and be it further

Resolved, That we continue to pray fervently for all who are affected by abortion, both for the victims to be spared and for those who have committed this evil to repent and find the great comfort of the forgiveness of sins through Jesus’ blood and merit (1 Tim. 2:1–4); and be it finally

Resolved, That we affirm that God is the one who kills and makes alive, who gives and takes away, so that we might receive all good gifts, especially children, with fear, love, trust, and thanksgiving (1 Sam. 2:6).

Grace, Lexington, MO; Saints Peter and Paul, Sharon, PA

2019 Convention Workbook
Ov. 11-04  
To Oppose Physician-Assisted Suicide  

Resolved, That the Minnesota South District in convention encourages its congregations to become more intentional in reaching out to members and non-members who find themselves in difficult life circumstances that have led others in the past to consider PAS; and be it further  

Resolved, That the Minnesota South District in convention encourages both individual members and the institutional church (via its public policy efforts) to be politically active in opposing PAS; and be it finally  

Resolved, That the Minnesota South District in convention memorializes the Synod meeting in convention to adopt this resolution (less items specific to the state of Minnesota).

Minnesota South District

Ov. 11-05  
To Oppose Physician-Assisted Suicide and to Support Enhanced Palliative Care  

Resolved, That the Minnesota South District in convention encourages its congregations to become more intentional in reaching out to members and non-members who find themselves in difficult life circumstances that have led others in the past to consider PAS; and be it further  

Resolved, That the Minnesota South District in convention encourages both individual members and the institutional church (via its public policy efforts) to be politically active in opposing PAS; and be it finally  

Resolved, That the Minnesota South District in convention memorializes the Synod meeting in convention to adopt this resolution (less items specific to the state of Minnesota).

Minnesota South District

Ov. 11-04  
To Oppose Physician-Assisted Suicide  

WHEREAS, Satan’s original and continuing temptation invites us to worship at the altar of personal autonomy rather than acknowledge that we have been “bought with a price” (1 Cor. 6:19–20) and that “we are not our own”; and  

WHEREAS, In popular culture death is often portrayed as our friend and a means to escape from the sufferings of life, rather than our greatest enemy to be resisted (Is. 7:15; Rom. 6:23; 1 Cor. 15:26, 55–57); and  

WHEREAS, The theology of the cross reveals suffering to be a means by which God can bring blessing; therefore suffering is not meaningless or something to be avoided at all costs (Rom. 8:28; 2 Cor. 12:9; Heb. 12:5–10; James 1:2–4; 2 Cor. 1:3–4; Matt. 25:40); and  

WHEREAS, Advocates for Physician-Assisted Suicide (PAS) often improperly exploit people’s fear of suffering; and  

WHEREAS, The underlying logic of PAS denies the inherent, God-given dignity of all human beings regardless of age, physical condition, mental capacity, or any other life circumstance; and  

WHEREAS, PAS carries with it inherent opportunities to abuse the elderly and disabled, from which no safeguards can offer any real protection; where the right to die by means of PAS easily becomes felt by the elderly and disabled as the duty to die; and  

WHEREAS, Those who advocate for the legalization of PAS often misrepresent the primary motive for seeking PAS as the experience of intense and unremitting pain when, in fact, it is most often feelings of intense loneliness or the perception of being an unwelcome burden on others that are their actual primary motive; and  

WHEREAS, The legality of PAS will fundamentally alter the trust relationship between doctors and their patients and will require doctors to engage in a legal deception as to the actual cause of death on the death certificate; and  

WHEREAS, PAS introduces a whole host of obvious perverse financial incentives as insurance companies, financial heirs, government entities, and others are tempted by financial self-interest to pressure patients into considering PAS; and  

WHEREAS, There is typically no requirement for family members to be informed when a loved one is requesting PAS, there are many subsequent feelings of intense guilt and regret experienced by family members; and  

WHEREAS, Studies have shown that the legalization of PAS has the effect of normalizing suicide and thus increasing the rate of non-PAS in the community; and  

WHEREAS, We are called to love our neighbors by protecting their physical well-being; and  

WHEREAS, We are called to “shine as lights amidst this crooked and twisted generation” by “holding fast to the word of life” (Phil. 2:15); therefore be it  

Resolved, That the Minnesota South District in convention declares its clear opposition to PAS and any legislative efforts on state or federal level to legalize it; and be it further  

Resolved, That the Minnesota South District in convention encourages the congregations of the district to make a concerted effort to educate their members about the issue of PAS; and be it further
WHEREAS, Studies have shown that the legalization of PAS has the effect of normalizing suicide and thus increasing the rate of non-PAS in the community; and

WHEREAS, We are called to love our neighbors by protecting their physical well-being and by providing easily accessible and effective palliative care to those who are suffering; and

WHEREAS, We are called (Phil. 2:15) to "shine as lights amidst this crooked and twisted generation" by "holding fast to the word of life"; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Minnesota North District in convention:
1. Declares its clear opposition to physician-assisted suicide (PAS) and any legislative efforts on state or federal level to legalize it;
2. Encourages the congregations of the district to make a concerted effort to educate their members about the issue of PAS;
3. Encourages its congregations to become more intentional in reaching out to members and non-members who find themselves in difficult life circumstances which have led others in the past to consider PAS;
4. Encourages both individual members and the institutional church (via its public policy efforts) to be politically active in opposing PAS and advocating for better palliative care in Minnesota; and
5. Continues to support the work of the Minnesota Alliance for Ethical Healthcare, a coalition which is committed to pursue these same ends;

and be it further

Resolved, That the convention memorialize this to the Synod.

Ov. 11-06

To Combine Synod Efforts to Support Marriage, Life, and Family into a Unified Ministry

WHEREAS, The Holy Scriptures, by placing Adam’s creation in the image of God in the immediate context of the creation of “male and female” (Gen. 1:27), tie marriage directly to the existence of mankind; and

WHEREAS, Human life since creation has been perpetuated through the one-flesh union of male and female. Holy matrimony is both the God-ordained means for conceiving life and is also endowed by God with every necessary gift to protect, defend, nurture, and educate those children whom God has placed within the care of husband and wife; and

WHEREAS, Marriage, life, and family, while three distinct gifts of God, are yet so interrelated and mutually supportive that none of the three, taken by itself, can be fully understood nor fully supported. They thus form an inseparable and holy unity which itself is integral to God’s design; and

WHEREAS, Members of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) (pastors, church workers, and congregations) are daily encountering confused, ungodly and ever-changing “teachings of demons” which deny and undermine God’s institution of marriage (1 Tim. 4:1; 3), the sanctity of human life, and the divine origin of the family; so that the people of God need clear, thoughtful, and ongoing guidance which reflects deeply on God’s Word, makes precise and faithful use of language, and faithfully upholds these divine institutions; and

WHEREAS, The 2016 LCMS convention resolved to “strengthen and support the Lutheran family in living out God’s design.” (Proceedings, 4-02A, pp. 145–6; 16-02A, pp. 253–4); therefore be it

Resolved, That the Wyoming District in convention memorialize the Synod’s 2019 convention that LCMS Life Ministries be renamed LCMS Marriage, Life, and Family Ministries; and that it be tasked with the ongoing work of supporting and strengthening the Lutheran family, including marriage and human life from conception to natural death; and that the LCMS Marriage, Life, and Family Ministries be initially assigned the following topics to study and offer guidance for all members of the LCMS, that we might walk together in love and unity, living faithfully in a culture intent upon contradicting God’s works of marriage, life, and family:

• the impact government schools are having on the faith and families of Lutheran youth, with the possibility of providing recommendations of how Christian households might mitigate the effects of our culture’s most corrosive teachings (parochial schools, online academies, homeschool, etc.);
• provide encouragement and resources for Lutheran parents, especially fathers, to lead their families in the reading and discussion of God’s Word in their homes;
• the impact that changes in marriage laws, such as no-fault divorce, have had on the sanctity of marriage, the sanctity of life, and the vitality of the family;
• the theological and practical impact that various forms of birth control have had upon marriage, life and family;
• how those involved in same-sex “marriages” may faithfully repent of the ungodly union while remaining faithful in their financial, custodial, and legal obligations;

and that reports on the above-named tasks be prepared for submission to the 2022 Synod convention for review, possible ratification, and as appropriate, wide dissemination throughout the LCMS.

Wyoming District

Ov. 11-07

To Affirm the Synod’s Position on Marriage and Family

WHEREAS, At the July 2016 convention of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS), a number of excellent and thoroughly Biblical resolutions were presented, discussed, and adopted, notably, “To Confess Sanctity of Marriage” (Resolution 14-02A); “To Respond Compassionately to Challenges to Biblical View of Marriage and Human Sexuality” (Res. 14-03A); “To Affirm the Right of Clergy to Continue Conducting Weddings in Accordance with Confession” (Res. 14-04); “To Recommend CTCR Document Gender Identity Disorder or Gender Dysphoria in Christian Perspective” (Res. 14-09); and

WHEREAS, The culture of the world has crept into the Christian church so that many churches no longer uphold the Biblical understanding of gender (male and female), sexuality, marriage, and family; and

WHEREAS, Many of our pastors are pressured by people within their own congregations to follow the compromise of other church
bodies that have not remained faithful to the teaching of God’s Word on matters of gender (male and female), sexuality, marriage, and family; therefore be it

Resolved, That the 2016 Missouri District Pastors’ Conference affirm the teaching of the Scriptures that God’s design for marriage is the union of one man and one woman, affirmed as the position of the LCMS in 2016 Res. 14-02A; and be it further

Resolved, That this conference encourage all of our pastors and their congregations to a biblical study of sexuality, marriage, and family, utilizing the assortment of LCMS-adopted and LCMS prepared studies and positions; and be it further

Resolved, That this conference petition the 2019 Synod convention to continue to be bold in its affirmation of the proper masculinity to repentance and absolving the penitent.

Gospel in matters related to marriage, irrespective of cultural ain faithful in applying Law and

Relations to continue to develop timely resources to assist pastors and congregations as they rem

Ov. 11-08

To Uphold the Integrity of the Holy Estate of Marriage

Rationale

In the beginning, God in Christ instituted, or mandated, the marriage estate with these words (Gen. 1:26–28):

Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.”

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”

In, Genesis with the creation of Adam and Eve, God instituted and gave marriage to mankind, “Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh” (Gen. 2:24).

In the New Testament, God confirmed the marriage estate as continuing until the end of the world, Jesus himself quoting and commending the Scriptural institution of marriage, and also affirming the blessing of children. In marriage, God Himself joins the man and woman together, and for that reason forbids man to sunder marriage, “What God has joined together, let not man separate” (Matt. 19:6b); divorce is thereby forbidden for Christians, except in cases of adultery or desertion (Matt. 19:9; 1 Cor. 7:15).

By His word and mandate in these Creation Scriptures, God established marriage as the fountainhead and source of the entire marriage estate, which entails the following:

- marriage itself, the union of one man and one woman until death parts them (permanent, exclusive, and monogamous; Matt. 19:3–9; Apology of the Augsburg Confession [Ap] XXIII 7–13; Large Catechism [LC] I 199–221);
- the Word and blessing of children as the fruit of the marriage union (Gen. 1:28; Psalm 127; 128; LC I 207);
- family (or household) as the expanded expression of the marriage estate (e.g., Col. 3:18–24; Augsburg Confession [AC] XVI);
- the economic concerns of the family, including work and home (Eph. 6:5–9; LC I 141–149);
- the education of sons and daughters, especially that they be brought up “in the education (paideia) and instruction of the Lord” (Deut. 6:1–9; Eph. 6:1–4; LC I 208);
- marriage as the image and likeness of the union of Christ and the Church, including the incarnation of God the Son, His life of love, His atoning death on the cross, and the giving of the divine Ministry of Word and Sacraments in His resurrection and ascension (e.g. Matt. 22:1–10; 25:1–13; John 3:28–30; Hos. 1–3; Psalm 45; Eph. 5:22–33; Rev. 19:6–9; 21:2, 9; 22:17; Ap VII/VIII 7–8; LC II 42; Solid Declaration [SD] VII 8, 87; SD XI 27, 41; see also the LC Marriage Booklet, 16 [Kolb/Wengert, eds., The Book of Concord (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), 371]).

In the midst of a Pauline “table of duties” for the marriage estate, Paul presents a concise exposition of marriage as the image and likeness of Christ and the Church (Eph. 5:21–6:9), as it is written prophetically and in fulfillment from Genesis to Revelation. In this passage the Holy Spirit teaches the Church that the Gospel itself is at stake in the Church’s treatment of marriage and indicates that the failure of marriage among Christians portrays the failure of the Church to submit to Christ and His Word.

We confess these truths in the Symbols of the Evangelical Lutheran Church (Small Catechism [SC], Sixth Commandment; LC I Fourth, Sixth, and Tenth Commandments; AC and Ap XVI, XVIII, XX and XXIII; Smalcald Articles [SA] III 11). The Augsburg Confession sets the marriage estate, or the household (oeconomia), next to the civil estate (politia) as institutions of God (AC XVI). In AC XXIII, Ap XXIII, and SA III 11, which address the papal church’s laws against the marriage of pastors, we confess that the created distinction of male and female is according to both natural and divine law and that they are made for one another within marriage. In our confession, we praise the exclusive, permanent, and monogamous conjugal union of marriage, and thereby reject all violations of the marriage estate. We confess explicitly in the Large Catechism’s explanation of the Tenth Commandment, “[F]or in the New Testament those who are married are forbidden to get divorced” (LC I 306).

Divorce is a violation of the integrity of marriage. The destruction of the integrity of marriage is an attack upon the entire marriage estate. Already during the French Revolution (1792), marriage was legislated to be a civil contract, and divorce to be the termination of that civil contract, in order to remake society according to the ideals of the Revolution. The past 100 years have especially seen a progressive and rapidly accelerating destruction of the marriage estate from within the civil estate. In Russia in 1918 the Bolshevik Decree on Divorce inaugurated state-sponsored no-fault divorce for the purpose of revolutionizing society at every level. In the United States, in 1969 feminism and the sexual revolution began to achieve
their greatest victory in the passage of no-fault divorce laws (beginning in California), soon to be followed by the legalization of abortion and the public acceptance and legal establishment of the sodomite/lesbian movement. In 2015 the Supreme Court of the United States ruled in Obergefell v. Hodges that states must license and recognize same-sex “marriages.”

The passage of no-fault divorce laws effectively taught and reinforced the false belief that marriage is not a permanent institution belonging to the origins and nature of man, but rather that it is a social construct, once based on the imposition of power within religious and civil communities, but now based on the desires, happiness, and personal autonomy of individuals. This radical change in the conceptualization of marriage was aided by readily available birth control—the severing of sexual intercourse from the conception of children. This false belief about marriage has finally reached maturity in the societal and legal imposition of same-sex “marriages” upon the nation, with even more extensive perversions of marriage looming on the horizon.

Churches in the United States and abroad have often capitulated to this assault upon the marriage estate and mirrored what has taken place in the civil estate by accepting no-fault divorce without the discipline of the church. By poisoning the fountainhead of the marriage estate, this acceptance of no-fault divorce has led churches to adopt the presuppositions of feminism and the sexual revolution (including “ordaining” women); to accept and promote the ideals of the population control movement; to declare sodomy and lesbianism to be licit; and even to “ordain” and “marry” public violators of the marriage estate, including partners in same-sex unions.

The consequences of this systematic dismantling of the marriage estate from within both the civil estate and the ecclesiastical estate include the following: a great increase in divorce; the resulting dissolution of families; a great increase in the use of cohabitation without marriage; the rise of the age at which young adults first marry; a great decrease in the birthrate; the feminization of poverty; a great increase in the numbers of mothers of young children in the workforce (often by necessity) and in the number of hours they must work; the increase in women taking custody of children at the expense of the separated or ex-husband; the marginalization and withdrawal of men within the marriage estate; and finally the complete breakdown of society’s understanding of marriage.

The time has come for The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) to reassess and renew its public voice concerning the marriage estate, so that our beautiful, pure doctrine may be more clearly taught and more consistently carried out in the practices of its congregations and pastors. We must begin by repenting of our corporate reluctance to resist unscriptural divorce and by renewing our commitment to praise and defend the integrity of marriage. This is also a marvelous opportunity for our beloved Synod to make a bold and clear confession of the marriage estate before the world, ultimately so that many may be won over to the saving truth of God’s Word.

Therefore be it

Resolved, That we repent of our sins of omission and commission against God and one another with regard to the marriage estate, both in our personal lives and in the collective failures of our congregations and our Synod, looking to Christ alone for forgiveness and restoration, and faithfully receiving that very forgiveness and restoration in the pure preaching of God’s Word and reception of the Holy Sacraments; and be it further

Resolved, That the LCMS, its members, congregations, schools, universities, and seminaries, teach and confess the Bible’s doctrine and practice of marriage with renewed effort, in the conviction that “what God has joined together, let not man separate” (Matt 19:6) and that “in the New Testament those who are married are forbidden to get divorced” (LC 1 306); and be it further

Resolved, That our pastors, seminary faculties, and district presidents teach God’s full counsel concerning the marriage estate and lead the congregations of the Synod toward a more faithful discipline for the Christian life, namely, a positive discipleship that rejoices in and encourages the sanctity, integrity, and fruitfulness of the marriage estate; and a discipline that finally denies communion to those who divorce contrary to God’s Word and refuse full reconciliation (Matt. 5:31–32; 1 Cor. 7:10–16), along with all those who publicly and persistently speak or act contrary to the marriage estate as God has instituted it; and be it further

Resolved, That as our pastors especially labor to teach the marriage estate and lead congregations to incorporate this sound discipline among the members in their care, that they do so with great patience with their members and with each other, knowing that it will take years or even decades for our Synod to recover what has been lost to us since societal beliefs about marriage began to change significantly in the middle of the last century; and be it further

Resolved, That our pastors, supported zealously and lovingly by our congregations, bring true repentance, forgiveness, healing, reconciliation, restoration, and hope to the many people who suffer from the effects of sin upon their marriages, families and homes, and personal lives through the faithful use of God’s Law and Gospel; and be it further

Resolved, That our pastors and congregations also recognize that many of the errors and sins against marriage and the marriage estate committed in the past (including divorce, adultery, fornication, homosexual acts or lifestyle, etc.) are beyond familial reconciliation or restitution in this life and cannot be remedied except by genuine repentance and the forgiveness of sins in Christ; and be it further

Resolved, That seminary faculties and the Council of Presidents reevaluate and implement guidelines for seminary admissions and seminary students, and for district presidents in their oversight of pastors, which are drawn from Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions concerning the marriage estate, especially addressing the gravity of divorce, fornication, and other sexual sins, and the high standards to which pastors are held by the Lord of the church (1 Tim. 3:1–13, Titus 1:5–9); and be it further

Resolved, That the Concordia University System and the Council of Presidents reevaluate and implement similar guidelines and practice for all other church work students and for rostered and non-rostered church workers; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod, its theological and seminary faculties, pastors, and other teachers of the church articulate and teach the distinction between the ecclesiastical estate and the civil estate especially in matters of marriage and divorce, and that the church uphold the divine mandates regarding the marriage estate even when they are unsupported or even opposed by the laws, judgments, and opinions of the civil estate; and be it finally
Resolved, That the Wyoming District in convention memorialize the LCMS to uphold the integrity of the Holy Estate of Marriage by adopting this resolution at the 2019 Synod convention.

Wyoming District

Ov. 11-09

To Give Witness That Same-Sex Unions Are Not Marriage

Preamble

Cultural and legal definitions of marriage, life, and family are in a state of rapid flux. Not only has a radically different view of marriage been recently enounced in judicial precedent (United States v. Windsor, 570 U.S. 744 [2013]; Obergefell v. Hodges, 576 U.S. 135 [2015] et al.), regulatory rules (see May 2016 “Guidance” from the US Deps. of Education and Justice, justice.gov/opa/file/850986/download), and the laws of various states, but these new definitions are by no means static. No sooner had the Supreme Court decreed the nation-wide recognition of same-sex “marriage,” than transgender activists challenged the immutable nature of male and female itself, polygamists challenged the exclusive nature of the married estate, and polyamorists challenged the twoness of marriage requirements under the Obergefell decision.

We have the “Everlasting Gospel” (Rev. 14:6) and seek a city not of this world, “which has foundations whose builder and maker is God” (Heb. 11:10). But since the current cultural change not only passively ignores the basic truths of human existence and well-being, but seeks by force to alter reality itself, Christian congregations are being compelled to interact with an ever-changing legal and social landscape.

The very first challenge the church encounters is the vocabulary itself. Love calls a thing what it is. Since Christ has given us to preach His word in all its truth and purity, our task revolves around words and around truth. Even before the refugees of the sexual revolution come into our sanctuaries seeking shelter from the storm, we must daily deal with the logical structure and verbal inventions of the sexual revolution.

When language itself is being invented, redefined, and perverted, the Church of God must speak clearly and unanimously concerning the immutable nature of male and female itself, polygamists challenged the twoness of marriage requirements under the Obergefell decision.

WHEREAS, “God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them” (Gen. 1:27). Therefore, male and female existed before man defined them. Hence, they cannot be understood as social constructs, or human creations (e.g. transgenderism), but of divine origin with deep theological content; and

WHEREAS, “God blessed them. And God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.’ Thus, the distinction of the sexes is given by God to form married homes which, in turn, are a blessing to the entire earth; and

WHEREAS, The Holy Spirit deepens our understanding of these mysteries in Genesis 2: “the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. And the man said, ‘This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.’” (Gen. 2:21–23). The institution of Holy Marriage was given before the fall, and hence has paradigmatic meaning. The creation of Adam’s bride points to the crucifixion of Jesus (John 19:33–34), even before the Protoevangelium (Gen. 3:15); and

WHEREAS, By Adam’s words, “she shall be called woman, for she was taken out of Man,” (Gen. 2:23) we are taught to receive God’s works by confessing what He has done. Accordingly, what God creates and gives is objective and immutable for the whole world. But to name the creations and institutions of God with their proper names is to receive them in faith. Likewise, this pattern is repeated after the Fall into sin and the giving of the Gospel promise. Adam receives the promised Seed by calling “his wife’s name, ‘Eve,’ because she was the mother of all living” (Gen. 3:20); and

WHEREAS, The Church is still called to speak God’s Word back to Him in faith and thanksgiving, so the institutions of marriage, and family, are faithfully received when we name them by God’s names and receive them as images of Christ and His Church (Ephesians 5). Such confession is included in St. Paul’s exhortation, “if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved” (Rom. 10:9); therefore be it

Resolved, That the Wyoming District in convention memorialize the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod’s (LCMS) 2019 convention to commend all people, whoever they are, that recognize and bear witness to the truths written into creation which “God has made plain to all,” through “the things that have been made” (Rom. 1:19–20), and thank God for those who refuse to “approve” (Rom. 1:32) the debased lies of Satan concerning man, woman, and human matrimony; and that the LCMS encourage Christians, in particular, to speak and act in such love for all people that they neither affirm Satan’s lies, nor withhold the Spirit’s hope from any single person for whom Christ has shed His precious blood. For the love of Christ controls us (2 Cor. 5:14); and that the Synod in convention reaffirm 2016 Resolution 14-02 “To Confess the Sanctity of Marriage,” and publicly confess that since same-sex “marriage” perverts God’s institution of Holy Marriage so completely as to render it unrecognizable, Christians can neither concede the use of the term marriage to such non-complementary unions, nor participate in solemnizing them.

Wyoming District

Ov. 11-10

To Encourage Our Church to Faithfulness Regarding Marriage

WHEREAS, By confessing the truth of marriage, we confess God as the one who created us male and female (Gen. 1:27); and

WHEREAS, Christ himself affirmed the truth of marriage, saying, “Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, ‘Therefore a man shall leave

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his father and his mother hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh?’” (Matt. 19:4–5); and

**Whereas**, Our confession of true marriage is tied to our confession of Christ and his bride the church (Eph. 4:25–33); and

**Whereas**, Public opinion, popular culture, and Supreme Court decisions cannot change what God has established; and

**Whereas**, The Scriptures also clearly teach that homosexual acts are intrinsically sinful and violate both revealed and natural law; and

**Whereas**, In the face of the virulent opposition to God’s institution of marriage that is rife in America in these times, faithfulness to the Bible’s teaching carries with it the prospect of real social and economic costs; therefore be it

**Resolved**, That The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) reaffirm its commitment to the biblical definition of marriage as the lifelong union of one man and one woman; and be it further

**Resolved**, That the LCMS encourage its members and the members of its congregations to remain faithful to the biblical teaching regarding marriage even when they experience negative and hostile reactions to such faithful confession; and be it further

**Resolved**, That the LCMS commend all those who have publicly spoken in support of God’s institution and against those who would subvert it; and be it further

**Resolved**, That the LCMS pledge its support by prayer and all other appropriate means to those in this country and elsewhere who are persecuted for their adherence to the biblical teaching of marriage; and be it further

**Resolved**, That the church would be a welcome place for sinners and would continue to proclaim Christ the friend of sinners, that all people would be called to repentance and that the repentant would be forgiven, and that all people would be called to find their identity in Christ alone; and be it finally

**Resolved**, That in faithfulness to Christ, who laid down his life for his bride church, that the LCMS in convention direct all its officers to give public witness to the biblical teaching regarding marriage especially when others are publicly attacking it.

Faculty, Concordia Seminary;
Faculty, Concordia Theological Seminary

### Ov. 11-11

**To Encourage Synod to Develop Resources to Aid Congregations and Schools Regarding Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Issues**

**Whereas**, Before mankind’s fall into sin, God created the estate of marriage (Gen. 1:27–28; 2:18–26) “for the mutual companionship, help, and support that each person ought to receive from each other, that man and woman may find delight in one another and for the procreation of children” (*Lutheran Service Book*, p. 275); and

**Whereas**, After mankind’s fall into sin, Jesus affirms that in the beginning God created mankind “male and female” (Matt. 19:4); and

**Whereas**, The Supreme Court of the United States has ruled that marriages may be contracted between two persons of the same sex; and

**Whereas**, Our society includes many persons who are uncertain whether they are “truly” male or female, and others who regularly dress and present themselves as a member of the opposite sex, and still others who participate in hormonal or surgical procedures in an attempt to change their gender identification from male to female or from female to male; and

**Whereas**, Congregations, schools, and individuals in our district are experiencing mounting pressures as a result of cultural and legal changes; and

**Whereas**, Many church workers and laity have asked for guidance in pastoral care for individuals and families struggling with matters of same-sex orientation and gender identity issues; and

**Whereas**, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) has recently produced resources such as the following Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR) reports: *Human Sexuality: A Theological Perspective* (adopted September 1981); *Response to Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust* (adopted April 2012); *The Creator’s Tapestry: Scriptural Perspectives on Man-Woman Relationships in Marriage and the Church* (adopted December 2009); and *Gender Identity Disorder or Gender Dysphoria in Christian Perspective* (adopted September 2014); therefore be it

**Resolved**, That the Missouri District in convention affirm and faithfully confess the biblical truth that marriage is God’s creation, the exclusive union of one man and one woman; and be it further

**Resolved**, That the Missouri District in convention affirm and faithfully confess that same-sex marriage is contrary to Scripture and to God’s design for his creation and in no way fulfills God’s intention to bless his children through holy marriage; and be it further

**Resolved**, That the pastors and congregations of the district continue to deal compassionately with those who experience same-sex attraction and gender identity issues through the proclamation of the Law and Gospel, the Sacrament of Holy Baptism, corporate and individual confession and absolution, and the proper administration of the Lord’s Supper; and be it further

**Resolved**, That the pastors and congregations of the district continue to deal compassionately with the family, friends, and all others impacted by those who struggle with same-sex attraction, those involved in same-sex relationships, and those who suffer with gender identity issues through the proclamation of the Law and Gospel, the Sacrament of Holy Baptism, corporate and individual confession and absolution, and the proper administration of the Lord’s Supper; and be it further

**Resolved**, That church workers and congregations in the Missouri District be encouraged to utilize the following CTCR reports: *Human Sexuality: A Theological Perspective; Response to Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust; The Creator’s Tapestry: Scriptural Perspectives on Man-Woman Relationships in Marriage and the Church; and Gender Identity Disorder or Gender Dysphoria in Christian Perspective*; and be it finally

**Resolved**, That the Missouri District memorialize the Synod in convention to direct the Office of National Mission, Concordia Publishing House, and the two seminaries of our Synod to continue to provide resources that enable the church to confess the truth boldly and deal compassionately with those who struggle with same-sex attraction and gender identity issues, along with those who care for them.

Missouri District

2019 Convention Workbook
**To Engage in Ministry to Transgendered Persons**

WHEREAS, All persons are created in God’s image and are made to glorify Him (Gen. 1:27; Is. 43:7); and

WHEREAS, God’s design was the creation of two distinct and complementary sexes, male and female (Gen. 1:27; Matt. 19:4; Mark 10:6) which designate the fundamental distinction that God has embedded in the very biology of the human race; and

WHEREAS, Distinctions in masculine and feminine as ordained by God are part of the created order and should find expression in every human heart (Gen. 2:18, 21–24; 1 Cor. 11:7–9; Eph. 5:22–33; 1 Tim. 2:12–14); and

WHEREAS, The fall of man into sin has introduced brokenness and futility into God’s good creation (Gen. 3:1–24; Rom. 8:20); and

WHEREAS, According to a 2016 study from the Williams Institute of the University of California Los Angeles (ULCA) School of Law, about 1.4 million Americans identify as transgender (williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/press/press-releases/updated-estimates-show-1-4-million-adults-identify-as-transgender-in-the-us-doubling-estimates-from-a-decade-ago/); and

WHEREAS, Transgenderism differs from hermaphroditism or intersexuality in that the sex of the individual is not biologically ambiguous but psychologically ambiguous; and

WHEREAS, Some states prohibit licensed counselors from any attempt to change a child’s “gender expression”; and

WHEREAS, The Church does not have a good history of ministering to transgendered persons often due to our discomfort with the topic or to the harsh, unloving, hypocritical manner in which we speak often while refusing to speak publicly against other sexual sins such as divorce, remarriage, pornography, sexual harassment, coarse language, etc.; and

WHEREAS, The Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR) has produced a 2014 paper titled, “Gender Identity Disorder or Gender Dysphoria in Christian Perspective” which begins to address this topic; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Synod in convention affirm God’s good design that gender identity is determined by biological sex and not by one’s self-perception—a perception which is often influenced by fallen human nature in ways contrary to God’s design (Eph. 4:17–18); and be it further

Resolved, That we grieve the reality of human falleness which can result in manifestations of sexuality outside of the teaching of Scripture and point all to the redemption of our bodies in Christ (Rom. 8:23); and be it further

Resolved, That we extend love and compassion to those whose sexual self-understanding is shaped by a distressing conflict between their biological sex and their gender identity; and be it further

Resolved, That we invite all transgender persons to trust in Christ and to experience renewal in the Gospel (1 Tim. 1:15–16); and be it further

Resolved, That we love our transgender neighbors, seek their good always, welcome them to our churches and, as they repent and believe in Christ, receive them into church membership (2 Cor. 5:18–20; Gal. 5:14); and be it further

Resolved, That we continue to oppose steadfastly all efforts by any governing official or body to validate transgender identity as morally praiseworthy (Is. 5:20); and be it further

Resolved, That we oppose efforts to alter one’s bodily identity (e.g., cross-sex hormone therapy, gender reassignment surgery) to refashion it to conform with one’s perceived gender identity; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod in convention request the CTCR to study this issue in more depth and provide Gospel-centered resources on how to engage in ministry to transgendered persons.

New Jersey District

**To Decry Racism in Church and Society**

(Resolution 02-07-18)

WHEREAS, All humanity shares a common origin in Adam and Eve (Genesis 1 and 2); and

WHEREAS, “God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him” (Acts 10:34–35); and

WHEREAS, God has united all believers in Christ through Holy Baptism (Eph. 4:4–6); and

WHEREAS, The Commission on Theology and Church Relations document, Racism and the Church (Feb. 1994) states: “We in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod have before us a wonderful opportunity to commit ourselves to strive toward making racism a thing of the past, and to demonstrate before a watching world how people of all cultures and groups can become one in Christ, who has made of many one body for the edification of all”; and

WHEREAS, Racism has no basis in science, Scripture, or the Confessions; and

WHEREAS, We continue to see racism among those who call themselves Christian and in society-at-large, including in the “white nationalist” movement; therefore be it

Resolved, That the delegates to the convention of the Atlantic District meeting in Bronxville, N.Y., June 8–9, 2018, decry every form of racism, including white supremacy under the white nationalist movement, as antithetical to the Gospel of Jesus Christ; and be it further

Resolved, That we prioritize working toward racial reconciliation and equality within the Church and within society-at-large; and be it further

Resolved, That we submit this resolution “To Decry Racism in Church and Society” to the Synod convention meeting in Tampa, Fla., July 20–25, 2019; and be it further

Resolved, That the congregations of the Atlantic District pray both for those who advocate racist ideologies and those who are thereby deceived, while ministering to those who carry this
deception within our congregations that they may recognize their errors, repent, and know the reconciling forgiveness of the Lord Jesus Christ, who by Baptism gathers His people into one from all nations; and be it finally

Resolved, That the Atlantic District make statements from time to time through press releases to decry incident of racism in society, whenever these occur.

Atlantic District

Ov. 11-14

To Condemn the Sin of Racism

WHEREAS, The sin of racism has plagued creation since the Fall, and its victims have been found in every place and every time including within and outside the Church; and

WHEREAS, The Gospel of Christ calls the Church to suffer alongside the oppressed at the cost of all things, for Jesus said, “Greater love has no one than this, that someone lays down his life for his friends” (John 15:13); and our Lord has commanded us, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Matt. 22:39b); and

WHEREAS, Racism seeks to harm its victims in thought, word, or deed, and people in our communities and ministries have experienced such harm; and

WHEREAS, The Church is called to condemn sin in every form and manner, both in public and in private, including racism in all of its expressions, such as: racial profiling; unjust incarceration; economic injustice and inequality; discrimination in education, employment, and housing; xenophobic sentiment; and inhumane treatment of immigrants and refugees; and

WHEREAS, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) has condemned racism in eight Synod conventions resulting in convention resolutions; and

WHEREAS, In 1994 the Committee on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR) issued a document called “Racism and the Church” that was commended to the Synod by the 1995 convention (Res. 2-05A); therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Northwest District of the LCMS publicly condemn the sin of racism in all its manifestations, giving honor to the Father “from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named” (Eph. 3:15); confessing the Son, who, by His Incarnation and sacrificial death gave value and dignity to every human being; and calling on the Spirit to work in us true repentance and renewal of life; and be it further

Resolved, That honest conversation about racism and its effects be encouraged in the district through creation of a district task force on racism and its effects, to develop tools to help congregations see and respond to racism and its effects in their local setting; and be it finally

Resolved, That the Northwest District in convention memorialize the Synod in convention to again address the sin of racism in a convention resolution calling for repentance, dialogue, and public witness.

Northwest District

Ov. 11-15

To Resist the Increasing Influence of the Gnostic Heresy

WHEREAS, The Gnostic heresy, which from early days of the Church has sought to radically separate the material world from the spiritual and elevate the spiritual over the material, is making a resurgence within culture and in some corners of the Church itself; and

WHEREAS, This Gnostic impulse is leading many to deny that the human person is an integrated and indissoluble union of body and soul/spirit; and

WHEREAS, This has led many in society to diminish the importance and the goodness of the human body relative to the soul/spirit; and

WHEREAS, This diminished view of the body has led to the denial of natural law and the natural order of creation, and has recently led to many anti-Scriptural and unnatural practices in our public life, including abortion, pornography, same-sex marriage, the celebration of transgenderism, gender fluidity, and homosexuality; and

WHEREAS, These Gnostic-inspired attitudes and practices are demonstrably harmful to the temporal flourishing of human life both on the individual and corporate level, as well as to distorted understandings of the Christian gospel; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Minnesota South District of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod in convention strongly encourage pastors of the district to stress in their preaching, teaching, and worship leadership the importance, the goodness, and the integrity of the whole human person and that of the whole creation, both in its physical and spiritual dimensions; and be it further

Resolved, That the district in convention urge pastors of the district that in their preaching, teaching, and worship to not intentionally or inadvertently give the impression that a goal of the Christian life is to be liberated from the body, even though a person may be experiencing bodily or psychological suffering; and be it further

Resolved, That the district in convention urge pastors of the district that in their preaching, teaching, and worship to not intentional or inadvertently give the impression that a goal of the Christian life is to be newly made heaven, a new earth, including a new and glorified body; and be it further

Resolved, That the district in convention encourage pastors and congregations of the district to continue to hold the sacraments in high regard, not only because they are a most blessed means by which God assures us of forgiveness, life and salvation, but also because in joining God’s Word and its promise to physical elements, a clear witness is given to the high regard God continues to have for the physical world; and be it further

Resolved, That the district in convention encourage pastors and congregations of the district to continue to publicly celebrate the Feast of the Ascension of our Lord and other such occasions which reinforce the enduring importance and goodness of the human body by drawing attention to God’s permanent commitment to his embodied creatures by remaining embodied himself in Christ to this very day; and be it finally

2019 Convention Workbook
Resolved, That the district in convention memorialize the Synod to develop resources for use in home and schools related to the issue of Gnosticism.

Minnesota South District

Ov. 11-16

To Address the Global War on Christianity

WHEREAS, The Christian family understands we are “strangers here and heaven is our home” (John 8:18; 9:2); and

WHEREAS, Satan has worked to undermine and destroy Christians in every age (Rom. 8:18–39; Col. 4:18); and

WHEREAS, The global culture is continuing to be an instrument of evil in the slaughter and harm of Christians in many parts of the world. Every month 322 Christians are killed for their faith, 214 churches and Christian properties are destroyed, and 722 acts of violence (such as rape, beatings, forced marriages, arrests, and abductions) are perpetrated against Christians (statistics from Open Doors Ministry, 2017); and

WHEREAS, The Italian journalist Antonio Socci asserts that there have been 70 million martyrs worldwide since the church began and that 45.5 million, or 65 percent, died in the twentieth century (Antonio Socci, “Twentieth Century Saw 65% of Christian Martyrs,” May 9, 2002); and

WHEREAS, Persecution is carried out by many government and totalitarian regimes; and

WHEREAS, Societal pressure as experienced in much of western culture marginalizes and discriminates against Christians and the Church; and

WHEREAS, The apostle Paul writes that Christians in the body of Christ “should have equal concern for each other” and that if “one part suffers, every part suffers with it” (1 Cor. 12:25–26); and

WHEREAS, We are encouraged “to remember those in prison as if you were together with them in prison, and those who are mistreated, as if you yourselves were suffering” (Heb. 13:3); therefore be it

Resolved, That The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) in convention pray for Christians everywhere who suffer and are suffering persecution for the faith; and be it further

Resolved, That the LCMS regularly inform pastors, congregations, and individual members of the ongoing persecution of Christians; and be it further

Resolved, That the congregations of the LCMS regularly pray for Christians who are being martyred around the world; and be it further

Resolved, That the LCMS become a global leader in speaking to the issue of Christian persecution; and be it further

Resolved, That the LCMS provide the means and resources to help, support, and protect the lives of Christians everywhere; and be it finally

Resolved, That the LCMS establish a task force to examine the best ways we can accomplish these goals.

Concordia, Fort Wayne, IN; Emmanuel, Fort Wayne, IN; Martini, New Haven, IN; New Life, Fort Wayne, IN; St. Michael, Fort Wayne, IN; St. Peter’s, Fort Wayne, IN

Ov. 11-17

To Remember the Persecuted Church

WHEREAS, The Christian family understands that we are strangers here and heaven is our home (Heb. 11:13; 2 Cor. 5:6–8); and

WHEREAS, Satan has worked to undermine and destroy Christians in every age (Eph. 6:10–12; 1 Peter 5:8); and

WHEREAS, The secular culture is continuing to be an instrument of evil in the slaughter and harm of Christians in many parts of the world. Every month 322 Christians are killed for their faith, 214 churches and Christian properties are destroyed, and 722 acts of violence (such as rape, beatings, forced marriages, arrests, and abductions) are perpetrated against Christians (Source: Open Doors Ministry, 2017); and

WHEREAS, The Italian journalist, Antonio Socci asserts that there have been 70 million martyrs worldwide since the church began and that 45.5 million, or 65 percent, died in the twentieth century (Antonio Socci, “Twentieth Century Saw 65% of Christian Martyrs,” Zenit, May 9, 2002); and

WHEREAS, Persecution is carried out by many government and totalitarian regimes; and

WHEREAS, Societal pressure as experienced in much of Western culture marginalizes and discriminates against Christians and the Church; and

WHEREAS, The Apostle Paul writes that Christians in the body of Christ should “care for one another” and that if “one member suffers, all suffer together” (1 Cor. 12:25–26); and

WHEREAS, Christians are encouraged to “remember those who are in prison, as though in prison with them, and those who are mistreated, since you also are in the body” (Heb. 13:3); therefore be it

Resolved, That The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) in convention pray for Christians everywhere who suffer and are suffering persecution for the faith; and be it further

Resolved, That the LCMS regularly inform pastors, congregations, and individual members of the on-going persecution of Christians; and be it further

Resolved, That the congregations of the LCMS regularly pray for Christians who are being martyred around the world; and be it finally

Resolved, That the LCMS provide the means and resources to help, support, and protect the lives of Christians everywhere.

Zion
Fort Wayne, IN

Ov. 11-18

To Expand the Mandate of the Lutheran Center for Religious Liberty

WHEREAS, The newly created Lutheran Center for Religious Liberty (LCRL) has as its mandate to be about the task of “educating encouraging and equipping LCMS members and organizations to take informed action ...”; and

WHEREAS, This institution currently is focusing on “marriage, life and religious freedom,” and pro-life theology in all its manifold manifestations; and
WHEREAS, There are many issues in society that call for a vigorous pro-life response from Christians based on the clear testimony of scripture, including racism, poverty, caring for the holistic wellbeing of others, and the just care of the alien in our midst; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Atlantic District request the Synod in convention to expand the pro-life mandate of the LCRL to include, among issues but not limited to, racial reconciliation, the merciful treatment of the alien in our midst, and the appropriate provision of care for all who are in need of healing.

Atlantic District
12. Retention: Schools, Family, Youth and Young Adults

REPORTS

R1, R1.1, R1.2, R7, R12, R15, R63, R65, R66

OVERTURES

Ov. 12-01

To Develop a General Confessional Ethos in Our Congregations

WHEREAS, Congregations of the Minnesota South District (MNS) all have in their constitutions a statement that says they believe the Augsburg Confession is a proper exposition of the Scriptures, along with its Apology and the other writings of the Book of Concord, namely the ecumenical creeds, the Small and Large Catechism, the Smalcald Articles, the Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope, and the Formula of Concord (henceforward referred to as the Lutheran Symbols); and

WHEREAS, Every pastor of our district, when he is ordained and installed, makes the same statement about our Lutheran Symbols, confessing them to be a proper exposition of the Scriptures; and

WHEREAS, Every congregational council, when installed, according to the agenda of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, implies a similar statement regarding these Lutheran Symbols; and

WHEREAS, When Jesus gave the Church the commission to make disciples, it was to be not only by baptizing, but teaching them what He had commanded the disciples, thereby making it clear He expected the disciples to be precise about the teachings and to make sure the next generation of leaders knew the apostolic faith well; and

WHEREAS, Our Lord taught us to pray that His name would be hallowed among us, which meant He expected His Word to be “taught in its truth and purity” (Small Catechism III 2); and

WHEREAS, Our Lord recognized that false teaching would always be a problem even as He warned His disciples about these false teachings saying, “Watch and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees” (Matt. 16:6, 11); and

WHEREAS, When the Holy Spirit inspired these apostolic writers to record what Jesus had said, bringing to mind what He had taught them saying, “When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. All that the Father has is mine; therefore I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you” (John 16:13–15), we can be confident of what they have written; and

WHEREAS, It was recognized that some of the next generation would not be faithful to those teachings even as Paul the apostle warned the elders of Ephesus to “pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood... I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them” (Acts 20:28–30); and

WHEREAS, It became necessary that there was division to establish who had the truth as Paul said, “For, in the first place, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you. And I believe it in part, for there must be factions among you in order that those who are genuine among you may be recognized” (1 Cor. 11:18–19); and

WHEREAS, The Lord raised up fathers of the church who were faithful to the apostolic writings and confronted those false teachings our Lord and Paul had warned against, and the writings of these fathers have been recorded in history; and

WHEREAS, Martin Chemnitz, one of the authors of the Formula of Concord (FC), reflecting the attitude toward the reliability of the writings contained in the Book of Concord—also reflected in our clergy and congregational subscription—said, “We assign to the writings of the fathers their proper and, indeed, honorable place which is due them, because they have clearly expounded many passages of Scripture, have defended the ancient dogmas of the Church against new corruptions of heretics, and have done so on the basis of Scripture, have correctly explained many points of doctrine, have recorded many things concerning the history of the primitive church, and have usefully called attention to many things”; and

WHEREAS, The Confessions themselves knew the limitations of human writings, saying in the introduction to the Formula of Concord, “Other writings of ancient and modern teachers, whatever their names, should not be put on a par with Holy Scriptures. Every single one of them should be subordinated to the Scriptures and should be received in no other way and no further than as witnesses to the fashion in which the doctrine of the prophets and apostles were preserved in post-apostolic times” (FC Summary Content, Rule, and Norm 2); and

WHEREAS, George Porterfield Krauth, leader of the 19th century Lutheran Council, which eventually became part of the ELCA, wrote concerning the Confessions, “We do not claim that our Confessors were infallible. We do not say they could not fail. We only claim that they did not fail”; and

WHEREAS, Based on their history, we have every right to make the bold confession regarding these Lutheran Symbols that they are the truth and are faithful expositions of the Scriptures; and

WHEREAS, By the very nature of membership in the Synod, both as pastors and as congregations, we already make the bold confession that Lutheranism is the true confession of faith, as opposed to any other Christian denomination’s confession; and

WHEREAS, Being able to make this bold confession gives us great comfort because we are not, as so many denominations are today, merely struggling to know the truth, but we are confident we have it, especially since our Lutheran Symbols constantly point us back to the One who is the truth, as well as the way and the life (John 14:6); and

WHEREAS, We are in the midst of celebrating the first year of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, and celebrating this has created a broader awareness of our Lutheran Symbols; and

WHEREAS, We could lose the impact of our celebration if we don’t encourage further study and simple consideration of the role of these Symbols in our congregation; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Minnesota South District in convention encourage the congregations of the MNS District to consider these statements and create an ethos in their congregations that looks upon these Symbols as being more than just a statement of
confession, but a particularly Lutheran approach to congregational life by implementing the following suggestions, including, but not limited to:

Offering a study of the Small Catechism, Large Catechism, and/or Augsburg Confession to the members of our district congregations;

Encouraging members to avail themselves of various resources such as the Lutheran Witness; bookofconcord.org; various programs on kfuo.org such as Thy Strong Word, Law and Gospel, Concord Matters, and Issues, Etc.; or to attend area seminars and conferences sponsored by Vine and Branches, Confessional Lutherans for Christ’s Commission and others;

Encouraging weekly readings out of the Book of Concord by publishing excerpts for congregational reading, and using the weekly assigned readings at congregational meetings;

Encouraging the youth of district congregations to engage with the Confessions by attending studies demonstrating the truth of the apostolic faith as confessed in Lutheranism, and encouraging Bible bowls to also include portions of the Confessions;

Encouraging pastors to seek to incorporate passages of the Confessions in their sermons and Bible studies, and ensure that the doctrine proclaimed in their congregations shall be examined according to our confessional writings;

and be it further

Resolved, That the MNS District in convention memorialize the Synod in convention in 2019 to do similarly.

Minnesota South District

Ov. 12-02

To Encourage Congregations toward Retention of Members Through Catechesis

WHEREAS, We are surrounded by Christians who don’t know the full riches of God’s grace; and

WHEREAS, We are tempted to emulate and identify with them so that the Lutheran church, rather than being the queen that she is with all the gifts given to her, becomes a beggar with regard to these Christians of different confessions; and

WHEREAS, Many in our congregations are proselytized from the Lutheran faith at all stages of life because they don’t know the apostolic faith as confessed in the Lutheran symbols; and

WHEREAS, Many in our congregations are proselytized from the Lutheran faith at all stages of life because they don’t know the apostolic faith as confessed in the Lutheran symbols; and

WHEREAS, The times to help people to know the faith are primarily when they are first brought into our congregations as members and as youth when they are first learning the faith; and

WHEREAS, Many of our congregations don’t do a thorough catechesis of new members, preferring to accept new members into their congregation without helping them to know that their membership entails a confession of what is taught at their congregation’s altar (1 Cor. 10:18); and

WHEREAS, The prevailing understanding of youth ministry is that after confirmation, the Small Catechism is no longer necessary, much less any other confessional documents; therefore be it

Resolved, That during catechesis leading up to confirmation, whether in the home or at the church, the congregations of the Minnesota South District recognize that they are preparing the youth, among other reasons, to safeguard them against proselytization into churches of different confessions; and be it further

Resolved, That we encourage congregations of the district toward ongoing catechesis after confirmation, using the Bible, the Small Catechism, and the Synod explanations with generous references to other confessional documents; and be it further

Resolved, That we encourage congregations to provide a thorough catechesis for their new members recognizing that this is also, among other things, to prevent their proselytization into churches of different confessions; and be it further

Resolved, That the district in its communications highlight best practices that encourage study of the Scriptures, Small and Large Catechisms and other parts of the Lutheran Confessions. Examples of best practices shall be solicited from the circuit and should highlight examples of deeper study of Christian doctrine in youth and adult classes (including Sunday school), creative use of the catechism and other confessional documents, creative techniques families are using to teach the Lutheran faith, use of libraries for members and community, seminars held and attended, etc.; and be it finally

Resolved, That the district in convention memorialize the Synod in convention in 2019 to do the same.

Minnesota South District

Ov. 12-03

To Encourage Families to Teach the Lutheran Faith with an Eye Toward Lutheran Mission

WHEREAS, President Harrison wrote in his report as recorded on p. 8 in the 2016 Workbook “When the German mission leader and theologian of the last generation Friedrich Wilhelm Hopf (1910–1982) asserted, ‘The Lutheran church can only do Lutheran mission,’ he was observing that the Lutheran confession is inseparable from mission”; and

WHEREAS, The Synod in convention in 2016 passed Resolution 16-02A, entitled “To Make Strengthening Lutheran Families a Mission Priority”; and

WHEREAS, That resolution stated, “The family home is to be the place of forming Christian disciples”; and

WHEREAS, It also stated, “The witness of our children, discipled at home and in the church, is key to reaching those outside the faith”; and

WHEREAS, Our Synod has developed outreach tools like Everyone His Witness and the various programs in re:Vitality [a revitalization program developed by the Office of National Mission]; and

WHEREAS, In His priestly prayer, Jesus prayed for His disciples before He prayed for those they would reach (John 17); and

WHEREAS, In popular parlance, the flight attendant tells the travelers to always fix the mask on their own face before trying to help others with theirs; therefore be it

Resolved, That the congregations of the Minnesota South District in convention encourage the parents of our congregations toward a more thorough discipling of their children in the Lutheran faith with an eye toward the mission of the church; and be it finally

Resolved, That the Minnesota South District in convention memorialize the Synod in convention in 2019 to do similarly.

Minnesota South District

2019 Convention Workbook
Ov. 12-04

To Encourage Congregations to Help Parents in their Duty to Pass on the Faith

WHEREAS, It is the duty of parents to pass on the faith to their children, even as Paul says, “Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord” (Eph. 6:4); and

WHEREAS, Moses writes in Deut. 6:6–7, “And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise”; and

WHEREAS, The Large Catechism comments on the promise God makes for those who keep this commandment in reference to Ex. 20:12 and Eph. 6:3 saying, “From this you can see for yourself how serious God is about this commandment. He not only declares that it is well pleasing to Him and that He has joy and delight in it, but He also declares that it shall prosper us and promote our highest good, so that we may have a pleasant and agreeable life, furnished with every good thing” (LC I 131–2); and

WHEREAS, It is clear this command was not meant to be just for the next generation but for succeeding generations as Moses says, “Now this is the commandment—the statutes and the rules—that the LORD your God commanded me to teach you...that you may fear the LORD your God, you and your son and your son’s son” (Deut. 6:1–2); and

WHEREAS, Our congregations have given the impression to parents that they have met their parental duty simply by bringing their children to church for instruction and catechesis; and

WHEREAS, Outward influences on children can’t be countered by simply an hour to two hours of instruction a week; and

WHEREAS, To truly be able to pass on the faith, parents will need to adopt the principles Moses had recommended; and

WHEREAS, In order to have the faith passed on to succeeding generations, the parents must be concerned not only about their children’s understanding of the faith but also their children’s future spouse, not simply so the child will stay Lutheran, but even more that they may continue to enjoy the blessings that come from being in the Lutheran faith and see it passed to the next generation; and

WHEREAS, The beginning of this principle starts in the weekend Divine Service, where the Lord comes to His people giving them gifts of life and forgiveness, thereby allowing the parents opportunity to speak about this with their children, reflecting on what was said and anticipating what will be said in the next week; and

WHEREAS, As a church, in general, we of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod have not considered the parents to be the teachers of their children’s faith and therefore haven’t prepared them very well for that task; and

WHEREAS, The system of “Home-Centered, Church-Supported Christian Education,” as suggested by Dr. Ben Freudenburg and also promoted by Dr. Peter Bender through his work with the Concordia Catechetical Academy, captures the Mosaic principle of parents being the teachers and churches helping them in that task; and

WHEREAS, It may seem nearly impossible to follow these Mosaic principles based on the schedules of today’s families and children and is likely to cause feelings of insufficiency and guilt for some parents; therefore be it

Resolved, That pastors be ready to support these parents with a pastoral word of forgiveness; and be it further

Resolved, That we encourage our congregations of the Minnesota South District, using current congregational programs and developing new ones with the help of the district, to help parents embrace this role of passing on the faith, being careful to point out that the congregation only supplements the parents’ role, not supplants it; or, to put another way, the Church supports the parents as they work to form their children’s faith at home; and be it further

Resolved, That we encourage pastors and/or other members of congregational staff to increase visitation of young families, use bulletins to suggest readings and topics for family devotions, and introduce experienced families to help mentor young families in areas of home catechesis; and be it further

Resolved, That we memorialize the Synod as it gathers in convention in 2019 to do similarly.

Minnesota South District

Ov. 12-05

To Support and Strengthen Marriage and Family

WHEREAS, The divine purposes for marriage are: 1) “for mutual companionship, help, and support that each person ought to receive from the other, both in prosperity and adversity”; 2) “that man and woman may find delight in one another...and shall take a spouse in holiness and purity, not in the passion of lust, for God has not called us to impurity but in holiness”; and 3) “for the procreation of children who are to be brought up in the fear and instruction of the Lord so that they may offer Him their praise” (Lutheran Service Book Agenda, p. 65 and Lutheran Service Book p. 275; see Gen. 2:23–24, Matt. 19:4–6); and

WHEREAS, Scripture teaches that marriage between one man with one woman in life-long fidelity to each other is the very image and representation of the Gospel; that is, of Christ’s eternal fidelity and love for His bride, the Church (Eph. 5:22–33; Rev. 19:1–9); and

WHEREAS, The decline of marriage and the family in the Western hemisphere, in general, and the United States, in particular, is evidenced in the increased number of broken homes, divorce, single-parent families, delayed marriage, high unwed birth rates, an overall low birth rate in society, redefinitions of marriage and family, the increased burden of society to care for abandoned children via the foster care system, and the elderly abandoned in nursing homes, etc.; and

WHEREAS, The decline of marriage and the family is adversely affecting the health and vitality of the Christian church and local congregations especially, as documented by The Journal of Lutheran Mission, December 2016 Special Edition, p. 10, “The connection between marriage,parenthood, and religiosity is well established. This effect is particularly pronounced for men, who are more likely to return to religion upon getting married or becoming a father. … It is clear that early marriage, on average, tends to keep young people involved in religion. On the other hand, cohabitation
without marriage tends to weaken religious attachment even further,” concluding, on p. 11, “It is in the church’s best interest to encourage early marriage (rather than cohabitation) and large, strong families”; and

Whereas, The 2016 Synod convention resolved to add “strengthen and support the Lutheran family in living out God’s design” as a seventh priority under the three-fold emphasis of “Witness, Mercy, Life Together” (Resolution 4-02A, 16-02A); therefore be it

Resolved, That the Wyoming District in convention memorialize the 2016 Synod convention to exhort all her members (congregations, pastors, directors of christian education, etc.) and organizations (recognized service organizations, Concordia Publishing House, etc.) at all levels and at every opportunity to confirm publicly that marriage and family are good and thus promote the health and vitality of marriage and the family by undertaking the following endeavors:

1. to teach purposely the biblical view of family, its institution and purposes, as well as the godly expectations of Christians to “provide for his relatives, and especially for members of his household” (1 Tim. 5:8);

2. to teach purposely the underlying Gospel foundation that marriage is a profound mystery that “especially refers to Christ and the church” (Eph. 5:22–33, esp. v. 31);

3. to teach purposely that marriage is a good and honorable estate that should be sought after sooner rather than later in life;

4. to encourage purposely congregations to “train the young women to love their husbands and children … working at home” and support those mothers in meaningful and tangible ways who wish to stay home and nurture their family (Titus 2:1–8, esp. vv. 4–5);

5. to encourage purposely husbands and wives to consider children to be “a heritage from the Lord, the fruit of the womb a reward” (Ps. 127:3), while providing appropriate encouragement to bear children sooner, during “one’s youth” (Ps. 127:4), and to seek the Lord’s benediction for more numerous children, “blessed is the man who fills his quiver with them” (Ps. 127:5; Psalm 128);

6. to teach purposely husbands and fathers that it is each husband’s God-given responsibility to be “the head of his wife even as Christ is the head of the church” (Eph. 5:23) with God-pleasing headship manifesting itself by:
   a. ensuring that he, his wife, and his children are regular and faithful in weekly church services whereby they devote “themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers” (Acts 2:42; Heb. 10:24–25),
   b. providing for and participating in abundant catechetical instruction for all members of his household so that children are brought “up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord” (Eph. 6:4), and
   c. leading his family in daily devotions with God’s Word serving as the center piece that is talked about “in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise” (Deut. 6:4–9; esp. v. 7);

7. to teach purposely that each Christian is to “lead the life that the Lord has assigned to him and to which God has called him” (1 Cor. 7:17), for example, the vocations of husbands, fathers, wives, mothers, hearers, and citizens, etc., as taught in The Table of Duties in Luther’s Small Catechism (1991 Edition, 35–39; Lutheran Service Book, 328);

8. to teach purposely that fathers and mothers be intentional in their efforts to help their children meet other Lutheran youth, keeping the goal of marriage in mind;

9. to teach purposely that children ought to receive such marital guidance from their parents and other authorities for their good as the promise of the 4th Commandment states, “that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land” (Eph. 6:3; Ex. 20:12);

10. to provide various social and catechetical opportunities for Lutheran youth and young adults to meet other Lutheran youth and young adults;

11. to encourage and affirm the specific giftedness that celibate singles have within the body of Christ and the unique opportunities the Lord provides them for life and service “for the sake of the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 19:10–12); and be it further

Resolved, That The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, together with all Christians who are humbled in godly sorrow, rejoice in the fullness of the Father’s forgiveness for the sake of Christ, pray for forgiving hearts towards those who have sinned against us, and trust in the Triune God alone to repair, restore and heal us in his mercy.

Wyoming District

Ov. 12-06

To Give Thanks for Campus Ministry and Endorse Best Practices Therein

Whereas, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) campus ministries provide an invaluable means to strengthen the faith of college students at a time and in an environment when many fall away from the church; and

Whereas, LCMS campus ministries also provide invaluable opportunities for outreach and evangelism to young adults on college campuses; and

Whereas, In the past several years the LCMS has expanded and enhanced its campus ministry program under the banner of “LCMS U” led by Rev. Marcus Zill, where “LCMS U is the place to connect and encourage parents, congregations and campus ministries as they seek to care for students, so that all can boldly bear witness to Christ on our nation’s college campuses”;

Whereas, LCMS U has identified four principal reasons to CARE about campus ministry:

• catechizing and caring for our own;
• apologetics in the academic square;
• reaching out to those who are lost;
• engaging a dying culture with Christ;

Whereas, In furtherance thereof, LCMS U provides:

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• tools to find LCMS U chapters and connect college students to them;
• national conferences for college students and campus workers;
• a weekly LCMS U radio program, “The Student Union,” on Worldwide KFUO;
• resources to help connect and prepare those who are college bound;
• consultation for new and existing campus ministries;

WHEREAS, All ministry takes place in its own unique context; yet in every context it exists in the commonality of the Word proclaimed with Law and Gospel rightly divided, and the Sacraments rightly administered; and

WHEREAS, Students at colleges and universities are independent young adults seeking knowledge, are open and apt to the thoughtful study of the rich treasures of Holy Scripture, the Confessions, and the liturgy at a high level; and

WHEREAS, Students therefore should be fed accordingly: “strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil,” (Heb. 5:14); and

WHEREAS, As these young adults will graduate and take their places in vocations in the working world using the knowledge imparted to them, so too should they graduate as adults prepared for their vocations as faithful laity in their local congregations; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Synod in convention give thanks for the faithful work of LCMS U campus ministry, including all individual campus ministries whether supported by districts, or as missions of local congregations in proximity to institutions of higher learning, or on the campuses of our Concordia University System (CUS) schools; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod in convention affirm, and encourage as best practice, the housing of campus ministry in a physical location suited for Word and Sacrament ministry in proximity to the relevant campus, be it a freestanding chapel facility or a local congregation, and exhort those districts with such facilities to use all reasonable efforts to maintain and preserve them; and be it further

Resolved, That pastors of each congregation in the Synod be exhorted to connect their members attending colleges and universities away from their home congregation with local LCMS campus ministries where available, or if not with local LCMS congregations, by contacting the campus pastor or pastor directly with the name and contact information of each student, and by providing information about LCMS campus worship opportunities to such students; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod in convention affirm, and encourage as best practice, that campus ministries use the liturgy from the Synod’s hymnals as the order of worship, with lessons read by the pastor, and offer the Lord’s Supper every Sunday, given the sometimes-sporadic worship attendance of college students; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod urge all campus ministries to provide a college level theological education to the students in their care, by conducting regular and high-level Bible and confessional studies led by the pastor; and be it finally

Resolved, That the Synod in convention encourage all congregations to support campus ministries in their district, including those at CUS schools, including through the extension of hospitality to students.

Board of Regents
Concordia University Chicago

Ov. 12-07

To Encourage Ministry to College-Age Young People

WHEREAS, The college years have historically been a time where many of our young people are tempted to fall away from the faith as they find themselves confronted by dominant secular and increasingly anti-Christian worldviews; and

WHEREAS, We have experienced escalating turmoil on our nation’s university campuses in recent years, including the loss of freedom of speech and religious expression; and

WHEREAS, An annual survey of over 153,000 college freshmen, “The American Freshman,” (Los Angeles: Higher Education Research Institute) demonstrates that college freshmen are increasingly distancing themselves from any religion (28% in 2015 compared to 12% in 1971); and

WHEREAS, According to a recent Gallup poll in 2015, the percentage of Christians continues to trend lowest among college age young adults (18–24); and

WHEREAS, One of the greatest tasks each generation has is to hand over the faith to the one that follows it; and

WHEREAS, We all wish to join the apostle, John in saying of the young people of the church, “I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth” (3 John 4); and

WHEREAS, We are witnessing increased zeal by many of our Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) college students to confess their faith in the public square, although it is getting increasingly more difficult to do so; and

WHEREAS, The enormous challenges that our young people face on our university campuses also present equally tremendous opportunities for our collective witness to the truth of God’s Word in the academic square and the marketplace of ideas; and

WHEREAS, The 2016 Synod convention resolved to “increase our efforts to retain college-age youth” (Resolution 16-05); therefore be it

Resolved, That we give thanks to God for the renewed emphasis on campus ministry in the Synod through LCMS campus ministry and that we continue to encourage congregations and circuits to intentionally support local campus ministry and outreach wherever possible; and be it further

Resolved, That we encourage all LCMS families, pastors, youth workers, and congregations in our district to teach Luther’s Large Catechism throughout their youth and to increase their own efforts to help connect their graduating high school students transitioning into college to our LCMS U campus ministries and/or local congregations as early as possible; and be it further

Resolved, That we also encourage the congregations in the Wyoming District to support district gatherings such as Lander Youth Camp and the Youth Breakaway Weekend; and be it further
Resolved, That we encourage congregations with local college campuses to develop programs that would connect incoming LCMS college students to local LCMS families; and be it further
Resolved, That we encourage circuits in the district to develop gatherings of the youth in their circuits that youth may develop and nurture relationships with one another prior to transitioning into college; and be it further
Resolved, That we encourage all families, pastors, youth workers, and congregations of the district to develop a way to follow up with recent high school graduates; and be it finally
Resolved, That the district encourage and assist in efforts made by LCMS campus ministry to develop a strategic and comprehensive plan to help congregations and families better prepare high school graduates for the transition to college life, develop resources to help those going to college better understand the challenges and worldview frameworks that they will face during their college years, and increase training opportunities and resources to aid our college age youth in boldly witnessing to their faith on campus and in the public square.

Wyoming District

Ov. 12-08

To Take Further Steps in the Retention of College Students in Synod Congregations

WHEREAS, Fifty percent of the students that go off to college never return to church; and
WHEREAS, Many of these are students that come out of congregations of the Minnesota South (MNS) District of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS); and
WHEREAS, The Synod has in place programs to prevent this loss such as the Concordia University System and LCMS U; therefore be it
Resolved, That we encourage congregations of the district to creatively develop programs to maintain contact with students that are away at school; and be it further
Resolved, That the district office help congregations of the district become familiar with contact congregations of the various schools where their students attend so that the respective congregations might inform the pastor(s) there of the student’s attendance; and be it further
Resolved, That the district shall encourage congregations in these efforts by highlighting an example of a college student being connected to a local or campus LCMS church in at least two Lutheran Witness inserts annually, and other communications; and be it further
Resolved, That congregations of the district encourage the parents of their congregations to consider the pastoral care of their young adult children as a factor when they make the decisions of where their young adult will go to school; and be it finally
Resolved, That the district memorialize the Synod in convention in 2019 to encourage congregations of the LCMS to do similarly.

Minnesota South District
CORRECTION IN REGISTRATION LISTING

(For Delegates Only)

It is important that the delegate lists published after the convention in the Convention Proceedings be as accurate as possible. Please use this form to report any correction to your personal listing in the front of this Workbook.

The lower section of this page serves as your notice to the Office of the Secretary to report corrections. Remove it from your Workbook and hand it to the Secretary at the convention or mail it within two days of the close of the convention to:

John W. Sias, Secretary
The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod
1333 South Kirkwood Road
St. Louis, MO 63122-7295

(Please note that this form is not to be used when there is a change of delegates. In such cases necessary documentation is required from the Secretary of the District.)

To the Office of the Secretary:

My personal listing in the front of the 2019 Convention Workbook is not accurate and should be corrected as follows (please print):

On page _____, column _____, under District ______________________________, the present reading:  ______________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
should be changed to:  __________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________

Thank you for making this correction.

Signed:  ________________________________________________________________
Date:  __________________________________________________________________