



CONVENTION WORKBOOK

REPORTS AND OVERTURES 2023

WE PREACH!
CHRIST CRUCIFIED

68TH REGULAR CONVENTION
The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod
July 29–Aug. 3, 2023 | Milwaukee, Wis.

Name of delegate _____
Home address _____
Convention address _____

Please report any errors in registration listings; see the last page of this *Convention Workbook*.

For ongoing convention information, see lcms.org/convention

Delegates must bring copies of all convention publications to all sessions of the convention.

Preface

To the church of God gathered in the congregations of our Synod, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints together with all those who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 1:1–3)! 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 68th Regular Convention of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, to be held in Milwaukee, Wis., July 29–Aug. 3, 2023. Please give them your careful attention. The delegate convention of the Synod is the member congregations’ chief means of governing *their Synod*, to keep everything tuned to *their confession* (Synod Constitution Article II) and aimed at achieving *their objectives* (Const. Art. III). It “legislates policy, program, and financial direction to carry on the Synod’s work on behalf of and in support of the member congregations” (Bylaw 1.4.1). Thorough digestion of these materials is central to the delegates’ doing that well.

The theme for the convention is “We Preach Christ Crucified,” drawn from 1 Corinthians 1:23–24. As are the confession of our Synod and its objectives, both to be found in the Synod’s *Handbook*, available at lcms.org/handbook—and, indeed, how much more—this theme is to be valued for its *concreteness*. As we make these words our own, speak them with one voice as the congregations of our Synod, and so come together to govern all we have built together, they focus our attention on what matters: preaching. What is to be preached, every time, everywhere, to everyone? Christ, and Him crucified—and just so, Christ, the power and the wisdom of God and our righteousness, our sanctification, our redemption. What does it mean *for us* in this *world*? Suffering, scorn, for the wise not only count us fools but are shamed by our preaching, and by it those things that make much of their being something are brought to nothing. But what does it mean *for the world* that *we are in it with this preaching*? Life beyond all their knowing! For He who is low and despised, who seems to be nothing, is revealed to be everything, the only foundation that is laid, the One in whom all things are ours—the world, life, death, present, future—and we *are* Christ’s, and the Christ—even Him crucified—is of God (1 Corinthians 1–3). Let us not boast in men or of men, but he who boasts, let him boast in the Lord Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. So we will be prepared as one to meet any challenge.

Delegates will note a diversity of impressions and even contested facts among some of the overtures. The President has again, 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[s]” (Bylaw 3.1.6.2 [c]). Four timely overtures were rejected for these reasons and their submitters have been so informed. Publication does not attest the President’s verification 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 Const. Preface).

Convention floor committees, listed in the prefatory material of this volume, will be meeting in St. Louis June 9–12, 2023. 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 memo to me by email, noting in the subject that it is “ATTN Floor Committee *N*,” at lcmssecretary@lcms.org. Responses may also be sent by mail to 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 27, 2023) 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.

*We preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles,
but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks,
Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.* (1 Cor. 1:23–24)

John W. Sias, *Secretary and Editor*

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2023 Biographical Synopses and Statements of Nominees

REGISTERED DELEGATES AND REPRESENTATIVES

Due to 2019 Res. 9-04A and 2019 Bylaw 3.1.8, delegate home congregations are listed rather than mailing addresses.

A. Voting and Advisory Delegates

Atlantic District

Voting Ordained

ALLSTAEDT, Jacob (Jake); St John LC, Williston Park, NY
COHN, Daniel F; St John LC, Stuyvesant, NY
DEEBRAH, Peter A D; Ev LC of St Matthew, New York, NY
HOLLMANN, Joshua David; True Light LC, New York, NY
JOHNSON, Thomas Roger; St Luke LC, Dix Hills, NY
NIEMEIER, Nils Paul; Messiah LC, East Setauket, NY
RETHINASAMY, Johnson Elwin; Immanuel LC, Whitestone, NY
SINGH, Mohan; Trinity LC, Schenectady, NY
YOUNG, John Michael; Our Savior LC, Fishkill, NY

Voting Lay

BHAGWATPRASAD, Deochand; St Paul LC, Brooklyn, NY
JAHN, Timothy C; Holy Trinity LC, Middle Island, NY
MANNING, Lynn D; Zion LC, Schenectady, NY
NELSON NOVEN, Jaime L; Mount Zion LC, Manhattan, NY
SEAMAN-CULLUM, Brittany; Trinity LC, Glen Cove, NY
SNYDER, Robert; Trinity LC, Islip, NY
SOMMER, Ron; St Paul LC, Monroe, NY
VAIL, David; Bethlehem LC, Delmar, NY
WENTZEL, Peter; St Johns Ev LC, College Point, NY

Advisory Ordained

BARTELT, Philip Dale; (cong. unknown)

Advisory Commissioned

KOCSIS, Betsy A; Our Savior's LC, Colonie, NY

California/Nevada/Hawaii District

Voting Ordained

BAMSCH, Duane R; Grace LC, Grass Valley, CA
BOKRE, Dawit A; Good Shepherd LC, Hayward, CA
BREDESON, Jason J; Trinity LC, Sacramento, CA
CUMMINS, Brian K; Trinity LC, Redding, CA
JUNG, David Sungeun; Grace LC, Visalia, CA
KARLEN, Fred W; Grace LC, Cloverdale, CA
KEGLEY, Noah Albert; St Paul LC, Mountain View, CA
LAU, Shiu Ming; LC of the Holy Spirit, San Francisco, CA
MASCHKE, Jediah T; Bethlehem LC, Carson City, NV
MULDOWNEY, Brian Conlin; St Andrew LC, Stockton, CA
MUNDINGER, Andrew Paul; Holy Cross LC, Concord, CA
SCHLENSKER, Daniel Alfred; Shepherd of the Hills LC, Lake Isabella, CA
ZIER, Mark A; Christ LC, Hilo, HI

Voting Lay

BYRD, Otis L III; Christ for All Nations LC, San Francisco, CA
ERWIN, Jay R; Redeemer Ev LC, Chico, CA
GUZZETTA, John; St Matthew LC, Sonora, CA
HALL, Andrew; St Paul LC, Woodland, CA
HEMKER, David J (Dave); Prince of Peace LC, Fremont, CA
JOHNSON, Michael K; St John LC, Fallon, NV
MOSLEY, Jeffrey T; St John LC, Bakersfield, CA
NELSON, Gary C; St John LC, Petaluma, CA
RISTOW, Larry; LC of Our Savior, Cupertino, CA
SUAREZ-ABRAHAM, Anthony; Mount Calvary LC, Soquel, CA
THEAKER, Brian; Light of the Hills LC, Cameron Park, CA
WIDSTRAND, Bryan; Trinity LC, Paso Robles, CA
YOUNG, Donald (Don); Our Savior LC, Livermore, CA

Advisory Ordained

ARNOLD, Ronald L; Our Savior LC, Sparks, NV

Advisory Commissioned

ANWYL, Evan Scott; St John LC, Bakersfield, CA
WEISS, Kathryn Elizabeth (Katie); St John LC, Bakersfield, CA

Central Illinois District

Voting Ordained

BIRD, Aaron Taylor; St John LC, Decatur, IL
EDDY, Mark Roland; Zion LC, Taylor Ridge, IL
FITZNER, Timothy John; Christ LC, Normal, IL
HERBERTS, Dean Zachary; St Paul LC, Wheeler, IL
HERZBERG, Andrew Edward; St Johns LC, Mattoon, IL
JANSSEN, Samuel Jay; Good Shepherd LC, Rochester, IL
JAUSS, Marcus R; Concordia LC, Warsaw, IL
LANDSKROENER, Timothy J; Immanuel LC, Shobonier, IL
RADDATZ, Simeon Daniel; Trinity LC, Pekin, IL
SCHUERMANN, Michael Paul; University LC, Champaign, IL
STRATTMAN, Gene Arthur; St Paul LC, Chapin, IL
THOMPSON, Mark A; Zion LC, Lincoln, IL
UPHOFF, Aaron Daniel; Calvary LC, Watseka, IL
WENDORF, Kevin C; St John LC, Chatham, IL
WHYBREW, Kene Allen; St Paul's LC, Strasburg, IL

Voting Lay

ABBE, Larry; St Johns LC, Buckley, IL
BOESDORFER, Dennis Eugene; Zion LC, Pleasant Plains, IL
CASEBEER, John; Trinity LC, Decatur, IL
CLARK, Zachary W; St James LC, Quincy, IL
COUCH, Randy W; St John LC, Pekin, IL
DANNEWITZ, Michael W (Mike); Good Shepherd LC, Sherman, IL
GRIFFIN, George M; Grace LC, Paris, IL
HAMM, Mark; Trinity LC, Danville, IL
HOMANN, James D (Jim); St John LC, East Moline, IL
JOERGENSEN, Stanley R; St John LC, Louisville, IL
SHAMBO, John A; Holy Cross LC, Shelbyville, IL
TRIMPE, Ken; St Pauls LC, Havana, IL
WICKLANDER, Carl D; Our Redeemer LC, Jacksonville, IL
WILCOXEN, Tim; Trinity LC, Roanoke, IL
ZIEGLER, Garrett M; St Paul LC, Altamont, IL

Advisory Ordained

HARRE, Richard R; Trinity LC, Auburn, IL

Advisory Commissioned

ERICSON, Berit; Our Savior's LC, Springfield, IL

Eastern District

Voting Ordained

BAUCH, Alan J; Trinity LC, Lockport, NY
DOROW, William R Jr; Calvary LC, Waterloo, NY
FOOTE, Robert M; Trinity LC, Ithaca, NY
HAHN, Daniel Anthony Jr; St Johns Ev LC, Millvale, PA
HARTKE, Nathan Carl; St Johns LC, Orchard Park, NY
KNUPP, Keith A; St Mark LC NT, North Tonawanda, NY
KUNTZ, Scott Allan; Mount Calvary LC, West View, PA
NICKEL, Jeffrey David; Holy Cross LC, Clarence, NY
SCHETTLER, Matthew C; St Paul LC, Fredonia, NY
SHRUM, Stephen Oakley; Trinity LC, Spencerport, NY
ZIMMERMAN, John M; Immanuel LC, Scranton, PA

Voting Lay

ALLEN, Jon; Faith LC, Penfield, NY
BISHOP, Susan C; Zion LC, Bridgeville, PA
CARR, Jim; Salem LC, Buffalo, NY
CWYNAR, Cindy Lynn; Mount Olive LC, Beaver Falls, PA
GRZYB, Walter; St Luke LC, Cheektowaga, NY
GURNETT, Dennis P; St Paul LC, North Tonawanda, NY
LEHMAN, Frank D; St Andrew LC, Pekin, NY
PIOPI, Greg A; Faith LC, Easton, PA
REISS, Nancy; St Paul LC, Hilton, NY
SUTHERLAND, Brandi; St Paul LC, Eden, NY
WATERSTRAM-RICH, Kristen Marie; St Mark LC, Mendon, NY

Advisory Ordained

CWYNAR, Paul David; Mount Olive LC, Beaver Falls, PA

Advisory Commissioned

FRETTHOLD, Kathleen (Kathy); Immanuel LC, Tonawanda, NY

English District

Voting Ordained

ANDRAE, Eric R; First Trinity LC, Pittsburgh, PA
ARNOLD, Todd Wayne; LC of the Risen Savior, Green Valley, AZ
BELTER, Kevin Paul; Messiah LC, Danville, CA
DIETRICH, Joel Andrew Christensen; Redeemer LC, Lincoln, NE
ERHARDT, Martin K; Messiah LC, Princeton, NJ
GRAMS, Daniel E; Ascension of Christ LC, Beverly Hills, MI
MARKLEVITZ, Zachary W; Grace LC, Wyoming, MI
MILLER, David Vesper; LC of the Ascension, Atlanta, GA
MUSOLF, Gregory Scott; Messiah LC, Forest Lake, MN
OLIPHANT, Anthony J; Redeemer LC, Elmhurst, IL
PILLAY, Dereck; St Matthew LC, Scarborough, ON CANADA
TROUTEN, Chad David; Bethany LC, Fort Wayne, IN
WELDON, Robert F Sr; Grace LC, Elyria, OH

Voting Lay

ARNDT, Wayne T; Blessed Sacrament LC, Hayden, ID
ASBURY, Marsha; Shepherd of the Coast LC, Palm Coast, FL
BUSAROW, Jonathan; Redeemer LC, Fort Wayne, IN
GEORGE, Carol Helen; Trinity LC, Erie, PA
ISHAM, Thomas; Agnus Dei LC, Marshall, MI
KING, Tim; Trinity LC, New Lenox, IL
LEISTICO, Laura; Peace LC, Windsor, ON CANADA
LEU, Terry R; Prince of Peace LC, Medina Township, OH
MACKAY, Leo; Immanuel LC, Alexandria, VA
METZGER, Colin S; Prince of Peace LC, Mesquite, NV
NELSON, Christopher (Chris); Hope LC, Hastings, MN
SOLOMON, Joel W; Zion Ev LC, Detroit, MI

Advisory Ordained

LINTHICUM, Eric Rodger; Tree of Life LC, Inverness, FL
PATT, Richard W; Christ LC, Lake Mills, WI

Florida-Georgia District

Voting Ordained

GLOVER, John E; First LC, Gainesville, FL
HOWE, Andrew James; Mount Calvary LC, Warner Robins, GA
LINGSCH, Keith Allan; Grace LC, Naples, FL
MAULELLA, Robert J; Faith LC, Sebring, FL
MC KENZIE, Patrick Carl; Hope LC, Jacksonville, FL
MESEKE, Paul R; Christ LC, Brooksville, FL
MICHAEL, Gregory C (Greg); Christus Victor LC, Athens, GA
MOORE, Donald A Jr; St Paul LC, Apopka, FL
MUELLER, Mark Alan; Ascension LC, Casselberry, FL
NARRING, Dana A; Faith LC, Punta Gorda, FL
PFEFFER, Dean R; Hope LC, Plant City, FL
RIVERA, Wilfredo C Sr; Trinity LC, Cutler Bay, FL
ROEDSENS, Jacob James; Our Savior LC, Lake Worth, FL
SORENSEN, Andrew Jacob; Faith LC, Dunedin, FL
WARNKE, Joseph Matthew (Joe); Christ Our Savior LC, Griffin, GA

Voting Lay

BORUCKI, Wesley B; Redeemer LC, West Palm Beach, FL
CHADDOCK, Craig M Sr; Our Savior LC, Plantation, FL
COOK, Morris D III; St John LC, Ocala, FL
DIXON, Jason Eugene; Martin Luther Chapel, Marathon, FL
FUGE, Douglas P (Doug); Good Shepherd LC, Gainesville, GA
GREEN, William M; Zion Ev LC, Winter Garden, FL
GREUL, Mark R; Hope LC, Bonita Springs, FL
HOWARD, Fredrick J (Rick); First LC, Clearwater, FL
JONES, Steven R; Our Savior LC, Zephyrhills, FL
KAISER, William E; Good Shepherd LC, Titusville, FL
KNIDSVIG, Lee A; Lakeside LC, Venice, FL
LIST, John M; St Paul LC, Boca Raton, FL
MUNGIN, Naomi E; St Paul LC, Jacksonville, FL
PETERSON, Joseph A (Joe); Christ LC, Perry, GA
ROBERTSON, Richard C; St Paul LC, Peachtree City, GA
YOAKUM, Kathleen A (Kathy); Christ the King LC, Riverview, FL

Advisory Ordained

BIEL, Ronald D (Ron); Amazing Grace LC, Oxford, FL
HERMANN, Rory M; Christ Our Savior LC, Saint Augustine, FL
MAST, Michael Wm; Christ the King LC, Largo, FL
MUELLER, Michael Lee; LC of the Cross, Port Charlotte, FL

Advisory Commissioned

LEECH, Debra Jean; Faith LC, Eustis, FL
LEECH, William Alan; Faith LC, Eustis, FL
PROHL-KELLER, Ellen Elizabeth; Mount Calvary LC, Warner Robins, GA

Indiana District

Voting Ordained

BECKER, Dale Andrew; Shepherd of the Hills LC, Georgetown, IN
BROCK, Peter James; St John LC, Decatur, IN
CURRAO, Andrew J; Redeemer LC, Seymour, IN
DEHNING, K C (K C); St James LC, Logansport, IN
DREYER, John Michael; Our Redeemer LC, Kokomo, IN
FERRY, Joseph William (Joe); Southwest LC, Fort Wayne, IN
GIGER, Scott Wayne; Cornerstone LC, Carmel, IN
GUAGENTI, Andrew Daniel; Holy Cross LC, Shelbyville, KY
HARRINGTON, Daniel Robert; Holy Cross LC, Fort Wayne, IN
HEINZ, Richard Andrew; Trinity LC, Lowell, IN
JORDING, Jeremiah Nathaniel; St Paul LC, South Bend, IN
MCDOWELL, Adam Mateo; St Peter's LC, Fort Wayne, IN
MCKINLEY, Jordan J; Trinity LC, Vallonia, IN
MIEROW, Seth A; St Peters Ev LC, Indianapolis, IN
OSBUN, Michael Joshua (Josh); First LC, Hanna, IN
RIORDAN, Todd C; Faith LC, Columbus, IN
RITTNER, Philip R II (Phil); Zion LC, Columbia City, IN
SCHOECH, Eric W; Faith Memorial LC, Valparaiso, IN
TUCHER, Jared Christopher; St Paul's LC, Cross Plains, IN
WATT, Luke John; St John Ev LC, Indianapolis, IN
WENIG, Thomas D; Our Redeemer LC, Evansville, IN
WIIST, David E; Concordia LC, Evansville, IN
WINTER, William John (Bill); Peace LC, Greencastle, IN

Voting Lay

BAUGHMAN, Leonard D; Trinity LC, Auburn, IN
DRYSCH, Michael; Redeemer LC, Highland, IN

EICKHOFF, Dennis R; Prince of Peace LC, Martinsville, IN
 FRANKE, Mark Alan; Ascension LC, Fort Wayne, IN
 HARWEGER, Ty A; Zion LC, Seymour, IN
 HAWK, David K; St Paul's LC, Fort Wayne, IN
 HEINKEL, David M; Grace LC, Muncie, IN
 KRUGER-ARNOLD, Amanda; St Johns LC, Lexington, KY
 KUBLY, Scott; Our Saviour LC, Monticello, IN
 LEININGER, Kevin J; Zion LC, Fort Wayne, IN
 MUNDINGER, Gerhard H Jr; St Paul LC, Chesterton, IN
 OWEN, Dean; Concordia LC, Greenwood, IN
 RAGAN, Charles Edward (Charlie); Trinity LC, Henderson, KY
 SILLETTO, Aaron John; Concordia LC, Louisville, KY
 SMITH, Caleb D; Emmaus LC, South Bend, IN
 STOPPENHAGEN, Neil E; Bethlehem LC, Ossian, IN
 TURNER, Kevin; Trinity Ev LC, Dillsboro, IN
 TURPEN, Lee; St Paul LC, Evansville, IN
 VANDERCAR, Michael (Mike); St Peter LC, Waymansville, IN
 WISCHMEIER, Roger D; St Paul LC, Brownstown, IN
 WOOLERY, Phil; St Peter LC, North Jordan, IN

Advisory Ordained

GARD, Daniel L; Ascension LC, Fort Wayne, IN
 MAY, Daniel P; Emmanuel LC, Fort Wayne, IN
 SCHMIDT, Ralph G; St Paul's LC, Fort Wayne, IN
 ZIMMERMAN, Thomas P; Ascension LC, Fort Wayne, IN

Advisory Commissioned

BAUMAN, Michelle A; St Paul LC, Columbus, IN
 DENHOLM, George III; St Peters LC, Columbus, IN
 KETCHER, Karol R; Trinity LC, Crown Point, IN
 KOENEMANN, Darin D; Ascension LC, Fort Wayne, IN
 MEYER, Peter John; Bethlehem LC, Ossian, IN
 MIEROW, John E; St Peters Ev LC, Indianapolis, IN
 OLSEN, Brenda G; St John Ev LC, Indianapolis, IN
 OYLER, Bertha J; Grace LC, Columbus, IN
 RITTNER, Katherine E; Zion LC, Columbia City, IN
 SCHALLHORN, Mark Brian; Bethlehem LC, Ossian, IN
 WENDT, Paul R; St John LC, Kendallville, IN

Iowa East District

Voting Ordained

BELTZ, Samuel G; St John LC, Oskaloosa, IA
 BURNS, Jesse Allen; Redeemer LC, Ventura, IA
 CRAWFORD, Jonathan Thomas; St Paul LC, Dubuque, IA
 ELLINGWORTH, Jon M; St John LC, Waverly, IA
 FELDT, Larry L; St John LC, Denver, IA
 GRAY, Andrew W; St Johns LC, Marengo, IA
 GROTH, Theodore W (Ted); Trinity LC, Cedar Rapids, IA
 HAMBLETON, Aaron Michael; St Paul LC, Eldora, IA
 HOFT, Peter David; Park View LC, Eldridge, IA
 LINGARD, David C; St Andrew LC, Van Horne, IA
 PREUS, James A O; Trinity LC, Ottumwa, IA
 REDHAGE, Daniel Todd; Trinity LC, Lowden, IA
 VAN HEMERT, Thomas C; St John LC, Center Point, IA

Voting Lay

AREND, Lynn; Trinity LC, Hampton, IA
 BANKO, Timothy (Tim); St Silas LC, North Liberty, IA
 BAYER, Jeff M; St Johns Ev LC, Victor, IA
 EHLER, Matthew; Zion LC, Hiawatha, IA
 ELBERT, Jeffrey E (Jeff); Faith LC, Waterloo, IA
 GIBSON, David L (Dave); Our Redeemer LC, Dubuque, IA
 HUCK, Thomas W; St John LC, Sumner, IA
 MACK, Michael (Mike); Trinity LC, State Center, IA
 MCHUGH, James; St John LC, Clinton, IA
 MOELLER, Thomas; Zion LC, Wilton, IA
 MORTIMER, George; Bethlehem Ev Luth Cong, Mason City, IA
 OEHLERICH, Richard D; St John LC, Keystone, IA
 SMITH, Stephen C; Risen Christ LC, Davenport, IA

Iowa West District

Voting Ordained

BOOHER, Lucas Wayne; Zion LC, Storm Lake, IA
 BOOTHBY, Michael John; St Paul LC, Ireton, IA
 CONNER, Jonathan Everett; Zion LC, Manning, IA
 DIETRICH, Chadric Allen; Emmanuel LC, Rockwell City, IA
 DURAND, Edward E III; Trinity LC, Van Meter, IA
 HEIMER, Jessten P; Trinity LC, Boone, IA
 JOHNSON, Kevin Lynn; Holy Cross LC, Carlisle, IA
 KEUNING, Jeffrey Michael; Zion LC, Dexter, IA
 KOOPMAN, John Henry; St Paul LC, Emmetsburg, IA
 KROONBLAWD, Cory James; St Paul's LC, Sac City, IA
 MAHNKEN, Merle F; Immanuel LC, Schleswig, IA
 MERRILL, Richard Charles; St John Ev LC, Charter Oak, IA
 MILBRANDT, Richard W; St Peter LC, Ocheyedan, IA
 PERKINS, Benjamin D; Shepherd of Peace LC, Sergeant Bluff, IA
 RUTZ, John Benjamin; Trinity LC, Creston, IA

STEEB, Daniel Paul; Immanuel LC, Logan, IA
 WITMER, Brett Peter; Bethel Ev LC, Sutherland, IA

Voting Lay

ALLERS, Terry L; Good Shepherd LC, Fort Dodge, IA
 ARMBRECHT, Paul Lames; Pilgrim LC, Lake City, IA
 BURT, Jon; Trinity LC, Hawarden, IA
 CLAUSEN, Dennis W; St Paul LC, Ida Grove, IA
 DOWNING, Charles M (Chuck); Our Savior LC, Denison, IA
 DREYER, Lynn; St Paul LC, Ames, IA
 HEEREN, Steven P (Steve); Zion LC, Paullina, IA
 HELMUTH, Charles; Peace LC, Des Moines, IA
 JOHNSON, Jerry L; St John LC, Storm Lake, IA
 JOHNSON, Loren D; St Paul LC, Clarinda, IA
 LARSEN, Michael; Beautiful Savior LC, Polk City, IA
 NATH, Carter J; Zion Ev LC, Lu Verne, IA
 SEGEBAERT, Mark E; Trinity LC, Manilla, IA
 SEIPOLD, Bret H; St Johns LC, Hastings, IA
 SWANSON, David A; Immanuel LC, Greenfield, IA
 TRACEY, Duane; Immanuel LC, Spirit Lake, IA

Advisory Ordained

GERKEN, Mark A; Faith LC, Adel, IA

Advisory Commissioned

RAINS, Heidi Jean; Mount Olive LC, Des Moines, IA

Kansas District

Voting Ordained

COOK, Theodore E Sr; Zion LC, Pittsburg, KS
 DE GIOVANNI, Terry L; St Luke LC, Wheaton, KS
 HARDERS, Daniel Ervin; St Peter LC, Holyrood, KS
 JAHNKE, Randall L (Randy); Holy Cross LC, Dodge City, KS
 JOHNSON, Thomas R; Faith LC, Derby, KS
 MEASE, Van Edward (Ed); St Paul LC, Leavenworth, KS
 MICHEEL, Benjamin Peter (Ben); Christ LC, Topeka, KS
 MILLER, Philip T; Mount Calvary LC, Marysville, KS
 SCHMIDT, Michael John; Peace LC, Natoma, KS
 SCHULTZ, Christian Daniel; First LC, Paola, KS
 SCHULTZ, Joel S A; Beautiful Savior LC, Olathe, KS
 SLATER, Troy Lyn; Immanuel LC, Canton, KS
 SNOW, Scott A; Holy Cross LC, Wichita, KS
 STAHLACKER, Alan Roy; St John LC, Lincolnville, KS
 WOELMER, Joshua James; Zion Ev LC, Vassar, KS
 WOLF, Philip B; Christ LC, Wathena, KS

Voting Lay

AHRENS, Richard; King of Kings LC, Gardner, KS
 BRINCFIELD, Thomas (Tom); Trinity LC, Atchison, KS
 BRUNE, Milton E; Grace LC, Liberal, KS
 CAREY, Michael A; Faith LC, Ottawa, KS
 FASSOLD, Randy C; Trinity LC, Mission, KS
 GEHRKE, Stevin H; St Johns Ev LC, Topeka, KS
 GIER, Tyler A; Bethlehem LC, Sylvan Grove, KS
 HAUSER, Brett; St Peter LC, Humboldt, KS
 JENSEN, Lyle L; Zion LC, Newton, KS
 JORNS, Kenneth D (Ken); St Paul LC, Preston, KS
 PIESTER, Brenda; Ascension LC, Pratt, KS
 SCHULTZ, Bruce D; St John LC, Alma, KS
 UFFMAN, Stanton N; Zion LC, Linn, KS
 WELLER, Stephen F; Grace LC, McPherson, KS
 WOLTERS, Mark A; Redeemer LC, Atwood, KS
 ZENGER, Joshua B; Trinity Family of Faith LC, Basehor, KS

Advisory Ordained

HARRIES, Thomas H; Hope LC, Shawnee, KS

Advisory Commissioned

LIMBACK, Jane Leigh; Bethany LC, Overland Park, KS

Michigan District

Voting Ordained

BAGNALL, George Steve; Good Shepherd LC, Cass City, MI
 BAKKER, Jonathon J; Zion LC, Mount Pleasant, MI
 BIBER, Paul R; Good Shepherd LC, Saginaw, MI
 BLACK, Eric Steven; St Paul LC, Kalkaska, MI
 BOEHNKE, Christopher M; Lakeshore Lutheran Fellowship, Spring Lake, MI
 CERCHEZ, Marin; St John Ev LC, Jenison, MI
 CHINERY, James D; St Martin LC, Birch Run, MI
 CLARK, Paul M; St Paul LC, Fowler, MI
 DENT, Matthew T; Bethlehem LC, Standish, MI
 FIENEN, Daniel Henry; Grace LC, Baldwin, MI
 FRECHETTE, Jeffrey David Sr; St Mark LC, Flint, MI
 GAERTNER, Evan Paul; Our Shepherd LC, Birmingham, MI
 GARCIA, Adan Christopher (Chris); Immanuel LC, Bay City, MI
 GIBBONS, Nikolai James; Immanuel LC, Macomb, MI
 HERTER, Paul W; Hope LC, Adrian, MI
 HOFFMEYER, Alex William; Salem LC, Coloma, MI

HOPFENSBERGER, Bryan L; Peace LC, Sandusky, MI
 HOWARD, Daniel Charles; Hope LC of Warren, Warren, MI
 HUFF, Mark Landon; Faith LC, Port Huron, MI
 JAMES, Asaph A; East Bethlehem LC, Detroit, MI
 KLEIMOLA, Dale M; Grace LC, Leslie, MI
 LATHAM, Mark E; St Michael LC, Traverse City, MI
 MAJESKI, Eric W; Grace Lutheran Fellowship, Romeo, MI
 MUHLE, Dean Ray; St Pauls LC, Hale, MI
 MURRAY, Daniel Patrick; Hosanna-Taber LC, Redford, MI
 OELSCHLAEGGER, Benjamin George Dopp; Good Shepherd LC, Lake Orion, MI
 OSWALD, Mark Arthur; Trinity LC, Conklin, MI
 PHIFER, Phillip L; Trinity LC, Paw Paw, MI
 ROGGO, Aaron Warner; St Paul LC, Ann Arbor, MI
 ROSCHE, Bryce S; St Matthew LC, Westland, MI
 SCHAEIDIG, Michael W; St John LC, Cheboygan, MI
 SCHAEFFER, Glenn E; St James LC, Grand Rapids, MI
 SCHWARTZ, John W; St Pauls LC, New Boston, MI
 STEELE, Cameron Kamp; St Paul LC, Caro, MI
 TODD, Kelly D; Christ LC, Goodrich, MI
 WADE, Jeffrey Erin; St Johns Ev LC, Waltz, MI
 WELLHOUSEN, Austin Michael; St Matthew LC, Walled Lake, MI
 WILLMAN, Sean August; St Pauls LC, Hillsdale, MI
 WOELL, Brennan Andrew; Emmanuel LC, Cadillac, MI
 ZEILE, Richard A (Dr Z); St Johns LC, Taylor, MI

Voting Lay

BEIER, Beverly J; St Paul LC, Coldwater, MI
 BOOS, Jennifer; Faith LC, Troy, MI
 BUL, Jeremy; Immanuel LC, Saint Clair, MI
 BURNS, Polly; Trinity LC, Reed City, MI
 COULSON, Shannon; St Luke LC, Harrison, MI
 DRAPER, Barb; Grace LC, Coopersville, MI
 FORD, George F; Trinity LC, Traverse City, MI
 GRULKE, James; Immanuel LC, Alpena, MI
 HAWORTH, Mark D; St Andrew LC, Portland, MI
 JOHNSON, David W; Trinity LC, Onekama, MI
 KOKE, Carol; Faith LC, Grand Blanc, MI
 MEYER, Diane L; Faith LC, Prescott, MI
 MILLER, Coralie; St Paul LC, Caledonia, MI
 NEUMANN, Steven; Holy Cross LC, Saginaw, MI
 NICKODEMUS, Daniel (Dan); Historic Trinity LC, Detroit, MI
 NUTZMANN, John W; Messiah LC, Clio, MI
 QUITMEYER, Fritz Carl; Christ Our Savior LC, Livonia, MI
 REINBOLD, Wesley Allan; Immanuel LC of Frankentrost, Saginaw, MI
 ROMANCHECK, John D; Bethlehem LC, Roseville, MI
 SAALFELD, James R; Peace LC, Ann Arbor, MI
 SCHOTT, William M (Bill); Emmanuel LC, Dearborn, MI
 SCHULTZ, Paul; St Luke LC, Nunica, MI
 SEE, Walter H; Holy Redeemer LC, Dryden, MI
 SEMENIUK, John; Calvary Ev LC, Lincoln Park, MI
 SHULER, Stephen (Steve); Trinity LC, Saint Joseph, MI
 SMITH, Mark; Journey LC, Oxford, MI
 SPENLE, Lori Ann; Holy Cross LC, Belding, MI
 SPRENGER, Mark W; St Paul LC, Sanford, MI
 VAUGHN, Victor (Vic); Trinity LC, Clinton Township, MI
 VIGES, Philip; St Matthew LC, Holt, MI
 VOGEL, Brent; Immanuel LC, Sebewaing, MI
 WAGNER, Lloyd Alan Sr; Trinity LC, Jackson, MI
 WARREN, Jeremy Michael; St Paul LC, Bay City, MI
 WILSON, Janeane N; Zion LC, Harbor Beach, MI
 WOLTEMATH, Chad R; St Luke LC, Ann Arbor, MI
 WORDEN, Joseph (Joe); Redemption LC, Battle Creek, MI
 WYSS, Jim; St Augustine LC, Troy, MI
 YORK, Guy R; Faith LC, Highland, MI
 ZOWADA, Tim D; Zion LC, Petoskey, MI

Advisory Ordained

BROMM, Glen Wade; Living Water LC, Mio, MI
 GRIMM, Gerald E; Bethany LC, Detroit, MI
 LASSANSKE, Dennis L; Trinity LC, Muskegon, MI

Advisory Commissioned

ALLEN, Ronald M; St Paul LC, Ann Arbor, MI
 ALTEVOGT, Lester L; LC of the Lakes, Addison, MI
 GALLAGHER, John Joseph III; Trinity LC, Muskegon, MI
 GIERACH, Raymond C; Trinity LC, Clinton Township, MI
 HOOPER, Susan L (Sue); Faith LC, Grand Blanc, MI
 HORNING, Brian Curtis; Zion LC, Petoskey, MI
 JONES, Amanda Ruth; St Paul LC, Flint, MI
 KRIEGER, Ruth A; Trinity LC, Berrien Springs, MI
 KUSCH, David S; St John LC, Rochester, MI
 MEYER, David J; St John LC, Fraser, MI
 PEARSON, Kathryn Kraai; Peace LC, Saginaw, MI

RUSSELL, Charles Patrick; St Peter LC, Macomb, MI
 SPIEHS, Shawna Lynae; Trinity LC, Utica, MI
 WEISMANTEL, Paul O; Immanuel LC, Alpena, MI
 WESTON, Amy J; St Matthew LC, Walled Lake, MI
 WILLS, Paul R; Immanuel LC, Kalamazoo, MI

Mid-South District

Voting Ordained

ABRAHAM, Andrew J; Shepherd of the Hills LC, Crossville, TN
 BARTZSCH, Thomas W; River Valley Grace LC, Lamar, AR
 BAUCH, Gregory D; Ascension LC, Madison, TN
 LEIGEBER, Joshua Paul; All Saints LC, Jonesboro, AR
 LEIGEBER, Paul A; Faith LC, Union City, TN
 MEYERS, Sawyer Andrew; Beautiful Savior LC, Olive Branch, MS
 SCHAAF, Kent R; Grace LC, Little Rock, AR
 SMITH, Gordon L; Our Savior LC, Morristown, TN
 VANDERCOOK, David Dominic Sr; Trinity LC, North Little Rock, AR
 WELMER, Donald Nicholas; First LC, Chattanooga, TN
 ZISCHKE, JohnDavid Karl; Restoration LC, Fayetteville, AR

Voting Lay

BRUMMETT, Keith D; Faith LC, Bentonville, AR
 D'ATRIO, Keith; Zion LC, Avilla, AR
 DAVENPORT, Dennis R; Zion LC, Ulm, AR
 DUNCANSON, Pete; Immanuel LC, Memphis, TN
 HEIDEL, Dustin C; St Paul LC, Wartburg, TN
 JACOBS, Dan Edward; Good Shepherd LC, Chattanooga, TN
 JOHNSON, Kendall; Faith LC, Thompsons Station, TN
 LUPPE, Frank J; Grace LC, Clarksville, TN
 PRICE, Elyse S; First LC, Little Rock, AR
 REINERT, David; Redeemer LC, Mountain Home, AR
 TIESLER, Tom; Redeemer LC, Nashville, TN

Advisory Ordained

LEACH, Le Roy H Jr; Grace LC, Little Rock, AR

Advisory Commissioned

FISCHER, Michelle Diane; Immanuel LC, Memphis, TN
 IRWIN, Jessica M; First LC, Knoxville, TN

Minnesota North District

Voting Ordained

BIBERDORF, Nathanael Richard; Zion LC, Browns Valley, MN
 CARLSON, Daniel R (Roy); St Paul's LC, Milaca, MN
 COOP, Gregory S (Gregg); Prince of Peace LC, Baxter, MN
 DARE, Paul W; Zion LC, Alexandria, MN
 FISH, Robin D Sr; Immanuel LC, Verdale, MN
 HOLLINGSHEAD, Benjamin Alan; St Paul LC, Eden Valley, MN
 HOUSER, Philip Gideon; Trinity LC, Lake George, MN
 KLATT, Donald Michael; Immanuel LC, Holloway, MN
 KONKEL, Nathaniel William; Peace LC, Finlayson, MN
 MEYER, Matthew J (Matt); Beautiful Savior LC, Callaway, MN
 MOMMENS, David R; St Pauls LC, Melrose, MN
 MUENCH, Josef L; Trinity LC, Twin Valley, MN
 PEPPERKORN, Troy W; Faith LC, Silver Bay, MN
 REHWALDT, Timothy J; St John LC, Sauk Rapids, MN
 SOUER, Eric; St Johns LC, Barnesville, MN
 STAUTY, Donald M (Don); Gloria Dei LC, Virginia, MN
 TILNEY, David M; St Luke LC, Wood Lake, MN
 WALSH, David Jordan; Redeemer LC, Menahga, MN

Voting Lay

BAKER, Steven L; St Stephens LC, Braham, MN
 BERGSTROM, Donna; Mount Olive LC, Duluth, MN
 DIERKS, Gary; Bethlehem LC, Frazee, MN
 EHNE, Kirk H; Immanuel LC, Eagle Bend, MN
 GOETZ, Daniel; Redeemer LC, Saint Cloud, MN
 GRUEDEM, Jerry; St John LC, Park Rapids, MN
 HANSEN, Claire; St Paul LC, Campbell, MN
 HAUSER, David J; Trinity LC, Fergus Falls, MN
 HOBBIIE, Melodie; Zion LC, Ada, MN
 KURASH, Terry S; Trinity LC, Sauk Rapids, MN
 MAROTZKE, Wendel K; Zion LC, Morris, MN
 MUSTONEN, Dean R; Living Savior LC, Lake Shore, MN
 NELSON, Craig; Redeemer LC, Deer River, MN
 PIERCE, Jonathan F; St Paul LC, Montevideo, MN
 RATZ, Timothy Jon; St Andrew LC, West Fargo, ND
 ROLF, Thomas; Trinity LC, Sandstone, MN
 THALMANN, Rod; St John LC, Ottertail, MN
 TIEMAN, Wayne W; Trinity LC, Bemidji, MN
 WARD, Gene T; Immanuel LC, Parkers Prairie, MN

Advisory Ordained

SCHOESSOW, David G; Mount Olive LC, Duluth, MN

Advisory Commissioned

SAGISSOR, Emily Lynne; Our Redeemer LC, Moorhead, MN

Minnesota South District

Voting Ordained

BAKER, Jesse Cory Steven; Zion LC, Hardwick, MN
 BARRY, Matthew Allen; St Johns LC, Chaska, MN
 BERNAU, Wayne A; Immanuel Ev LC, Courtland, MN
 BERTRAM, Anthony Thad (Tony); St Paul LC, Fairmont, MN
 FREIBERG, Marc L F Sr; Immanuel LC, Racine, MN
 GEHRKE, Robert Joseph; South Shore Trinity LC, White Bear Lake, MN
 GLESS, Adam Christopher; Zion LC, Mayer, MN
 HAAKANA, Jon T; Mount Olive LC, Anoka, MN
 HORTON, Christopher P; St Johns LC of Rich Valley, Rosemount, MN
 JACOBSEN, Adam Edward; Trinity LC, Sioux Valley Twp, MN
 KLEIN, Brent A; Trinity LC, Northfield, MN
 LEE, Vue; King of Kings LC, Roseville, MN
 LODER, Mark S; St James LC, Howard Lake, MN
 MATHENY, Adam Michael; Our Savior LC, Mankato, MN
 MATHEWS, Michael William; First LC, Waldorf, MN
 MICHALK, Michael E; Mount Olive LC, Mound, MN
 MOSS, Matthew Vernon; St John's LC, Corcoran, MN
 MUELLER, Herbert C III; Immanuel LC, Lewiston, MN
 NELSON, Eric Matthew; St Paul Ev LC, Lester Prairie, MN
 NIEDERSTADT, Jeffrey William; Holy Cross LC, Rochester, MN
 PARRISH, Brent L; Immanuel LC, Prior Lake, MN
 WEBER, Kurt A; Golden Valley LC, Golden Valley, MN
 WILSON, Steven D (Steve); St John LC, Sherburn, MN
 ZUCKER, Tyge C; Concordia LC, Red Wing, MN

Voting Lay

COOK, Andrew; St John LC, Norwood Young America, MN
 EHLERS, Delmar W; Trinity Ev LC, Austin, MN
 ERDMAN, Wesley J; Trinity Lone Oak LC, Eagan, MN
 ETCHISON, John E; Cross View LC, Edina, MN
 GEHLBACH, Paul; Bethlehem LC, Saint Paul, MN
 HAMP, Timothy James; Immanuel LC, Fairmont, MN
 HEINTZ, Ethan R; St Pauls LC, Fulda, MN
 HOLTZ, Adam; Grace LC, Dodge Center, MN
 KIRSCH, Martin J; Mount Calvary LC, Richfield, MN
 KOOSMAN, David Rollin (Dave); Bethlehem LC, Annandale, MN
 KRANZ, Luke; Immanuel LC, Gaylord, MN
 KRUSE, Gary; St John LC, Hutchinson, MN
 LEASE, Chad; LC of the Good Shepherd, North Mankato, MN
 LEWIS, Daniel; St Martin LC, Winona, MN
 LINDH, Al; Glory of Christ LC, Plymouth, MN
 NETLAND, Dan; Good Shepherd LC, Circle Pines, MN
 OLSON, Barry Dean; Trinity LC, Waseca, MN
 PASCHE, Richard R; Family of Christ LC, Ham Lake, MN
 QUAST, Steve; St John LC, Winsted, MN
 ROSLANSKY, David R; St Matthew LC, Worthington, MN
 ROWLANDS, David O; Trinity LC, Rochester, MN
 VOTH, Wayne; Immanuel LC, Hay Creek, MN

Advisory Ordained

MCCOURT, Craig Thomas; Peace LC, Arlington, MN

Advisory Commissioned

ANDERSON, Aislinn Rhea; Shepherd of the Grove LC, Maple Grove, MN
 BECKMAN, April Heather; Redeemer LC, Rochester, MN
 BOEHLKE, Jeffrey K; St Pauls LC, Watertown, MN
 KRUSE, Robin Faith; St John LC, Hutchinson, MN
 LANDSKROENER, Joel P; St Johns LC, Chaska, MN
 LOVHAUG, Brenda Ann; Golden Valley LC, Golden Valley, MN
 PETERSON, LaDonna Kay; Immanuel LC, Lakefield, MN
 SCHEELE, Dean M; First Ev LC, Glencoe, MN
 STROHSCHIEIN, Lonnie Marie; Redeemer LC, Rochester, MN

Missouri District

Voting Ordained

BARTO, Gregory S; Zion LC, Hillsboro, MO
 BERRY, Matthew Christopher; Concordia LC, Sikeston, MO
 BOISCLAIR, David Richard; Bethesda LC, Saint Louis, MO
 DEHNE, John Allen; St Andrew LC, Cape Girardeau, MO
 FERGUSON, Eamonn Michael; Holy Trinity LC, Mound City, MO
 FURGESON, Jon C; Peace LC, Saint Louis County, MO
 GORLINE, Jeremy Dean; Child of God LC, Saint Peters, MO
 HENRICKSON, Charles M; Grace LC, De Soto, MO
 HETZEL, Brian J; Pointe of Hope LC, Blue Springs, MO
 KENNEL, Andrew C; St Johns LC, Monett, MO
 KRANZ, Mark J; Mount Calvary LC, Excelsior Springs, MO
 KRUEGER, Joel A; Faith LC, Branson, MO
 LUCAS, Frank E; Immanuel LC, Altenburg, MO
 MALONE, C Robert Sr; Amazing Grace LC, Pleasant Hill, MO

MAUSS, Douglas E; Pathfinder LC, Ellisville, MO
 MEYER, Jonathan Vaughn; Holy Cross LC, O'Fallon, MO
 MORRIS, Timothy E (Tim); Alive In Christ LC, Columbia, MO
 MUELLER, Jacob Timothy; Holy Cross LC, Emma, MO
 PERLING, John F; Faith LC, Saint Robert, MO
 PREUS, Andrew J; Trinity LC, New Haven, MO
 RUBACK, Nathan Aaron; Grace Lutheran Chapel, Bellefontaine Nghbrs, MO
 SALO, Scott A; Immanuel LC, Hannibal, MO
 SMITH, William Gerald Jr (Jerry); Trinity LC, Appleton City, MO
 STAFFELD, Timothy William; Epiphany LC, Saint Louis, MO
 THOMAS, Glen D; St Pauls LC, Des Peres, MO
 THORSON, Brian J; Grace Ev LC, Lexington, MO
 WILLIAMS, Guillaume J S Sr; Hope Lutheran Chapel, Osage Beach, MO

Voting Lay

BAUMHOEGGER, Harry Jr; Zion LC, Owensville, MO
 BRENNER, Russell W (Russ); Trinity LC, Jefferson City, MO
 CRESPO, Wilfredo Jr; Bethlehem LC, Warrensburg, MO
 DAVIDSON, Ian; Trinity LC, Norborne, MO
 EHRHARD, Raymond A; Blessed Savior LC, Florissant, MO
 ENSOR, Stacey Kay; St Matthew LC, Sullivan, MO
 GEIS, Aaron; Good Shepherd LC, Cape Girardeau, MO
 HOPPE, Russ; Immanuel LC, Wentzville, MO
 KIEFER, Daniel H; Zion LC, Perryville, MO
 KLATT, Daniel P (Dan); Calvary LC, Kansas City, MO
 LINHARDT, Dean H; Hope LC, Saint Ann, MO
 MAHSMAN, Phillip D (Phil); Trinity LC, Louisiana, MO
 MARQUARDT, John A; Zion LC, Rockville, MO
 MARTIN, Daniel E; St Pauls LC, Independence, MO
 MCCOIG, Larry; Trinity LC, Columbia, MO
 MEYER, Dwight; St Paul LC, Jackson, MO
 MOELLER, Deborah; St Trinity LC, Saint Louis, MO
 MOWERY, Kevin M; King of Kings LC, Chesterfield, MO
 PIGORS, Howard A (Carl); Holy Cross LC, Kansas City, MO
 ROHLFING, Dennis; Immanuel LC, Saint Charles, MO
 STEELE, John; Glendale LC, Glendale, MO
 TEBO, Casey; LC of the Resurrection, Sunset Hills, MO
 TRIPLET, Jim; St Paul LC, Saint Joseph, MO
 TURLEY, Ken; St Paul LC, Farmington, MO
 UHLMANSIEK, Thomas E (Tom); Hope LC, High Ridge, MO
 VIETS, Doris W; St John LC, Cole Camp, MO
 WESTERN, Joseph; Trinity LC, Springfield, MO

Advisory Ordained

BRANDT, Gary Ray; Peace LC, Camdenton, MO
 HERTWIG, Frederick C; Trinity LC, Cole Camp, MO
 KAMPFRATH, Stephen P (Steve); Immanuel LC, Rolla, MO
 NINKE, John Howard; Faith LC, Jefferson City, MO
 WOLLENBURG, Alan J; Zion LC, Gordonville, MO

Advisory Commissioned

BOND, Gillian Mary; Concordia LC, Maplewood, MO
 BURKEE, Jeffrey R; Salem LC, Black Jack, MO
 FIALA, David Aaron; LC of Webster Gardens, Webster Groves, MO
 FRANK, David James (Dave); Timothy LC, Blue Springs, MO
 GIFFORD, Charles J Sr; Trinity LC, Alma, MO
 HONOREE, Cheryl L; Concordia LC, Frohna, MO
 JANSSEN, Matthew Carl; Hope LC, Saint Louis, MO
 KAHLER, Micheal L; Holy Cross LC, O'Fallon, MO
 KLEIBOEKER, Carole A; Trinity LC, Freistatt, MO
 LOHMAN, James Harold; Zion LC, Saint Charles, MO
 MCDONNELL, Ruth Ericka; Salem LC, Saint Louis, MO
 NOWISZEWSKI, Nancy Edna; Timothy LC, Blue Springs, MO
 NUMMELA, Thomas A; St Pauls LC, Des Peres, MO
 RICE, Denise L; Trinity LC, Saint Louis, MO
 SIMPSON, Matthew E (Matt); St Andrew LC, Cape Girardeau, MO
 THOMPSON, Carolyn M; Alive In Christ LC, Columbia, MO

Montana District

Voting Ordained

BEHM, David M; Concordia LC, Williston, ND
 MERZ, Daniel S; Emmaus LC, Livingston, MT
 SHUPE, Paul R; St Paul LC, Bridger, MT
 WINTER, Kyle Christopher; The Church at Creston-Lutheran, Kalispell, MT

Voting Lay

HABENER, Steve; Hope LC, Billings, MT
 HALVORSON, Tom R; Trinity LC, Sidney, MT
 KEMPF, Joel H; Our Redeemer LC, Columbia Falls, MT
 PETRIE, Joe; Shepherd of the Valley LC, Salmon, ID

Advisory Ordained

ZAGEL, Bruce Robert; Trinity LC, Billings, MT

Advisory Commissioned

KOSCHE, Thomas Paul; Trinity LC, Billings, MT

Nebraska District**Voting Ordained**

ARCHER, Adam K; St John LC, Ord, NE
 ASBURY, Christopher Page; Grace LC, Norfolk, NE
 AWE, Michael A; Hope LC, South Sioux City, NE
 BURMA, Cory W; Peace LC, Columbus, NE
 FELCHER, Lonnie Ray; Peace LC, McCook, NE
 FRANCISCO, Benjamin Joel (Ben); Faith LC, York, NE
 GERBER, Anthony Joseph; Trinity LC, Fremont, NE
 HARTMAN, Jared Paul; St Paul LC, Wisner, NE
 HESSEL, Kenneth N; Our Redeemer LC, Springfield, NE
 JANKE, Ryan Matthew; St Peter LC, Orchard, NE
 KOHLMEYER, Marcel L; St Johns LC, Tecumseh, NE
 KRUSE, Caleb John; Lord of Life LC, Elkhorn, NE
 KUNZE, John Raymond; Messiah LC, Lincoln, NE
 OETTING, Jonathan Wayne; Shepherd of the Hills LC, Hyannis, NE
 RASMUSSEN, John W; Holy Cross LC, Kearney, NE
 SCHAFFER, Gregory A (Greg); St Peters LC, Davenport, NE
 SCHECK, Nathan David; St John LC, Seward, NE
 SIEBERT, Benjamin R (Ben); Zion LC, Hastings, NE
 WING, Daniel S; Trinity LC, Lincoln, NE
 WRIGHT, Brian Lynn; Christ LC, Cairo, NE

Voting Lay

BOLTE, William P (Bill); Emmanuel LC, York, NE
 CARPENTER, Don; Immanuel LC, Lincoln, NE
 ENDORF, David; Immanuel LC, Daykin, NE
 FOWLKES, David; St Paul LC, Tilden, NE
 FRAZIER, Sandra (Sandy); Pacific Hills LC, Omaha, NE
 HOINS, Barbie; Peace LC, Hastings, NE
 JANKE, Phillip A; St Paul LC, Winside, NE
 KINDT, Sharon A; St Paul LC, Doniphan, NE
 KORTE, Bruce; Christ LC, Columbus, NE
 LUNNEY, Yvonne A; Zion LC, Garland, NE
 PHILLIPS, Thomas (Tom); Trinity LC, Lexington, NE
 SEIBER, Dale; First LC, Papillion, NE
 SERR, Jerrod; Grace LC, Burton, NE
 STANDIFORD, Melanie A; St John LC, Curtis, NE
 SWAN, Marvin; Zion LC, Grant, NE
 TIMM, Darrel; Grace LC, Neligh, NE
 WAGEMAN, Steve M; St John LC, Pender, NE
 WEBER, Carol; St Matthew LC, Cedar Bluffs, NE
 WEBER, Rod E; St Paul LC, Weeping Water, NE
 WILSHUSEN, Brec; Peace LC, Waverly, NE

Advisory Ordained

BARTELT, Stephen R (Steve); Zion LC, Omaha, NE

Advisory Commissioned

ANSON, Harlan D; Our Redeemer LC, Staplehurst, NE
 BOEKA, Cassie Denise; Trinity LC, Arapahoe, NE
 SEIFERT, Vanessa M; Calvary LC, Lincoln, NE
 WHITNEY, Steven Bryan; St John LC, Battle Creek, NE

New England District**Voting Ordained**

CLOW, Mark R; Grace Ev LC, Middletown, CT
 GREGORY, Peter F; Our Savior LC, Westminster, MA
 REITZ, Jason Eric; Bethany LC, West Hartford, CT
 RUWISCH, George A V; Grace LC, Nashua, NH
 SCAMMAN, Evan Paul; First LC, Greenwich, CT

Voting Lay

DAHL, Brian; Christ LC, Niantic, CT
 DAY, Darik C; Redeemer LC, Gorham, ME
 EDMON, Paul Pretzer; First LC, Boston, MA
 KRAMPITZ, Jan A; Holy Trinity LC, Terryville, CT
 SORKNESS, Kyle ; Zion Ev LC, Orange, CT

Advisory Commissioned

GIERKE, Jennifer Denise; The LC of the Savior, Bedford, MA

New Jersey District**Voting Ordained**

FJORDBOTTEN, Dale Allan; Holy Trinity LC, Somerset, NJ
 HODGES, Jonathan E; Christ the King LC, Ringwood, NJ
 SMALL, David C; Calvary LC, Medford, NJ
 VOSSLER, L Richard Jr; Grace LC, Livingston, NJ

Voting Lay

BERGMANN, Boyd; Redeemer LC, Westfield, NJ
 CINARDO, Michael (Mike); Good Shepherd LC, Old Bridge, NJ
 GIBNEY, Geraldine Gold; St Paul's Ev LC, Closter, NJ
 ONDER, Paul M; Holy Faith LC, Oak Ridge, NJ

Advisory Commissioned

VOGT, Caren M; Prince of Peace LC, Hamburg, NJ

North Dakota District**Voting Ordained**

BEYERSDORF, Philip John; St Mark LC, Minot, ND
 BRADEMEYER, Christopher William; St Johns LC, Oakes, ND
 CHEPULIS, Mark Andrew; Our Savior LC, Cavalier, ND
 MARCIS, Thomas R Jr; Zion LC, Bismarck, ND
 SCHULZ, Steven Michael; Immanuel LC, Fargo, ND
 TOOMAN, Matthew Marvin; Immanuel LC, Wahpeton, ND

Voting Lay

ANDERSON, Anthony J; Immanuel LC, Grand Forks, ND
 BROWNLEE, Curtis Alan; Holy Cross LC, Lidgerwood, ND
 CHRISTENSEN, Bradley J (Brad); Shepherd of the Valley LC, Bismarck, ND
 FLIETH, Randy; Concordia LC, Jamestown, ND
 RILEY, John P; Immanuel LC, Willow City, ND

North Wisconsin District**Voting Ordained**

BENDER, Kevin James; SS Peter and Paul LC, Houghton, MI
 ERRER, Joshua Samuel; Faith LC, Green Bay, WI
 FEHRMANN, Ryan J; Zion Ev LC, Wausau, WI
 GILLET, Stephen Paul; St Paul LC, Tomahawk, WI
 JENSEN, Scott Arthur; Luther Memorial LC, River Falls, WI
 JERABEK, Todd R; Zion LC, Embarrass, WI
 KLINE, Steven G (Steve); Shepherd of the Hills LC, Greenville, WI
 KNEFELKAMP, David J; St Paul LC, Whitehall, WI
 LAHNERS, Kenneth W; Trinity LC, Glidden, WI
 MARKWORTH, Gary L; St John LC, Pittsville, WI
 MORSCHING, Samuel L; Peace LC, Park Falls, WI
 RADKE, Paul Christopher; St Matthew LC, Deerbrook, WI
 SHAFFER, Corey Allen; Trinity LC, Port Edwards, WI
 SHOREY, Ralph Chester III; Trinity LC, Medford, WI
 STOLL, Steven E (Steve); Tabor LC, Mountain, WI
 THOMAS, Brad; Zion LC, Chippewa Falls, WI
 WALTER, Jody Roger; Our Redeemer LC, Webster, WI
 ZOBEL, Andrew J; St James LC, Shawano, WI

Voting Lay

BALLERSTEIN, Roger; St John LC, Edgar, WI
 FAHL, Jeffrey V; Trinity LC, Prentice, WI
 FENSKE, Marie; Trinity LC, Bear Creek, WI
 MELLEM, David; Hope LC, De Pere, WI
 MEYER, James; St Paul LC, Bonduel, WI
 MILLER, Kevin D; Calvary LC, Waupaca, WI
 MOORE, Philip; Faith United LC, Gillett, WI
 ROACH, Don; St John LC, Black River Falls, WI
 RUGG, Terri A; St John LC, Laona, WI
 RUSSLER, Jim; Peace LC, Arbor Vitae, WI
 SALMINEN, Amy; Redeemer LC, Marquette, MI
 STRENGER, Jack; Christ LC, Marshfield, WI
 TIMM, Craig Victor; St John LC, Wisconsin Rapids, WI
 VOELKER, Randy; First LC, Rice Lake, WI
 VOIGHT, Donald N; St Paul LC, Merrill, WI
 YARISH, Terry L; Rib Mountain LC, Wausau, WI
 ZAMARRIPA, Alex; St Paul LC, Thorp, WI

Advisory Commissioned

FERG, Emily J; St Martin LC, Clintonville, WI

Northern Illinois District**Voting Ordained**

ANDERSON, Steven J; Gloria Dei LC, Chicago, IL
 ANTONETTI, Christopher Omero; St Pauls LC, Lockport, IL
 BARTENS, Emmett Arnold; Bethany LC, Naperville, IL
 BROWN, Eric J; Trinity LC, Herscher, IL
 CAMPBELL, Braun Christian; Immanuel LC, Belvidere, IL
 CONRAD, Matthew J (Matt); Cross LC, Yorkville, IL
 EHRHARD, Jacob William; St Johns LC, Chicago, IL
 FAY, Karl Richard; Prince of Peace LC, Palatine, IL
 FISCHABER, Phillip Jordan; Holy Trinity LC, Walnut, IL
 GALLIGAR, Patrick Joseph; Zion LC, Marengo, IL
 GALLUP, Roger B; Bethlehem LC, River Grove, IL
 HATESOHL, Andrew (Andy); Trinity LC, Huntley, IL
 JAMES, Christopher N; Immanuel LC, Downers Grove, IL
 KEATING, David Tucker; St James LC, Chicago, IL
 LAMIE, Julian A; St John LC, Beecher, IL
 MILASH, Bruce Paul; St Peter LC, Dundee, IL
 PETZOLD, Jonathan David; Trinity LC, Roselle, IL
 SCHELLHAS, Aaron M; Immanuel LC, Mokena, IL
 SQUIRES, Benjamin Charles; Bethel LC, Gurnee, IL

Voting Lay

BISHOP, Timothy E (Tim); Immanuel LC, East Dundee, IL
 BROWN, David; Resurrection LC, Chicago, IL
 CHILDERS, Crista; Trinity LC, Burr Ridge, IL

CROW, Brian J; Immanuel LC, Crystal Lake, IL
 EDEN, Brent; St Pauls LC, Bourbonnais, IL
 EVANS, Brian; Christ LC, Orland Park, IL
 HELLER, Jeffrey S (Jeff); St Andrews LC, Park Ridge, IL
 HENDRYX, Thomas; Christ the Rock LC, Rockford, IL
 HILLMAN, Darlene; Immanuel LC, DeKalb, IL
 KELLER, Erich M; River of Life LC, Channahon, IL
 KELLY, John H III; St Matthew LC, Hawthorn Woods, IL
 LEISE, William G; St Paul LC, Oak Lawn, IL
 LUSTREA, Robert; Trinity LC, Lombard, IL
 MEYER, Pamela Ann (Pam); St Paul's Ev LC, Chicago Heights, IL
 MILLER, Shane E; Christ Our Savior LC, Dixon, IL
 PACYGA, Emily E; Tabor LC, Chicago, IL
 SOLTWISCH, Thomas L; Zion LC, Naperville, IL
 STERN, Mark O; St Paul LC, Brookfield, IL

Advisory Ordained

BUSSERT, Mark P; Trinity LC, Lisle, IL
 MUELLER, Charles S Jr (Chuck); Trinity LC, Roselle, IL

Advisory Commissioned

BERG, Alan M; Immanuel LC, East Dundee, IL
 BIERLEIN, Beth N; Immanuel LC, Batavia, IL
 HASSELDLAHL, David C; Zion LC, Marengo, IL
 JENSEN, Karen E; Christ the Rock LC, Rockford, IL
 LAABS, Jonathan Charles; Trinity LC, Roselle, IL
 LAABS, June M; Trinity LC, Roselle, IL
 OTTEN, Ruth A; St Paul LC, Brookfield, IL
 PIEL, Laura M; Trinity LC, Roselle, IL
 PIEL, Lianne Melissa; St John LC, Elgin, IL
 PIEL, Paul F; St Peter LC, Arlington Heights, IL
 URBAN, Mariann C (Catie); Immanuel LC, Elmhurst, IL

Northwest District**Voting Ordained**

ATKINSON, Dustin Carl; Star of the North LC, Kenai, AK
 DUBKE, Dallas C R; Faith LC, Monmouth, OR
 GAUSE, Mark E; New Hope LC, Pacific, WA
 GULLIDGE, Jason E; St Paul LC, Jerome, ID
 HESS, Karl R; Emmaus Ev LC, Redmond, OR
 HIRSCH, Thomas William; St Johns LC, Sutherlin, OR
 MATTHEWS, James Allan; Grace LC, Tacoma, WA
 MUELLER, Jacob Steven; Epiphany LC, Kenmore, WA
 SCHROEDER, Todd Eric; Redeemer LC, Richland, WA
 SHAVER, Ross Patrick; Zion LC, Nampa, ID
 SHEARIER, Jeffrey Edward; Bethlehem LC, Aloha, OR
 SPRENGLE, James J; Ascension LC, Portland, OR
 SWAN, Jason; LC of the Atonement, Seattle, WA
 THOMAS, Eli J; Christ Community LC, Ridgefield, WA
 TRIPLETT, Kirk Eugene; Faith LC, Pocatello, ID
 WAGLEY, Doug; New Vision LC, Spokane, WA
 WINTERSTEIN, Timothy James; Faith LC, East Wenatchee, WA
 ZUCH, Aaron T; Grace LC, Blaine, WA

Voting Lay

CARTER, Branden Michael; Good Shepherd LC, Boise, ID
 COBLE, Christine; Lamb of God Ev LC, Seattle, WA
 COLLISON, Virginia A; Redeemer LC, Gresham, OR
 DENNY, Stuart; Shepherd of the Hills LC, Rathdrum, ID
 FALB, Roland; Peace LC, Chehalis, WA
 FRASCH, Rich; Faith LC, La Grande, OR
 HAYES, Aaron D; Grace LC, Pocatello, ID
 HILLER, Bryan; Light of Christ LC, Federal Way, WA
 HORNER, Kim; St Matthew LC, Washougal, WA
 JANSSEN, Karen M; St Pauls LC, Grants Pass, OR
 KOLTZ, Lawrence L (Larry); Hope LC, Seattle, WA
 LUTKEHUS, Richard (Rich); Clover Trinity LC, Buhl, ID
 MIX, Tim; Trinity LC, Mount Angel, OR
 RICHARD, Jill M; St Paul LC, Sherwood, OR
 SIMPSON, Jerry; Our Redeemer LC, Chugiak, AK
 SYMMANK, David (Dave); Trinity LC, Mount Vernon, WA
 TEILBORG, Dylan; Hope LC, Spokane Valley, WA
 WESTHAFFER, Carol; Our Savior LC, Waldport, OR

Advisory Ordained

BJORNSTAD, Robert M; Peace LC, Salem, OR
 GRIESSE, Mark E; Peace LC, Selah, WA

Advisory Commissioned

BOPP, Anne E; Grace LC, Pocatello, ID
 GABLE, Gary G; Zion LC, Snohomish, WA
 GABLE, Kathleen A; Zion LC, Snohomish, WA
 KRANICH, Jeffrey D (Jeff); Prince of Peace LC, Portland, OR
 VANDE VOORT-SCHWEIM, Amy L; Immanuel LC, Puyallup, WA

Ohio District Voting Ordained

ETTER, Mark R; Bethany LC, Erlanger, KY
HARTSOUGH, Mark Richard; New Hope LC, Newark, OH
HROMOWYK, Wesley; Zion Ev LC, Columbus, OH
LUTZ, Stephen H; Trinity LC, Elmore, OH
MARCIS, Peter Christian; St Paul LC, Napoleon, OH
MATZKE, Mark G; St Mark LC, Chesterland, OH
MEWS, Kurt F; St John LC, Defiance, OH
VOGEL, Benjamin William; Bethany LC, Parma, OH
WACKER, Robert J; Trinity Ev LC, Warren, OH
WALLACE, Michael Scott; Gethsemane Ev LC, Lakewood, OH
WILSON, Andrew James; Trinity LC, Zanesville, OH
WITTE, Keith Frederick; Bethlehem LC, Fairborn, OH
ZIELINSKI, Philip Edward; St Paul LC, Valley City, OH
ZIEMANN, Kurt R; Zion LC, Painesville, OH

Voting Lay

CHAMBERLAIN, Lewis Martin (Martin); Trinity LC, Logan, OH
ESSEL, Randall; St John LC, Cleveland, OH
GIBSON, Tim P (Tim); Shepherd of the Valley LC, Perrysburg, OH
HORNER, Shawn; Messiah LC, Greenhills, OH
JOHNSON, Paul G; Faith LC, Avon, OH
JONES, Jeffrey J; St Timothy LC, Huber Heights, OH
KRONE, Steven Robert; St Paul LC, Westlake, OH
LAINE, Matthew; Hope LC, Condit, OH
LOCKHART, Robert; Shore Haven LC, Euclid, OH
MIELKE, Karl; St Johns LC, Wapakoneta, OH
OLSZEWSKI, Larry; Atonement LC, Columbus, OH
ROHRS, Randall F (Randy); Zion LC, Ridgeville Corners, OH
ZIEMANN, Jeremy; St Johns LC, Geneva, OH

Advisory Commissioned

CHEADLE, Deanna Lynn; Our Savior LC, Chillicothe, OH
DOWDELL, Dorcel; St Philip LC, Toledo, OH

Oklahoma District Voting Ordained

HALL, Christopher D (Chris); Grace LC, Tulsa, OK
HECKMANN, Joel T; St John LC, Okarche, OK
MOELLER, Dwight Fitzgerald; Bethlehem LC, Adair, OK
REITER, Ahren Lowell; Holy Cross LC, Lawton, OK
ROGGOW, Timothy Carl; Zion LC, Alva, OK
ROSS, Daniel Clifton; Christ LC, Mustang, OK
WACKLER, John E; Zion LC, Stillwater, OK

Voting Lay

FISCHER, Ron; Trinity LC, Norman, OK
HORN, Ronald Gene II; LC of Our Savior, Bethany, OK
O HARA, Loren D; Trinity LC, El Reno, OK
PLUNKETT, Randy; Immanuel LC, Garber, OK
POWELL, Dylan J; First LC, Ponca City, OK
RAU, Jerry M; Redeemer LC, Bartlesville, OK
STEITZ, Paul A; Trinity LC, Broken Arrow, OK

Advisory Ordained

WADE, Kenneth Earl; St Paul's LC, Enid, OK

Advisory Commissioned

O BRIEN, Shannon Abigail; Our Savior LC, Tulsa, OK

Pacific Southwest District Voting Ordained

AHLMAN, Timothy Paul (Tim); Christ Greenfield LC, Gilbert, AZ
BERAN, Joseph M; Bethlehem LC, Santa Clarita, CA
BLANKE, Neal R; St Pauls LC, Pomona, CA
BOGARDUS, Larry D; Good Shepherd LC, Sun City, CA
EICHINGER, Eric Todd; Our Savior LC, Arcadia, CA
HARMAN, Vincent Ronald (Vince); Christ LC, Yuma, AZ
HENKELL, James D (Jim); St Pauls LC, San Diego, CA
HILKEN, Dennis Ray; Redeemer by the Sea LC, Carlsbad, CA
HOFF, Clinton S; Our Saviors LC, Ridgecrest, CA
JONES, Keith R; Good Shepherd LC, Goleta, CA
KAROLUS, John D; Shepherd of the Desert LC, Scottsdale, AZ
KASTNER, Luke W; St Johns LC, Hemet, CA
KLEMM, Derek S; Mountain View LC, Las Vegas, NV
KLINKENBERG, Timothy M; St Johns LC, Orange, CA
KOLL, Quincy Donald; Mt Olive LC, Poway, CA
LOOS, Bartholomew Clark (Bart); First LC, Manhattan Beach, CA
MUELLER, Steven P; St Pauls LC of Irvine CA, Irvine, CA
PARKER, Dustin T; Concordia LC, Cerritos, CA
ROSS, Andrew Blake (Drew); Christ LC, Costa Mesa, CA
ROSSINGTON, Mark W; Epiphany LC, Chandler, AZ
SCHAUS, Nathan Eugene; Summit Community LC, Buckeye, AZ
SCHLOEMAN, Karl E; Faith LC, Cottonwood, AZ

STETSON, Adam; Christ LC, Boulder City, NV

Voting Lay

ANDREOLA, Anthony J; Good Shepherd LC, Tehachapi, CA
CASTELLANOS, Katie; Messiah LC, Downey, CA
CHOITZ, Bret A; Living Water LC, Buckeye, AZ
DUSEK, Mike; Calvary LC, Yuma, AZ
EVANS, Paul; Redeemer LC, Huntington Beach, CA
HARBER, Delcia; Trinity LC, Casa Grande, AZ
HARTMANN, Ross; Our Savior First LC, Granada Hills, CA
HERRMANN, Jonathan (Jon); Edgewater LC, Eastvale, CA
HITTINGER, Wayne Morse; First Ev LC, El Monte, CA
KANNEG, Gail; St Paul LC, Orange, CA
LAMONICA, Phil; Christ LC Ministries, La Mesa, CA
LANGE, Benjamin; Peace LC, North Tustin, CA
MEEKS, Renee; Trinity LC, Prescott Valley, AZ
MENTZER, John; Community LC, Escondido, CA
NARDINI, Bill; Good Shepherd LC-LCMS, Kingman, AZ
RAUSCHER, Robert (Bob); Desert Foothills LC, Scottsdale, AZ
SALZBERG, Joshua; First LC of Culver City & Palms, Los Angeles, CA
SMITH, Mercedes E; Grace LC, Ventura, CA
STEINBART, Paul J; Hosanna LC, Mesa, AZ
STORK, Joyce; Grace LC, Henderson, NV
WANAMAKER, Mark Andrew; Good Shepherd LC, Yucaipa, CA
WAUFLE, Victoria L; Faith LC, Vista, CA
WRIGHT, John; Grace LC, Banning, CA

Advisory Ordained

GOMEZ, Samuel (Sam); Grace LC, Escondido, CA
HUSE, Thomas Nathan (Nathan); Peace LC, North Tustin, CA
STOTERAU, Larry Allen; St Johns LC, Orange, CA

Advisory Commissioned

ANDERSON, Anne Elizabeth (Annie); Hosanna LC, Mesa, AZ
GONG, Wesley; Peace LC, North Tustin, CA
KIM, Eun Chu; Christ LC, Costa Mesa, CA
MAXWELL, Deryl R; Mt Calvary LC, Diamond Bar, CA
MC KINNEY, Robert D (Bob); Trinity LC, Simi Valley, CA
SCOTT, Mary K; Christ LC, Costa Mesa, CA

Rocky Mountain District Voting Ordained

BORCHER, Alan D; Holy Trinity LC, Riverton, UT
HATTEBERG, Kurt Thomas; St Pauls LC, Amherst, CO
KLETKE, Daniel (Dan); St John LC, Canon City, CO
KOONTZ, Adam Clinton; Trinity LC, Denver, CO
LANGEWISCH, David John; Bethlehem LC, Lakewood, CO
LANGNESS, Richard D (Rick); Beautiful Savior LC, Broomfield, CO
MATTHIS, Christopher Smith (Chris); Epiphany Ev LC, Castle Rock, CO
MEISSNER, Duane Paul; Resurrection in the City LC, Denver, CO
NORTON, Timothy Paul; Shepherd of the Valley LC, Navajo, NM
REDEKER, Michael James; LC of Messiah, Grand Junction, CO
REEDER, Thomas N Jr; Immanuel LC, Clovis, NM
RUSNAK, Joshua W; Rock of Ages LC, Colorado Springs, CO
WEISS, Stephen Thomas; Gloria Christi LC, Greeley, CO

Voting Lay

ANDERSEN, Rachel N; Mount Zion LC, Denver, CO
ARVIN, Michel; Ascension LC, Littleton, CO
BUCHLEITER, Jerry W; Peace with Christ LC, Fort Collins, CO
BURGESS, Brad; Hope LC, Montrose, CO
CHASE, Gavin; Zion LC, El Paso, TX
DIENST, Michael; Resurrection Ev LC, Colorado Springs, CO
GREER, James (Stormy); Peace LC, Arvada, CO
MC NERNEY, Harold (Hal); Trinity LC, Burlington, CO
PROFT, Donovan; Immanuel LC, Albuquerque, NM
TISCARENO, Marco; Mount Calvary LC, Fort Lupton, CO
WHITE, Alan; St Johns LC, Yuma, CO
WIEFFERINK, Mackenzie; Christ LC, Denver, CO
WINTERSTEIN, Russ; Grace LC, Sandy, UT

Advisory Ordained

MUELLER, Robert R Andrew; Grace LC, Albuquerque, NM
RHODE, Paul G; Mount Olive LC, Loveland, CO

Advisory Commissioned

BLACK, David W; Shepherd of the Hills LC, Centennial, CO
BOWER, Kristine; Beautiful Savior LC, Broomfield, CO
BUSACKER, William P (Bill); Immanuel LC, Loveland, CO
HOWARD, Marcus Worth; Immanuel LC, Loveland, CO

SELC District Voting Ordained

FERNANDEZ, James Francis; Hope Viera LC, Melbourne, FL
RAMIREZ, Richard Leigh; Ev LC of Dr Martin Luther, Chicago, IL

ST ONGE, Charles Patrick; Ascension LC, Montreal, QC
CANADA

STEPHENS, Curtis Daniel; St Matthew LC, Norton, OH

Voting Lay

BAISCH, Jonathan Emil; SS Peter and Paul LC, Sharon, PA
BRANDSTROM, Peter; St John LC, Cudahy, WI
FANA, Rebekah; Holy Cross LC, Lake Mary, FL
GONZALEZ, Obed; Redeemer LC of Manchester, Manchester, NJ

South Dakota District Voting Ordained

ANDREASEN, Jordon M; Our Savior LC, Aberdeen, SD
ASCHER, Christopher Duane (Chris); Resurrection LC, Sioux Falls, SD
BROWN, Thomas Carey; St Paul LC, Spearfish, SD
HINNERS, Gregory S; St John LC, Norris, SD
LOESLIE, Ryan Lane; Immanuel LC, Dimock, SD
NEUGEBAUER, Nathan T; St John's LC, Revillo, SD
RICHERT, Jeremy D; Holy Cross Ev LC, Dakota Dunes, SD
WELTON, Adam J; St Peter's LC, Wentworth, SD

Voting Lay

GROOMS, Michael D; Christ LC, Sioux Falls, SD
NEEMAN, Ronald G (Ron); Messiah LC, Redfield, SD
REIPRICH, Michael G; Divine Shepherd LC, Black Hawk, SD
RIECK, Donald E; Trinity LC, Spencer, SD
RUTTER, Mark H; St John LC, Yankton, SD
STRAND, Marvin J; Zion LC, Mitchell, SD
TIMMERMAN, Steven J (Steve); Mount Calvary LC, Brookings, SD
WENDLING, Philip; Zion LC, Chamberlain, SD

Advisory Ordained

WARNIER, Paul Albert; Peace LC, Alcester, SD

Advisory Commissioned

OCKANDER, Marli M; Faith LC, Sioux Falls, SD

South Wisconsin District Voting Ordained

BENDER, Peter; Peace LC, Sussex, WI
BERG, John M; Trinity LC, Sheboygan, WI
BERGELIN, David; Mount Calvary LC, Janesville, WI
BERGELIN, Douglas J D; St Peter LC, Lebanon, WI
BRANDT, Joel Timothy; Cross LC, Westport, WI
BUTLER, Robert W; Zion LC, La Valle, WI
CONRADT, Joshua Philip Henry; St Peter LC, Waterford, WI
DAVIS, Jesse Lee; Immanuel LC, Westfield, WI
EICHERS, Jacob John; Faith LC, La Crosse, WI
ENDERLE, Phillip M; Hope LC, Fond du Lac, WI
FRISQUE, Marshal R; St John LC, Fredonia, WI
FRITSCH, Bryan L; Messiah LC, Ripon, WI
GILBERT, Jacob A (Jack); St Johns LC, Racine, WI
HARRIS, Andrew M; Christ Ev LC, Clinton, WI
HENRICHS, Michael William; Our Savior LC, Whitefish Bay, WI
KOBLE, Brandon Wayne; Trinity LC, West Allis, WI
KOCH, Aaron Anthony; Mount Zion LC, Greenfield, WI
MARKS, Paul William; Emmanuel LC, Adell, WI
MEIER, Austin; Good Shepherd LC, Two Rivers, WI
NDON, Elijah Asuquo; Holy Ghost LC, Milwaukee, WI
NIEMAN, David Scott; St Johns LC, West Bend, WI
NILES, John Patrick; Bethlehem LC, Sheboygan, WI
SORENSEN, Grant A; St Paul LC, Madison, WI
TORKELSON, Daniel T; St Johns LC, North Prairie, WI
ZAHNER, Douglas James; Immanuel LC, Mayville, WI

Voting Lay

ANDERSON, Eric; St John LC, Edgerton, WI
BERAN, Braden T (Brady); Trinity LC, Potter, WI
BUSS, Myron G; Good Shepherd LC, Sheboygan, WI
COOK, Garrett R; Messiah LC, Beloit, WI
DENKERT, Robert A; Immanuel LC, Brookfield, WI
FAIRFIELD, Robert E; St Johns LC, Portage, WI
GRUNEWALD, Steve H; St Pauls LC, Sheboygan, WI
GUGEL, Mattias; Bethlehem LC, Sun Prairie, WI
JACKSON, Richard; Grace LC, Oak Creek, WI
KABITZKE, Ronald O (Ron); Pilgrim LC, West Bend, WI
KNIGHT, Gary L; St Pauls LC, West Allis, WI
KOCH, Kevin M; St John LC, Berlin, WI
MARTIN, Paul; Christ the King LC, Racine, WI
MEYER, David; St Paul LC, Oconomowoc, WI
NEUBERGER, George L; Good Shepherd LC, Watertown, WI
NICKEL, Daniel W; St Stephen LC, Horicon, WI
NIGRO, Jerry; St Paul LC, Union Grove, WI
PERKINS, Edward A (Ed); Peace LC, Neenah, WI
PFEIFER, Donald A (Don); St John Ev LC, Random Lake, WI
RUSSELL, Edgar T; Mount Calvary LC, Milwaukee, WI
SCHRAN, Thomas; Prince of Peace LC, West Salem, WI

SCOTT, Adam J; Luther Memorial Chapel, Shorewood, WI
STRAND, Rachel; Beautiful Savior LC, Mequon, WI
THOMPSON, Gary R; Trinity LC, Wautoma, WI

Advisory Ordained

SCHUBERT, Jeffery Scott (Jeff); Divine Redeemer LC, Hartland, WI

Advisory Commissioned

BEVERSDORF, Melvin L; Our Father's LC, Greenfield, WI
BULT, Derek Wayne; Our Redeemer LC, Sheboygan, WI
HASSELD AHL, Cynthia L (Cindy); Trinity LC, Racine, WI
HASSELD AHL, Gregory C (Greg); Trinity LC, Racine, WI
HOVLAND, Stephenie Marie; St Johns LC, Portage, WI
JOHNSON, Stephen P; Our Father's LC, Greenfield, WI
MARSHALL, Christopher Robert (Chris); St Paul LC, Grafton, WI
MERCIER, Gary L; St Paul LC, Grafton, WI
OLDENBURG, Michael; Divine Redeemer LC, Hartland, WI

Southeastern District

Voting Ordained

BEDNASH, Eric Z; St James of Overlea LC, Overlea, MD
BREITBARTH, Marcus Allen; Living Hope LC, Stafford, VA
BROOKS, David H; Grace Ev LC, Durham, NC
BURGER, Christopher A; Holy Trinity LC, Columbia, SC
CHRISTENSEN, Jonathan Keith; Mount Pisgah LC, Hendersonville, NC
COSGROVE, Tab E; St John LC, York, PA
DAUB, James M; St Paul LC, Havelock, NC
FISHER, Alexander Robert; Christ LC, Hickory, NC
FREDERICKSEN, Wayne P; Our Savior LC, Arlington, VA
GAINES, Lloyd Douglas Sr; Peace LC, Washington, DC
GRAEF, Russell; Prince of Peace LC, Virginia Beach, VA
HILPERT, Matthew R; Galilee LC, Pasadena, MD
HOLLAR, Eric C; Bethel LC, Claremont, NC
KUMMER, David J; Concordia LC, Wilmington, DE
LUTZ, Elliott Michael; Fountain of Life LC, Kernersville, NC
MATON, Benjamin Orval (Ben); Immanuel LC, Charlottesville, VA
OLSON, Gary C; Bethlehem LC, Richmond, VA
SCHULTHEIS, Martin J; Emmanuel LC, Catonsville, MD
STOTTLEMYER, William K; St Paul LC, Hancock, MD
STOUT, Christopher T; Center Grove LC, Kannapolis, NC
WALLSCHLAEGER, Joel D; Hope LC, Manassas, VA

Voting Lay

BLOUNT, Kerry; Eternal Shepherd LC, Seneca, SC
COBB, Steven R; Holy Trinity LC, Statesville, NC
DANIELS, David L; Salem LC, Taylorsville, NC
DEBOLT, Leon; Living Savior LC, Fairfax Station, VA
ELGERT, Elizabeth H (Beth); King of Glory LC, Williamsburg, VA
FEGLEY, Thomas L; Messiah LC, Germantown, MD
GILLESPIE, Frank A Jr; Peace LC, Goldsboro, NC
HARRISON, Roger; Our Savior LC, Laurel, MD
HOLLE, Mary; Redeemer Ev LC, Parkton, MD
LUBELL, Paul; St Paul LC, Catonsville, MD
MARTIN-WATSON, Betty L; St Mark LC, Winston-Salem, NC
MCCUTCHEEN, Herbert G (Gene); Incarnate Word LC, Florence, SC
MIZE, Joshua S; All Saints LC, Charlotte, NC
MULLER, Peter; Hope LC, Wake Forest, NC
NEHLS, Craig; Redeemer LC, Fredericksburg, VA
RUFUS, Isaac; Faith LC, Bear, DE
RUSSELL, Eric; Our Savior LC, Lynchburg, VA
STEPHENS, Cortez D; Bethany LC, Alexandria, VA
TECHAU, Paul; Our Saviour LC, Baltimore, MD
TRIBBY, Judith A (Judy); St Pauls LC, Gambrills, MD
WEBER, Nelson; Trinity LC, Richmond, VA

Advisory Ordained

DIEFENTHALER, Jon T; Our Savior LC, Laurel, MD
MAACK, Roy A; Calvary LC, Baltimore, MD
QUACKENBOSS, Dennis C; Mountinside LC, Linville, NC

Advisory Commissioned

BUTCHER, Nicholas Alexander (Nick); King of Glory LC, Williamsburg, VA
COX, Holly Katherine; Eternal Shepherd LC, Seneca, SC
HILLS, Jennifer Ann; St Johns LC, Alexandria, VA
MAACK, Susan Rose; St Paul's LC, Glen Burnie, MD

Southern District

Voting Ordained

BOSTELMAN, Kermit Carlton; Trinity LC, Leesville, LA
BUSSMAN, John Mark; St Pauls LC, Cullman, AL
COLE, Christopher L; Redeemer LC, Pensacola, FL
DROSEND AHL, John Charles; Redeemer LC, Mandeville, LA

INGLE, Chad Mitchel; Prince of Peace LC, Ozark, AL
MANNING, Gregory T; Gloria Dei LC, New Orleans, LA
MILLER, Wayne John; Grace LC, Mobile, AL
PELLOM, Warren R; Prince of Peace LC, Southaven, MS
WASHINGTON, Steven; Trinity LC, Selma, AL

Voting Lay

BRUCHSCHEN, Corey W; Good Shepherd LC, Callaway, FL
DALE, Charles; Concordia LC, Fairhope, AL
JAUBERT, Henry (Hank); Good Shepherd LC, Slidell, LA
KIDD, Alene R; Prince of Peace LC, Pineville, LA
OLSON, Roderick P; St James LC, Gonzales, LA
SCHNEIDER, Jeffrey A (Jeff); Immanuel LC, Pensacola, FL
THOMPSON, Glen A; First LC, Birmingham, AL
WORNNER PREVOST, Yolonda W; Mount Zion LC, New Orleans, LA

Southern Illinois District

Voting Ordained

BENNING, David E; Trinity LC, Nashville, IL
BUETTNER, Lyle E; St Paul LC, New Athens, IL
CLAYTON, Kirk M; Zion LC, Mascoutah, IL
JENNINGS, Jonathan Paul; Bethlehem LC, Ferrin, IL
KORNACKI, Alan R Jr; St Peter LC, Campbell Hill, IL
LAUFER, Ralph E; Holy Cross LC, Sugar Loaf Township, IL
METCALF, Brandon William; Zion LC, Bethalto, IL
SHANK, John Charles; Trinity Lutheran Ministries, Edwardsville, IL
STRONG, Micheal M; Zion Ev LC, Farmersville, IL
WALTHER, Michael P; Good Shepherd LC, Collinsville, IL

Voting Lay

ALJETS, Scott D; Emmaus LC, Dorsey, IL
DEROUSSE, Michael D; St Johns LC, Red Bud, IL
GROTE, Curtis W; Trinity LC, Hoyleton, IL
HASCHEMEYER, Bruce; Zion LC, Carlinville, IL
HUTCHINSON, Donald J; Messiah LC, Lebanon, IL
ILL, Caroline; Trinity LC, Millstadt, IL
JOHNSON, Kurt E; St Paul LC, Worden, IL
KAHRE, Janet; Messiah LC, Carlyle, IL
KELLER, Brian J; Jerusalem LC, Collinsville, IL
KLINDWORTH, Brett; St John LC, Chester, IL

Advisory Ordained

SCHNARE, Martin T; St Paul LC, Worden, IL

Advisory Commissioned

BECKER, William Festus; St Johns LC, Red Bud, IL
GERTH, Joseph John; St Paul LC, Worden, IL
MUTH, Janet J; St Paul LC, Worden, IL
SHIMKUS, Karen; St Paul LC, Worden, IL

Texas District

Voting Ordained

BECK, Dustin Mead; Holy Cross LC, Warda, TX
BLASDEL, Brady William; Zion LC, Pasadena, TX
BOSTER, Kory B; Christ LC, Brookshire, TX
BOWMAN, Keith E Jr; Our Savior LC, Centerville, TX
BRYNESTAD, Christopher Paul; King of Kings LC, Round Rock, TX
DANNER, Martin Dean; Bethany LC, Austin, TX
DAVIS, John F Jr; Memorial LC, Katy, TX
DE YOUNG, Mark K; St Peter LC, Bowie, TX
DETERDING, Shawn Lynn; Water of Life LC, Forney, TX
DORN, Michael P; Trinity LC, Houston, TX
EDEN, Timothy Paul (Tim); Bethel LC, Bryan, TX
FRAKER, Timothy D (Tim); Trinity LC, Weatherford, TX
GONZALEZ, Eloy Steven; El Buen Pastor LC, McAllen, TX
HINTZE, Kevin; Zion LC, Georgetown, TX
KACHELMEIER, Brian L; Mount Calvary LC, San Antonio, TX
KALBAS, Aaron Christopher; St John LC, Hamilton, TX
KENNEDY, Christopher Michael; Shepherd of the Hills LC, San Antonio, TX
KNIPPA, Joshua A; Holy Cross LC, Nederland, TX
KOLB, Peter Carl; St Mark LC, Waco, TX
MILLER, Micah D; Prince of Peace LC, Carrollton, TX
MITTELSTADT, Richard Alan; Grace LC, Brownwood, TX
NIEKERK, Timothy Roger; Salem LC, Tomball, TX
PASE, Robert J (Bob); Grace LC, Midland, TX
RICHARDSON, James Martin Jr (Martin); Crown of Life LC, Colleyville, TX
RIDLEY, Charles E; Fishers of Men LC, Sugar Land, TX
SALMINEN, Jon D; Epiphany LC, Pearland, TX
SCHELER, Eddie Ray Jr; Ascension LC, Cleburne, TX
SCHEY, Bernard J; Trinity LC, Dime Box, TX
SCROGGINS, Troy D; St John LC, Dumas, TX
SETTLE, Rance Alan; Lamb of God LC, Flower Mound, TX
STENNFELD, John Christian; Christ LC, Austin, TX

THEIMER, Doyle J; Christ the King LC, Kingwood, TX
ULMER, Kurt August; Faith LC, Wylie, TX

Voting Lay

BECKER, Darrell; Immanuel Lutheran Ministries, Temple, TX
BETTS, Daniel; Hope LC, Austin, TX
BIBLER, Jeff; Gloria Dei LC, Houston, TX
BRASINGTON, Bruce; Prince of Peace LC, Amarillo, TX
DOMEL, Ernest; King of Kings LC, San Antonio, TX
ETZEL, Burgess; Concordia LC, Houston, TX
GEIGER, Mark J; Zion LC, Schulenburg, TX
GIBSON, Donald E; Pilgrim LC, Kilgore, TX
GLOVER, Michael C; Trinity LC, Albany, TX
GOURAUD, George; Christ Our Savior LC, Lago Vista, TX
HARRIS, Adam Henry; Bethlehem LC, North Zulch, TX
HECK, Scott; The Dwelling LC, Porter, TX
HECKMANN, Debra E; St Paul LC, The Grove, TX
HEIDRICH, Randy F; Our Savior LC, Rockwall, TX
HEITSHUSEN, Wayne A; Lifebridge Community LC, Sealy, TX
HERNANDEZ, Stephen Michael; Memorial LC, Houston, TX
KABELL, Kathy D; Faith LC, Graham, TX
KELM, David L (Dave); Our Savior LC, Whitney, TX
KISTLER, Thayne W; Peace LC, Groves, TX
KOESTER, Kendra K; Mount Olive LC, Houston, TX
KREUTZER, Jerry; The Grove LC, Argyle, TX
LINDEL, Davis R; Grace LC, Denison, TX
MENDOZA, Toby; Immanuel LC, Giddings, TX
MIILER, James C; Mount Olive LC, Corpus Christi, TX
MUELLER, Norbert H Jr; Trinity Klein LC, Spring, TX
NORDMEYER, David Herbert (Herb); Divine Savior LC, Devine, TX
RUNZHEIMER, James D (Jim); Grace LC, Arlington, TX
SCHEMMER, Kyle K; Our Redeemer LC, Dallas, TX
SCHOOLS, Fred; Holy Shepherd LC, Haslet, TX
SIMS, Elizabeth E; St Lukes LC, Houston, TX
SWOR, Richard; Faith LC, Plano, TX
THEIS, David (Dave); Messiah LC, Boerne, TX
THOMANN, Michael W (Mike); Hope LC, Lubbock, TX
WRIGHT, Thomas; St John LC, Cypress, TX

Advisory Ordained

HENNINGS, Kenneth M (Ken); Faith LC, Georgetown, TX
MATTL, Michael Jonathan (Mike); Grace LC, Denison, TX
MENGSTEAB, Yohannes A; Peace LC, Hurst, TX
MESSMANN, John A; St Paul LC, Fort Worth, TX
MUCHOW, Donald Karl (Don); Bethany LC, Austin, TX

Advisory Commissioned

BELLACH, Jeffrey Paul (Jeff); Bethel LC, Bryan, TX
BOESSLING, Jordan Ashley; Christ LC, Austin, TX
BRANDENBURGER, Corey James; Cross LC, New Braunfels, TX
FREDENBURG, Martha Ann; Immanuel LC, Giddings, TX
ILLICH, Seth K; Good Shepherd LC, Cedar Park, TX
LUND, Keith R; Grace LC, Denison, TX
MC CLAIN, Leann E; Immanuel LC, Giddings, TX
MC CLAIN, Mark A; Immanuel LC, Giddings, TX
MEISSNER, Laurence L; Zion LC, Georgetown, TX
MILBRATH, Elizabeth (Beth); Epiphany LC, Pearland, TX

Wyoming District

Voting Ordained

BENSON, Jacob Henry; St John LC, Lovell, WY
PREUS, Christian Abraham; Mount Hope LC, Casper, WY
ROCKHILL, James Lee; Bethlehem Ev LC, Crawford, NE
STRAWN, Allen K; St Paul LC, Bridgeport, NE

Voting Lay

LIST, Al; Christ the King LC, Cody, WY
PIEPER, Blake A; Zion LC, Hay Springs, NE
SCHMALL, John F; Mount Calvary LC, Bayard, NE
VAN DORSTEN, Scott; Immanuel LC, Sheridan, WY

Advisory Ordained

HINTZMAN, Harold R Jr; Trinity LC, Cheyenne, WY

Advisory Commissioned

HAHN, Nathanael; Mount Hope LC, Casper, WY

B. Advisory Representatives

ELECTED OFFICERS

President

HARRISON, Matthew Carl; Saint Louis, MO

First Vice-President

LANGE, Peter K; Saint Louis, MO

Second Vice-President

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SCHARR, Timothy J—Southern Illinois

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AND CONVENTION STAFF
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BEERENSTRAUCH, Lori; Lincoln, NE

GRIMPO, Phil; Lincoln, NE

MARRINAN, Heath; Omaha, NE

SCHOEN, Jordan; Lincoln, NE

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BELOW, Barbara (Barb); Saint Louis, MO

MARVIN, Lynne C; Ballwin, MO

SIMEK, Frank; Saint Louis, MO

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KEELE, Lyman; Tampa, FL

QUINTANA, Shani; Maple Grove, MN

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ARMBRUST, Kevin; Saint Louis, MO

ASKINS, Roy Stephen; Saint Louis, MO

BEHR, Mike J; Saint Louis, MO

BLANK, Rudy; Saint Louis, MO

CHENEY, Veronica; Saint Louis, MO

DOWBNIA, Al; Saint Louis, MO

DUFFY, Jennifer; Saint Louis, MO

EGGER, Stacey E; Saint Louis, MO

KEUP, Paul; Saint Louis, MO

KOHN, Frank; Saint Louis, MO

LEWIS, Amanda; Saint Louis, MO

LUNSFORD, Erik; Saint Louis, MO

MAGNESS, Cheryl; Broken Arrow, OK

MERTZ, Megan; Saint Louis, MO

REINSEL, Sarah; Saint Louis, MO

SLAYTON, Peter; Saint Louis, MO

SOLOMON, Prince E; Saint Louis, MO

LCMS Human Resources

THOMAS, Nathan; Saint Louis, MO

LCMS Mission Advancement

BRANSON, Julie; Saint Louis, MO

HOFMAN, Mark D; Saint Louis, MO

Legal Counsel

BUESCHING, Matthew R (Matt); Saint Louis, MO

Office of International Mission

BOEHLKE, Christian J; High Ridge, MO

KRIKAVA, James Alton; Brewster, MA

WARREN, Blake A; Saint Louis, MO

Office of National Mission

GALCHUTT, Dan; Saint Louis, MO

MANOR, Tiffany Marie; Saint Louis, MO

MEYER, Michael W; Chesterfield, MO

WOOD, Mark A; Gold Canyon, AZ

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LEIGHTON, Lori; Saint Louis, MO

Office of the Chief Financial Officer

STROH, Ross; Saint Louis, MO

WOOD, Chris; Saint Louis, MO

Office of the President

ENDICOTT, Georgia; Saint Louis, MO

HEMMER, Jeffrey Brandon; Fairview Heights, IL

VIEKER, Kim; Saint Louis, MO

Office of the President / Church Relations

BLODGETT, Alison; Fort Wayne, IN

FRESE, Michael N; Fort Wayne, IN

SHAW, Jonathan E; Fort Wayne, IN

Office of the Secretary / Assistant Secretary

POWELL, Samuel Michael; Jefferson City, MO

Office of the Secretary / Registration

SPINK, Janice; Saint Louis, MO

Operations and Support Services

GAMACHE, Meredith; Saint Louis, MO

KNEHANS, Barb A; Saint Peters, MO

KNIGHT, Jennifer; Saint Louis, MO

RIVERS, Joel; Saint Louis, MO

WILSON, Sammie; Saint Louis, MO

Parliamentarian

DICKY, Chris; Saint Louis, MO

Pastoral Education

BANECK, James A; Saint Louis, MO

Time Keeper/Stage Assistant

DAHLKE, Martha; Saint Louis, MO

KRANS, Dorothy L; Pevely, MO
 PHILP, Paul A; Traverse City, MI
 SMITHSON, Jeannie; Saint Louis, MO

Today's Business Staff

ARMBRUST, Robyn Lynn; Manchester, MO
 ASBURY, Rachel; Saint Louis, MO
 BERGHOLT, Matthew Tyler (Matt); Saint Louis, MO
 CHENEY, Veronica; Saint Louis, MO
 DOWBNIA, Karen; Arnold, MO
 HAYTER, Maryann Marie; Union, MO
 HINTON, Alice; Saint Louis, MO
 SCHAEFFER, Amy; Dittmer, MO
 SMITH, Meredith; Saint Louis, MO
 STACKLE, Shannon; Union, MO

Worship/Music Leader

CULLI, Benjamin; Germantown, WI
 DAENZER, Sean C; Saint Louis, MO
 EATHERTON, Samuel James (Sam); Sheboygan, WI
 MACHEMER, Matthew Alan; Fort Wayne, IN
 PATTON, Cara Marie Lois; Kirkwood, MO
 SCHEMPF, Andrew Michael; Saint Louis, MO

GUESTS

Essayists

BAHKOU, Abjar; Fenton, MO
 DAWN, Russell Paul; River Forest, IL
 EGGER, Thomas J; Saint Louis, MO
 POHJOLA, Juhana (Bishop Juhana); Kirkkonummi, Finland

LCMS President Emeritus

KIESCHNICK, Gerald B; Georgetown, TX

Preachers

BALL, Benjamin T (Ben); Worden, IL
 ESGET, Christopher S; Alexandria, VA
 HARRISON, Matthew Carl; Saint Louis, MO
 HOEM, Josemon Thomas (Joe); Fort Wayne, IN
 LANGE, Peter K; Saint Louis, MO
 MURRAY, Scott R; Houston, TX
 NOUR, Nabil Subhi; Sioux Falls, SD
 PRIETO, Ely; Saint Louis, MO
 WILLE, John C; Milwaukee, WI
 WOHLRABE, John C Jr; Saint Francis, WI

Special Presenters

POHJOLA, Juhana (Bishop Juhana); Kirkkonummi, Finland
 RASANEN, Paivi (MP Dr Paivi); Riihimäki, Finland

Translators

VOSS, Tardelli (Rev Tardelli); Saint Louis, MO

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Lanka)

ARULCHELVAN, A (Rt Rev)
 GNANAKUMAR, Perumal (Rev)

Evangelical Lutheran Church in South Sudan/

Sudan

ABIA, Peter Anibati (Bishop)
 GATLUAK, Simon (Rev)

Evangelical Lutheran Church of Ukraine

MASCHEWSKI, Serge (Bishop)

Evangelical Lutheran Mission Diocese of

Finland

POHJOLA, Juhana (Bishop)

Lutheran Church of Uganda

BAMEKA, Charles I (Bishop)
 MAGEZI, Fred

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LANTERNA, Juan Pablo (President)

Confessional Lutheran Church of South Africa

TSWAEDI, David (Bishop)

Evangelical Lutheran Church in Almaty

(Kazakhstan)

BURTSEV, Aleksander (Bishop)

Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya

OMOLO, Joseph Ochola (Archbishop)

Evangelical Lutheran Church of Brazil

SCHULER, Geraldo Walimir (President)

Evangelical Lutheran Church of Ghana

DONKOH, John Shadrack (President)

Evangelical Lutheran Church of Latvia

KRAULINS, Andris (Rev)

Evangelical Lutheran Church of Liberia

KAMARA, Martin F (Bishop)

Evangelical Lutheran Church of Paraguay

FIGUR, Alceu Alton (President)

Evangelical Lutheran Church—Synod of

France

SCHMIDT, Gleisson Roberto (President)

Independent Evangelical-Lutheran Church

(Germany)

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Lutheran Church—Canada

TEUSCHER, Timothy (President)

Lutheran Church in Korea

KIM, Eun Seob (President)

Lutheran Church in Southern Africa

KARAGILO, S M A Modise (Bishop)

Lutheran Church of Guatemala

CUX, Ignacio Juan Chan (President)

Lutheran Church of Uruguay

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Lutheran Synod of Mexico

GARCIA CASTILLO, Isaac Guadalupe (President)

Siberian Evangelical Lutheran Church

STRELTISOV, Alexey (Rev)

The Evangelical Lutheran Church of England

SAMIEC, George (Chairman)

The India Evangelical Lutheran Church

BALASINGH, Priestly (President)

The Lutheran Church in the Philippines

DEL RIO REYES, Antonio (President)

National Church Body

North American Lutheran Church

WENDEL, David M (Rev)

Other Special Guests

Christian Evangelical Lutheran Church of

Bolivia

CORONADO, Limberth Fernández (President)

Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya

OMOLO, Ruth

International Lutheran Society of Wittenberg:

The Old Latin School

WEBER, Wilhem (Rev Dr)

Lutheran Church of Australia

ANKER, Matt

Malagasy Lutheran Church

RAKOTOZAFY, Denis (Bishop)

RASAMIMANANA, Harison

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; **S** = Secretary;
SVP = Synod Vice-President; **DP** = District President; **VOM** = Voting Delegate Ordained Minister; **VL** = Voting Delegate Layperson; **AOM** = Advisory Delegate or Representative Ordained Minister; **ACM** = Advisory Delegate or Representative Commissioned Minister; **AL** = Advisory Delegate or Representative Layperson; **O** = Ordained; **C** = Commissioned; **L** = Lay

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: Eric Johnson (**DP**, SO)
VC: David R. Nehrenz (**DP**, OK)
VOM: Jonathon J. Bakker (MI); Alan D. Borchert (RM); Ryan J. Fehrmann (NW); Sawyer A. Meyers (MDS); Daniel C. Ross (OK)
VL: Pete Duncanson (MDS); Laura Leistico (EN); Mark A. Wanamaker (PSW); Kristen M. Waterstram-Rich (EA)
AOM: Steven C. Briel (MNS); Samuel Gomez (PSW); Ken R. Schurb (CI); Dien A. Taylor (**DP**, AT)

Committee 2: International Witness

C: Robert L. (Lee) Hagan (**DP**, MO)
VC: Arie D. Bertsch (**DP**, ND)
VOM: Todd R. Jerabek (NW); Vue Lee (MNS)
VL: Obed Gonzalez (SELC)
AOM: Kenneth J. Bomberger (MO); Theodore M. R. Krey (EN); Eli J. S. Lietzau (RM); James B. Maxwell (**DP**, RM)
ACM: David A. Fiala (MO)
AL: John W. Edson (MNS); Jesse Yow Jr. (CNH)

Committee 3: Mercy

C: Brady L. Finnem (**DP**, MNN)
VC: Waldemar R. Vinovskis (**DP**, SELC)
VOM: Christopher P. Asbury (NEB); Christopher W. Brademeyer (ND); Keith A. Lingsch (FG); Richard A. Zeile (MI)
VL: Caroline Ill (SI); Dean R. Mustonen (MNN); Yolanda W. Wornner Prevost (SO)
AOM: William A. Harmon (**DP**, SE)
ACM: Katherine E. Rittner (IN); Raquel A. Rojas (AT)

Committee 4: Life Together

C: Christopher S. Esget (**SVP**, EN)
VC: Allan R. Buss (**DP**, NI)
VOM: Peter Bender (SW); Jessten P. Heimer (IW); John

E. Wackler (OK); Sean A. Willman (MI)
VL: Jonathan Busarow (EN); Mattias Gugel (SW); Craig V. Timm (NW); Stephen F. Weller (KS)
AOM: Philip D. Bartelt (AT); Paul A. Linnemann (**DP**, NOW); Nabil S. Nour (**SVP**, SD)
ACM: Thomas A. Nummela (MO); Amy L. Vande Voort-Schweim (NOW)

Committee 5: Theology and Church Relations

C: Brian S. Saunders (**DP**, IE)
VC: John C. Wohlrabe Jr. (**SVP**, SW)
VOM: Peter J. Brock (IN); Eloy S. Gonzalez (TX); Peter F. Gregory (NE); Marcel L. Kohlmeyer (NEB)
VL: Stevin H. Gehrke (KS); Mark O. Stern (NI)
AOM: Jacob A. Corzine (NI); Naomichi Masaki (IN); Michael W. Newman (**DP**, TX); Richard L. Snow (**DP**, NEB); Roland F. Ziegler (IN)
ACM: Matthew C. Janssen (MO)

Committee 6: Pastoral Ministry and Seminaries

C: John E. Hill (**DP**, WY)
VC: Justin A. Panzer (**DP**, KS)
VOM: Lloyd D. Gaines Sr. (SE); Jason E. Gullidge (NOW); Richard L. Ramirez (SELC)
VL: David L. Daniels (SE); Leo Mackay (EN)
AOM: David A. Davis (**DP**, MI); Thomas J. Egger (MO); William M. Mons (IE); John L. Pingel (**DP**, EA); Cory J. Rajek (SD); Lawrence R. Rast Jr. (IN)
ACM: Ruth A. Otten (NI)

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VL: Robert A. Denkert (SW); David K. Hawk (IN); Gerhard H. Mundinger Jr. (IN)
AOM: Brian L. Friedrich (**DP**); Jay A. Winters (FG); Lucas V. Woodford (**DP**, MNS)
ACM: Russell P. Dawn (NI)
AL: Christian A. Preus (MNS)

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VOM: Alan R. Stahlecker (KS)
VL: David Mellem (NW); Richard C. Robertson (FG)
AOM: James H. Rockey (**DP**, FG); Luke T. Zimmerman (EN)
ACM: Donald C. Schult Jr. (NW)
AL: Jason A. Paradis (ND); John L. Powers (SW); Rick H. Stathakis (MI); Tamara J. Ulland (ND)

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VL: Cindy L. Cwynar (EA); Michael D. Grooms (SD); Jan A. Krampitz (NE)
AOM: Paul J. Cain Jr. (WY); Michael W. Mohr (**DP**, CI)
ACM: Joel P. Landskroener (MNS)

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ACM: Kevin H. Brockberg (IN)

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VOM: Paul M. Clark (MI); Paul W. Dare (MNN); Shi M. Lau (CNH); Michael P. Schuermann (CI); Charles P. St Onge (SELC)
VL: David Brown (NI); Geraldine G. Gibney (NJ); Melanie A. Standiford (NEB)
AOM: David W. Loy (PSW); Preston A. Paul (NW); Max A. Phillips (IW); Don R. Stuckwisch Jr. (**DP**, IN)
ACM: Jeffrey A. Fick (SI)

Committee 12: Schools, Family, Young Adults, and Youth

C: Benjamin T. Ball (**SVP**, SI)
VC: Michael E. Gibson (**DP**, PSW)
VOM: Duane R. Bamsch (CNH); John M. Bussman (SO); Brian L. Kachelmeier (TX); Aaron D. Uphoff (CI)
VL: Darik C. Day (NE); Wayne M. Hittinger (PSW); Coralie Miller (MI)
ACM: Deanna L. Cheadle (OH); Christopher B. Cody (SW); Eun Chu Kim (PSW); Jan W. Lohmeyer (TX); Janet J. Muth (SI)

Committee 13: Registration, Credentials, and Elections

C: Scott C. Sailer (**DP**, SD)
VC: Stephen A. Gewecke (**DP**, NJ)
VOM: Anthony J. Gerber (NEB); Charles M. Henrickson (MO); Kelly D. Todd (MI); L. Richard Vossler Jr. (NJ)
VL: Paul Lubell (SE)
ACM: Thomas P. Kosche (MT)
AL: Kimberly A. Myers (NEB)

Committee for Convention Nominations

**Standing Committee on Nominations (Bylaw 3.2.5)*

C: Christian A. Preus* (**AL**, MNS)
VC: Samuel M. Powell* (**O**, MO)
S: Mark O. Stern* (**VL**, NI)
O: Victor J. Belton (FG); James A. Douthwaite (SELC); Todd R. Jerabek (**VOM**, NW); Paul A. Linnemann (**AOM**, **DP**, NOW); Robert D. Newton (CNH); Jonathan R. Riggert (IW); Kevin M. Wendt (SO)
L: Mark A. Franke (**VL**, IN); Byron Hansen (NEB); Jeffrey Maltz (**AL**, OK); Matthew W. Putnam (CI); Richard G. Schaefer (AT); John F. Schmall (**VL**, WY); Steven J. Timmerman (**VL**, SD)

DIRECTORY—OFFICERS, BOARDS, AND COMMISSIONS OF THE SYNOD

OFFICERS OF THE SYNOD

President

Matthew C. Harrison (2023)

First Vice-President

Peter K. Lange. (2023)

Regional Vice-Presidents

Region

Second Vice-President —Great Lakes

John C. Wohlrabe Jr. (2023)

Third Vice-President —West-Southwest

Scott R. Murray (2023)

Fourth Vice-President —Great Plains

Nabil S. Nour (2023)

Fifth Vice-President —East-Southeast

Christopher S. Esget (2023)

Sixth Vice-President —Central

Benjamin T. Ball (2023)

Secretary

John W. Sias (2023)

Chief Administrative Officer

Frank K. Simek (Appointed)

Chief Financial Officer

Nathan M. Haak (Appointed)

Chief Mission Officer

Kevin D. Robson (Appointed)

Presidents Emeriti

Gerald B. Kieschnick

Robert T. Kuhn

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Chairman: Michael L. Kumm (2023)

Vice-Chairman: Ed H. Everts (2023)

Secretary: John W. Sias (2023)

Keith Frndak (2023)

Andrews Grams (2026)

Larry W. Harrington (2023)

Matthew C. Harrison (2023)

Josemon Hoem (2023)

Jan Lohmeyer (2026)

Christian Preus (2026)

Rick Stathakis (2023)

Jesse Yow (2026)

Non-Voting Member: Peter K. Lange (2023)

Advisory:

Kevin D. Robson, Chief Mission Officer

Frank K. Simek, Chief Administrative Officer

Nathan M. Haak, Chief Financial Officer

Legal Counsel:

Thompson Coburn LLP, St. Louis, MO

COUNCIL OF PRESIDENTS

Chairman: R. Lee Hagan (2025)

Vice-Chairman: Richard L. Snow (2025)

Secretary: Justin A. Panzer (2025)

Program Committee: Allan R. Buss (2025)

R. Lee Hagan (2025)

Matthew C. Harrison (2023)

John E. Hill (2025)

Peter K. Lange (2023)

Richard L. Snow (2025)

Ex-officio:

Peter K. Lange (2023)

Matthew C. Harrison (2023)

Staff:

John W. Sias (2023)

COMMISSIONS

Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR)

Chairman: Lawrence R. Rast Jr. (2023)

Paul Alms (2023)

Kenneth Balsters (2023)

Joel D. Biermann (2023)

Robert A. Dargatz (2026)

Frederick Guengerich (2023)

Timothy D. Hardy (2023)

Jack Kilcrease (2023)

Naomichi Masaki (2023)

Andrea R. Pitkus (2026)

John T. Pless (2023)

Ely Prieto (2023)

Arlo Pullmann (2023)

Brian S. Saunders (2023)

William W. Schumacher (2023)

Scott E. Stiegemeier (2023)

Roland F. Ziegler (2023)

Advisory Members:

Thomas J. Egger

Matthew C. Harrison

Peter K. Lange

Lawrence R. Rast Jr.

Executive Director: Joel D. Lehenbauer

Associate Executive Director:

Richard Serina

Assistant to the Executive Director:

Larry Vogel

Commission on Doctrinal Review (CDR)

Chairman: Roland F. Ziegler (2023)

Jason D. Lane (2023)

Eric T. Lange (2023)

David I. Lewis (2023)

Andrew E. Steinmann (2023)

Commission on Handbook (COH)

Chairman: Dale L. Sattgast (2023)

Heidi K. Abegg (2023)

Roger Carlisle (2026)

David K. Hawk (2026)

David W. Totsky (2023)

Ex-officio:

John W. Sias (2023)

Frank Simek (Appointed)

CCM Representative: George J. Gude

Commission on Constitutional Matters (CCM)

Chairman: George J. Gude (2023)

Vice-Chairman: Larry A. Peters (2026)

Secretary (Ex-officio): John W. Sias (2023)

Gerhard H. Bode (2023)

Thomas Deadrick (2026)

Scott A. Killian (2023)

MISSION BOARDS

Board for National Mission

Central Region

Pat Kyler (Lay, 2023)

Sawyer A. Meyers (Ord, 2026)

East-Southeast Region

Timothy J. Droegemueller (Ord, 2023)

Janis McDaniels (Lay, 2026)

Great Lakes Region

Peter Bender (Ord, 2026)

Crysten Sanchez (Lay, 2023)

Great Plains Region

Steve C. Briel (Chairman, Ord, 2023)

Carla Claussen (Lay, 2026)

West-Southwest Region

Alfonso O. Espinosa (Ord, 2026)

Carla Hack Broome (Lay, 2023)

President's Representative:

Dien Ashley Taylor (2023)

Staff:

Kevin D. Robson, Chief Mission Officer

Board for International Mission

Central Region:

James D. Gier Jr. (Ord, 2023)

Mike Hawk (Lay, 2026)

East-Southeast Region:

James A. Douthwaite (Ord, 2026)

James Wolf (Lay, 2023)

Great Lakes:

David P. Stechholz (Ord, 2023)

Allan Voss (Lay, 2026)

Great Plains:

Daniel Preus (Ord, 2026)

John Edson (Chairman, Lay, 2023)

West-Southwest:

Vacant (Ord/Comm, 2023)

Terence Lung (Lay, 2026)

President's Representative:

Limakatso Nare (2023)

Staff:

Kevin D. Robson, Chief Mission Officer

COMMITTEES

Colloquy Committee for the Pastoral

Ministry

Chairman:

Peter K. Lange

Members:

Glenn Nielsen

Timothy J. Scharr

Detlev Schulz

Colloquy Committee for Commissioned

Ministry

Chairman:

Peter K. Lange

Members: Russell P. Dawn
Paul A. Philp
James A. Pingel II
Lorinda Sankey

NATIONAL SYNOD STAFFS

Office of the President

President: Matthew C. Harrison
First Vice-President: Peter K. Lange
Administrative Assistant:
Georgia L. Endicott
Assistant: Barbara A. Below
Assistant: Jeffrey B. Hemmer
Assistant: Kim R. Vieker
Assistants, Church Relations:
Jonathan E. Shaw
Michael N. Frese
Project Coordinator: Rachel C. Asbury

MISSION UNITS

Chief Mission Officer: Kevin D. Robson

Office of National Mission

Executive Director: Daniel M. Galchutt
Director, Black Ministry:
Roosevelt Gray Jr.
Director, Disaster Response:
Ross E. Johnson
Director, Recognized Service
Organizations: Dorothy L. Krans
Director, School Ministry:
Alan L. Freeman
Director, Worship: Sean C. Daenzer
Director, Youth Ministry:
Mark R. Kiessling

Managing Director, Church Planting,
Renewal and Support: Mark A. Wood
Managing Director, Human Care and
Ministerial Support: Tiffany M. Manor
Managing Director, Congregations and
Districts: Michael W. Meyer

Office of International Mission

Interim Executive Director:
Christian J. Boehlke
Associate Executive Director, Regional
Operations: James A. Krikava
Director, Business Operations:
Blake A. Warren
Director, Ministry to the Armed Forces:
Craig G. Muehler
Director, Missionary Recruitment:
Mark A. Rabe
Director, Missionary Services:
Kendall Cortright
Director, Short-Term Mission Program:
Erin E. Alter

Regional Director, Africa:
Shauen T. Trump
Regional Director, Asia: Charles D. Ferry
Regional Director, Eurasia: Cory J. Rajek
Regional Director, Latin America and the
Caribbean: Theodore M. Krey

Communications

Executive Director: Mike Behr
Director, Digital Media Production:
Al Dowbnia
Director, Graphic Design: Erica Schwan
Director, Web Services: Rudy Blank
Managing Director, Editorial and
Theological Content:
Kevin L. Armbrust
Managing Director, Production:
Jennifer Duffy

KFUO AM & FM Radio Stations

Executive Director of Broadcast Services:
Gary Duncan
Director of Development: Mary Schmidt
Director of Programming: Andrew B. Bates
Social Media Manager: Sarah Gulseth

Mission Advancement

Executive Director: Mark D. Hofman
Director, Campaigns and Special
Initiatives: Martha J. Dahlke
Director, Missionary Network Care:
Chandra Thurman
Director, Transformative Giving:
John Lewis

Pastoral Education

Executive Director: James A. Baneck
Post-Seminary Applied Learning and
Support (PALS): Jonathan J. Manor

International Center Chaplain

Chaplain/Director of Worship:
Sean C. Daenzer

CHURCH BODY OPERATIONS

Secretary: John W. Sias

Rosters, Statistics and Research Services

Director: Scott Kostencki

ADMINISTRATIVE OPERATIONS

Chief Administrative Officer:
Frank K. Simek

Event Planning & Procurement

Senior Director: Lynne C. Marvin

Human Resources

Executive Director: Nathan Thomas

Operations Support Services

Executive Director: Joel A. Rivers
Director, IT Technology Applications:
Mike Metcalf

FINANCIAL OPERATIONS

Chief Financial Officer: Nathan M. Haak

Accounting

Executive Director: Christopher Wood
Director of Accounting: Jim Ehlers
Director of Tax and Compliance:
Pam Palmer

Internal Audit

Executive Director: Christopher Wood

SYNODWIDE TRUST ENTITY

Concordia Plan Services

President & CEO: James F. Sanft
Vice President and General Counsel:
Ann T. Stillman
Vice President, Chief Customer Officer:
Kenneth J. Krueger
Vice President, Chief Financial Officer
and Chief Administrative Officer:
Robert A. Bouche
Vice President, Chief Investment Officer:
Brian K. Gardner
Vice President, Chief Product Officer:
Kevin M. Herweck

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vices / Board of Trustees—Concordia Plans*
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Henry C. Eickelberg (2024)
Gail Hartmann (2025)
David K. Hawk (2025)
Jesse P. Huber (2025)
Ronald L. Kuehn (2025)
Mark A. Miller (2025)
Terry D. Miller (2023)
Mark P. Muehl (2023)
Scott A. Seefeld (2024)
Mark O. Swenson (2023)
Renee C. Varga (2023)

President's Representative:
Roger C. Paavola

Ex-officio: Nathan M. Hawk

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Concordia Historical Institute

Executive Director: Daniel Harmelink

Board of Governors

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David Millar (2025)
Ross Stroh (2028)
Kathy Graumann (2026)
Tim Good (2025)
Rodney A. Benkendorf (2026)
Robert V. Roethemeyer (2026)
Paul W. Robinson (2026)
John W. Sias (2023)

President's Representative:
John C. Wohlrabe Jr.

Advisor to the Board: Lawrence R. Rast Jr.	Chief Credit & Administration Officer: Gerald Kirk	Non-Voting Member: Nathan M. Haak
Concordia Publishing House		SYNOD EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS
President & Chief Executive Officer: Jonathan D. Schultz	<i>Finance</i>	SEMINARIES
Acting Senior Manager, Editorial: Wayne Palmer	Chief Financial Officer: Kevin Bremer	Concordia Seminary—St. Louis, Missouri
Executive Director of Production Control and Quality Systems: Karen Capps	SVP, Investments/Asset Liability Mgt.: John Burke	President: Thomas J. Egger
Senior Manager of Information Technology: Jeremy Roegner	Chief Growth Officer: Joseph Russo	<i>Board of Regents</i>
Executive Director of Finance: Collin Bivens	<i>Legal/Risk Management</i>	Chairman: W. Max Mons (2028)
Director of Facilities and Administrative Services: Scott Griffith	Chief Legal Officer: Timothy Ramberger	Tyler Arnold (2023)
Director of Marketing: Anna Johnson	<i>Lending Solutions</i>	Joel Brondos (2026)
Director of Public Relations and Publicity: Elizabeth Pittman	Sr. Vice President: Larry Crume	Paul Edmon (2023)
Director of Operations: Charlie Black	<i>Operations</i>	Paul Hegland (2023)
Director of Graphic Design: Alex Ha	Chief Operating Officer: James O'Brien	Bruce Keseman (2026)
Executive Director of Human Resources: Dana Neuhaus	<i>Human Capital and Organizational Effectiveness</i>	John Lang (2025)
Executive Director of Sales and eCommerce: Loren Pawlitz	Sr. Vice President: Yvonne Schone	Felix Loc (2029)
<i>Board of Directors</i>	<i>Board of Directors</i>	Bruce Paradis (2025)
Chairman: Mark L. Bender (2023)	Chairman: Max A. Phillips (2025)	Michael Staub (2026)
Heidi Abegg (2026)	Linda Barnes (2025)	Mark Stern (2026)
Stephanie A. Egger (2026)	Jason Braaten (2023)	
Elaine Graff (2023)	Sue J. Elsholz (2023)	Council of Presidents Representative: John Wille
Tom Halvorson (2026)	Jonathan Kramer (2023)	President's Representative: Peter K. Lange
Natalie L. Oleshchuk (2023)	Mark Pieper (2023)	Advisory Member: R. Lee Hagan
Joseph L. Olson (2026)	Donald Scifres (2024)	Concordia Theological Seminary—Fort Wayne, Indiana
Gretchen A. Roberts (2023)	Christopher Soyke (2024)	President: Lawrence R. Rast Jr.
President's Representative: Jeffrey B. Hemmer	Dale Wagner (2023)	<i>Board of Regents</i>
Ex-officio: Nathan M. Haak	Ronald Wheeler (2024)	Chairman: Scott R. Murray (2023)
Concordia University System	Bruce Winter (2023)	Marcheta Leighton Beasley (2028)
President: Dean Wenthe	President's Representative: Brady L. Finner	William M. Cwirla (2026)
Director of Institutional Research and Integrity: Paul Philp	Ex-officio: Nathan M. Haak	David L. Daniels (2026)
Board of Directors	The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod Foundation	Korey D. Maas (2026)
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Frederick Anderson (2023)	Finance/Administration, Sr. VP: Mark Cannon	Mark W. Meehl (2026)
Mark Braden (2023)	Gift Planning Services, Sr. VP: Philip Krupski	John L. Powers (2023)
Jason Fearneyhough (2023)	Marketing and Communications, Sr. VP: David O'Brien	Matthew W. Rueger (2023)
Jon Giordano (2023)	Trust Admin./Customer Support, Sr. VP: Tina Clasquin	Tim Sheldon (2028)
Matthew C. Harrison (2023)	<i>Board of Trustees</i>	Beverly K. Yanke (2023)
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Russell P. Dawn	Brian Fricke (2024)	Concordia University Texas—Austin, Texas
Dennis Eickhoff	Kay Kreklau (2024)	President: Donald A. Christian
Stevin Gehrke	Kirk Mattes (2024)	<i>Board of Regents</i>
Kevin D. Robson	Gregory Miller (2026)	Chairman: Christopher Bannwolf (2024)
Jamison Hardy	Tim Sheldon (2023)	Jim Albers (2023)
Lutheran Church Extension Fund	Robert Weinkauff (2026)	Quentin Anderson (2024)
President/CEO: Bart Day	Board for National Mission Rep.: Carol Hack Broome (2023)	James M. Cleary Jr. (2023)
<i>Credit and Administration</i>	President's Representative: Kevin D. Robson (2023)	Theodore Crofford (2024)
		Sandy Doering (2024)
		Mary Beth Gaertner (2025)
		Peter Hames (2025)
		Ray Kym (2025)
		Margaret Landwermyer (2023)
		Heidi Lewis (2024)

Sylvia Schmidt (2023)	Christine Specht-Palmert	Douglas Gaunt (2025)
Stephen Sohns (2027)	Don Richard Stuckwisch Jr.	Gail Hawkins (2023)
Bob Ssekyanzi (2025)	Kevin A. Wilson	Dick Helms (2025)
Alan Taylor (2025)	Concordia University Chicago—River Forest, Illinois	Timothy Hu (2023)
District President: Michael W. Newman	President: Russel P. Dawn	Richard Huebner (2023)
Concordia University, Irvine—Irvine, California	<i>Board of Regents</i>	Trudy Meyer (2023)
President: Michael A. Thomas	Chairman: Dominic Salvino (2025)	Timothy Moll (2023)
<i>Board of Regents</i>	Vice Chairman: Roger Gallup (2023)	Richard Snow (2025)
Chairman: Ronald R. Levesque (2023)	Eric Andrae (2023)	Erik Vieselmeyer (2023)
Jeffrey Beavers (2023)	Mark Bestul (2023)	President's Representative: James Woelmer (2023)
Jason J. Bredeson (2023)	C. Ross Betts (2023)	District President: Richard L. Snow
Neil Cowen (2025)	John Blakkan (2025)	
Ryan P. Ermeling (2024)	Allan R. Buss (2025)	
Matthew Flandermeyer (2025)	Carol R. Johnson (2023)	
Anthony Harnack (2024)	Michelle Kazmierczak (2023)	
David Hemker (2023)	John Krause (2025)	
Laura G. Hemminger (2023)	Christopher Krohe (2025)	
Scott Klemsz (2023)	Thomas McCain (2024)	
Peter K. S. Lee (2023)	Bruce D. Schultz (2025)	
Glenn Lucas (2025)	Jeff Schwarz (2024)	
Paula Meyer (2025)	Virginia Terrell (2025)	
Craig Olson (2023)	John Thoeke (2023)	
Xavria Schwarz (2025)	Alison Witte (2023)	
Mary Scott (2026)	Matthew Zickler (2025)	
Cindy Steinbeck (2023)	District President: Allan R. Buss	
District President: Michael E. Gibson	Concordia University, St. Paul—St. Paul, Minnesota	
Advisory Members: H. E. Durbin II	President: Brian L. Friedrich	
Rachel Klitzing	<i>Board of Regents</i>	
Michael Lange	Chairman: Mark L'Heureux (2023)	
James Maxwell	Kermit W. Almstedt (2023)	
Concordia University Wisconsin / Ann Arbor—Mequon, Wisconsin, and Ann Arbor, Michigan	David G. Bell (2025)	
President: Erik P. Ankerberg	Sandra Frauenshuh (2024)	
<i>Board of Regents</i>	Andrew Herzberg (2025)	
Chairman: Terry Donovan (2024)	Paul C. Hinz (2023)	
Vice Chairman: Harriet Pedersen (2023)	Jeremiah Johnson (2025)	
Secretary: Gary Petersen (2023)	Carrie Meyer (2023)	
John Berg (2025)	Brent L. Parrish (2023)	
Deborah Davidson (2023)	Rosa Summers (2025)	
Robert Denkert (2025)	Daniel Thao (2024)	
David Fleming (2023)	Lori Utech (2025)	
Michael Henrichs (2023)	Naomi Teske (2023)	
Timothy Jest (2023)	Gary Volberding (2025)	
Nancy Korom (2023)	Amy S. Wenthe (2023)	
David Maier (2025)	Daniel Zismer (2023)	
Mark Polzin (2023)	District President: Lucas V. Woodford	
James Riske Jr. (2023)	Concordia University, Nebraska, Seward, Nebraska	
Dale Robertson (2023)	President: Bernard D. Bull	
Terrace Rowinski (2024)	<i>Board of Regents</i>	
Jon Schumacher (2023)	Chairman: Dennis Meyer (2023)	
Scott Schweitzer (2025)	Vice Chairperson: Jill Johnson (2023)	
Nathan Wingfield (2025)	Krista Barnhouse (2025)	
District President: John C. Wille	Stuart Bartruff (2023)	
Advisory Members: Allan R. Buss	Brad E. Birtell (2023)	
David A. Davis	Ryan Burger (2025)	
Jamison J. Hardy	Craig Ernstmeyer (2023)	
Dwayne M. Lueck	John Fraser (2023)	

ENTERED INTO REST

Ordained Ministers

Abatie, Rodger P	3/15/21	Bradt, Lawrence Nolan	12/22/20	Duer, Ronald E	6/5/21
Ackerman, James L	8/15/20	Braem, Richard G	7/29/19	Duff, Floyd P Jr	11/2/19
Adams, Raymond H	6/17/20	Brammer, David H	4/20/21	Dutzmann, Ingo Rolf	1/15/22
Aho, Orville E	2/7/21	Brandt, Dennis A	1/24/22	Eberle, William B	8/27/22
Albers, Kenneth L	12/18/20	Brassie, Stuart W	8/22/21	Ebert, David Frederick	7/22/21
Albers, Richard E	12/29/21	Brauer, Joel J	8/31/20	Edge, Thomas L	3/20/21
Albers, Ronald W P	10/20/19	Braun, Roddy L	6/11/20	Eggold, Paul H	9/28/20
Allmann, John A	2/22/22	Brehmer, Charles A	10/30/19	Ehlers, Harvey I	6/19/22
Allwardt, Theodore E Sr	12/1/19	Brewer, Richard P	7/16/21	Eickhoff, Bert H	12/22/20
Almstedt, Quentin P	11/15/20	Brighton, David C	1/10/21	Eifert, Herbert N	12/20/19
Ames, Richard W	12/17/22	Brill, Walter L	3/12/21	Eissfeldt, Richard A*	6/1/19
Anderson, Hyle R	1/23/21	Brillinger, Otto Arnold	9/13/21	Elsner, James L (Jim)	1/11/23
Andrae, Hans O	2/13/23	Brinley, George W	11/8/22	Erdman, Leonard E	9/21/20
Appel, Vernon Lee	8/26/21	Brockhoff, Daniel A	8/18/22	Essenburg, Steven J	1/23/20
Arp, Gary M	3/12/20	Brostrom, Dennis P	10/30/21	Fabry, Joseph P	3/28/21
Ascher, George P	12/31/22	Brown, Robert J	3/27/20	Faerber, Richard B	5/2/21
Atsinger, Victor A Sr	10/10/22	Bruenger, Alvin J	8/12/20	Faulstick, Roy B	7/18/21
Aufdenkampe, Charles R	12/18/21	Bruning, Alton J	10/3/21	Fedde, Robert H	10/10/20
Babin, Kenneth L	9/2/22	Brunner, Paul H*	8/21/17	Fibelkorn, John E	3/10/21
Baepler, Richard P	11/19/20	Brusco, Stephen R Jr	3/4/22	Filbert, Bernhard W	11/23/19
Baerwald, Reuben C	12/31/21	Buck, George Jr	11/20/21	Fisher, Gary L	12/13/21
Bahr, Albert W	11/20/21	Buckman, Robert A	8/15/21	Fitchett, Carl S III	10/12/19
Barth, Karl L	2/16/20	Buege, Richard L	1/9/22	Fitzpatrick, Dennis G Sr	9/13/21
Beale, Leslie C	3/25/20	Burch, Don Edward	3/16/22	Francis, Ronald R	2/10/23
Beck, Hubert F	1/27/23	Burgdorf, Lawrence A	2/12/21	Frank, Donald Edward	4/2/21
Behling, Henry W	9/4/21	Burza, George J	9/7/22	Frazell, Jay Warren*	4/25/19
Behling, Robert E	9/14/21	Bye, Thomas William	12/3/21	Frerichs, Donald L	1/5/22
Bek, Edwin C	6/11/22	Byerley, Walter E Sr	11/16/22	Fuehler, Kenneth Martin	6/30/21
Belk, Jack A	10/16/21	Byler, David R	4/8/20	Gabram, Gordon O	5/15/21
Bell, Gary Alan	1/23/21	Campbell, Charles Frederick	9/12/19	Gall, Theodore Casper (Ted)	8/19/21
Bell, Raymond J	9/23/19	Cario, Donald A	4/4/22	Garchow, Paul H*	8/16/18
Beltz, Dewyth D	3/13/22	Carstens, David Leroy	10/25/20	Garwood, Everett L	1/25/20
Belz, Kenneth C	1/8/20	Cha, Kyung Jin	10/18/20	Gassett, William D	4/16/20
Benke, Richard	7/21/19	Clausen, Julius B	12/8/21	Geary, Duane O*	10/18/18
Benninghoff, Timothy J	10/10/20	Clawson, Ronald A	1/29/22	Geitz, Darrel W	1/19/23
Bergman, Marvin M	8/24/22	Coday, Terry John	9/15/21	Gerdes, Harvey A	2/21/21
Berlin, Von Eric	5/20/22	Conley, Jerry Lee	4/21/21	Gerdes, Larry W	1/27/22
Bernhardt, Robert H	1/23/22	Constien, Arthur J*	7/2/18	Gerken, Philip J	2/16/22
Bernthal, David H	10/7/21	Cooper, Robert C	1/29/20	Gerken, Richard W	6/24/21
Beyer, Arthur H	5/1/21	Corniels, Douglas R	6/23/22	Gierke, Charles A	8/5/22
Bingenheimer, Roy William	1/17/23	Cotton, H John	3/20/20	Gieseking, David Eugene	11/14/21
Bischoff, Frederick A	1/21/21	Couch, William L Jr	6/22/22	Gillam, Jack L	12/25/20
Bitter, Glenn Ray	7/22/20	Counts, Robert Paul	3/24/20	Ginter, Ronald A	4/29/22
Blakelock, B Bruce	7/26/21	Cox, Steven Douglas	11/24/21	Glade, Eugene C	7/11/19
Blanke, Norwood M	7/11/22	Craig, Donald W Jr	12/4/20	Glamann, John V	3/7/21
Blaske, Marvin O	9/12/22	Cruikshank, Thomas Gordon	12/11/22	Glienke, Herman J	11/1/22
Blau, Ronald E	7/26/20	Daberkow, Terrence H	2/26/21	Gocken, Ronald E	2/19/22
Bliese, William M	9/26/21	Daeke, Duane Otto	10/27/21	Godfrey, Charles Berwin (Chuck)	9/7/20
Blumenkamp, Edwin W	11/15/21	Daniel, David Paul	3/12/20	Gogolin, Floyd E	11/25/21
Bode, Arthur J	1/24/22	Daugherty, James N	4/23/21	Gonzalez, Juan A	5/5/22
Boecler, Paul A O	12/15/22	Dell, Monty A	7/28/22	Gorklo, John P	7/29/19
Boeder, Charles Francis	12/6/22	Desens, Merwin C	10/22/21	Grammes, Richard A	7/15/19
Boehlke, Alvin A	3/25/20	Dibell, Robert A	10/6/19	Granke, Warren A	9/26/20
Boehlke, Vernon C	4/20/21	Dietrich, Herman K Jr	3/11/20	Graudin, Arthur F	6/18/22
Boehnke, Roland W	11/17/22	Dietz, William F A*	6/25/18	Graudin, John Edward	5/3/22
Bolling, Richard E	10/20/19	Dittmar, Gary Dean	12/14/19	Graupner, Herbert H	4/27/20
Bomba, James M	12/2/20	Dobberfuhr, Ned A	3/12/21	Greene, Robert C	7/10/19
Bongard, Ronald A	4/4/22	Dockery, Daniel L	2/19/22	Gremel, Kurt H	12/13/22
Bontrager, John K	10/20/22	Dommer, Ronald G	2/18/22	Griffin, Dale E	3/28/20
Borchers, Richard W	12/13/20	Doring, Arthur R	1/26/21	Groenke, Lloyd E	11/2/19
Botsford, Michael D	1/12/22	Dorn, Louis O	7/16/20	Groteluschen, Norman L	7/23/21
Bottorff, Chris A E	1/21/21	Downing, Arthur R	12/18/20	Groth, M Charles	1/5/22
Boyce, Robert E	8/22/20	Downs, Gary Travis	1/24/21	Grothman, Floyd W	8/7/19
		Dretke, James Paul	8/24/21	Gudgel, Richard L	5/11/22
		Dubberke, Edwin H	3/4/20	Gundermann, Milton W	8/15/22

ENTERED INTO REST

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Haberkost, James P	4/28/20	Imme, Jon	12/5/22	Kuehne, Steven J	11/3/19
Hackbarth, Lloyd J	9/11/20	Israel, John W	11/4/21	Kuhlmann, Robert T	10/22/22
Hadley, Tom C	2/12/23	Jacob, Paul	12/13/21	Kusko, James D	7/31/21
Hagemeier, Fred W	11/21/21	Jacob, Roy A	12/29/19	Labrenz, Paul E	10/2/22
Hahn, Ernest Norman	12/26/21	Jalas, Duane A	10/6/22	Laetsch, Leonard C	4/5/21
Hake, Rogers K	7/29/19	Janetzke, Douglas K	11/19/22	Lai, Henry H S	7/16/21
Hakes, David E	9/20/19	Jank, Roland A Sr	1/27/21	Lakamp, Bruce A	4/19/21
Halm, D Ray	8/4/20	Janssen, Arlo T	5/3/20	Lange, James A	6/30/21
Hamer, John H	1/4/23	Jenkins, Donald F	7/19/19	Lanphar, Ralph Robert Jr	4/15/20
Hanchett, Mark Daniel	9/7/21	Jennings, Lance R	12/17/20	Larson, Raymond Everet Sr	12/24/22
Hannemann, Herman R	11/4/22	Jeske, Alvin	10/11/21	Larson, Stephen E	4/12/21
Hanus, Theodore R	11/12/22	Jilg, Paul H	8/18/19	Lazarchak, Edward	10/4/21
Harding, Michael S	7/15/21	Joeckel, David B	9/20/22	Leach, Ronald D	4/5/20
Harding, Stanley L	9/1/22	Johnson, Harry N	11/12/19	Lee, Daniel W	5/23/20
Harm, Frederick R*	10/20/18	Johnson, Harvey Glenn	8/15/21	Lee, R Keith	10/31/20
Harre, Alan F	8/20/20	Johnson, Russel Peter Jr	2/16/20	Lehenbauer, Osmar O	6/28/22
Hartfield, Paul W	6/19/21	Johnson, Sidney V	9/23/21	Lehfeldt, Dale C	1/11/20
Hasbargen, Roy M	9/27/21	Johnson, William A	12/22/22	Lehr, Milton O	4/3/22
Haubein, Wendell L	5/17/21	Jonas, Herman W Jr	7/20/22	Leider, Jon F	1/23/23
Hauptman, August L	1/9/20	Jones, Ronald W	7/29/21	Lemmermann, Walter C Sr	12/28/19
Hayas, Donald M	2/10/23	Jordan, Horst W	2/22/22	Lenk, Gene A	11/19/20
Hazel, Frederick G III (Fred)	11/14/22	Junge, Rolf A	2/2/21	Leonhardt, Roger Jerry*	1/7/19
Headapohl, Gary D	6/21/21	Jungkuntz, Frederick H O	7/16/19	Leoschke, Floyd L	3/20/20
Heckmann, Robert George	11/29/21	Jungkuntz, Theodore R	6/8/20	Levenhagen, Donald E	4/24/20
Heffel, William H	4/2/21	Kaarre, David M	7/22/21	Lieske, Bruce J	1/17/21
Heikkila, Gunard W	8/23/20	Karner, Roy R	12/11/19	Litterer, Charles Edward	8/22/22
Heimsoth, Elton N	3/2/22	Kash, Lewis*	3/24/18	Lloyd, Jeffrey E	10/1/21
Hein, Hugo	3/12/20	Kath, Lyle Reuben	10/8/20	Loest, Aden E	12/28/20
Heinicke, Martin W	6/16/21	Kehret, David H	6/17/21	Loney, Dana W	11/25/21
Helmich, Clarence W	3/27/22	Keller, William H	12/12/22	Lorenz, Marvin L	4/12/21
Hempelmann, L Dean (Dean)	8/29/21	Kelley, Phillip Bernard	11/23/21	Loum, John S	10/26/22
Henderson, Allen W (Al)	10/2/19	Kelm, Lawrence E	9/2/20	Loza, Julio A	12/28/22
Henderson, Brian Thomas	7/8/19	Kennedy, Lowell E	10/5/21	Lubben, Henry C III*	3/15/18
Hendrikson, James L	4/1/21	Kerestes, Louis C*	1/30/19	Luhring, Donald L	2/11/22
Henneman, Harry C	8/25/20	Kesselmayer, Darwood J	11/30/21	Lutz, Donald A	7/1/20
Hentz, Robert D	12/12/21	Ketema, Teklu Telila	2/4/23	Mader, Myron G	1/3/21
Herman, Don O	9/5/21	Keyl, Rudolf J S	3/23/21	Magill, Timothy William	12/26/20
Herzog, John A	10/26/21	Kieschnick, Roy A	9/21/20	Maier, Walter A II	10/24/19
Hess, Robert M	1/22/22	Kim, Chang Soo	4/17/20	Manteufel, Julius E	6/24/22
Hesse, Donley D	5/21/22	King, Stephen Matthew	2/12/20	Marozik, John R	8/30/22
Heuer, Daniel E	12/2/22	Kiros, Getachew	6/8/20	Marquardt, Martin John	10/14/22
Heuser, Mark E	12/16/22	Kitzmann, Harold L	9/19/19	Marshall, James B	6/25/22
Hinck, David E	9/30/21	Kletzien, Edward F*	3/19/19	Martens, Ray Fred	10/5/19
Hinz, Robert L	8/9/21	Kluck, Herbert L	5/31/21	Marth, David B	2/19/21
Hodel, Ronald K	5/21/22	Knoll, Parker A	4/10/20	Martin, Mark D	10/21/22
Hoecker, Paul M	3/12/20	Knuth, James A	1/21/21	Martis, Alvia McEwen	2/12/20
Hoelter, Thomas F	4/16/21	Koehler, Frederick F	1/18/21	Masaki, Shigeru*	8/13/17
Hoemann, Richard L J	9/10/22	Koehler, Luther A	10/2/21	Matthies, Richard J	11/18/20
Hoerle, Darrel D	11/22/19	Koepchen, Henry L	4/12/21	Matzke, Marvin L	7/10/22
Hofener, Robert H	4/21/20	Koessel, Francis Otto	11/25/22	May, Michael N	5/27/20
Hoffman, Robert L	3/24/20	Kohlmeier, Theodore W	8/11/21	Mayer, Robert F	9/13/22
Hoffman, Wayne Paul	3/2/21	Kollmeyer, Glen Charles	8/11/21	Mazak, Richard A	12/11/20
Hohle, Elmer M	4/29/21	Korth, Daird W	12/12/21	Mazemke, Vilas E	1/27/23
Homann, Brian Paul Edwin	10/14/21	Kramer, James F*	6/16/19	McCabe, H Herbert	3/14/21
Hoppes, James T	10/28/22	Krause, David William	3/12/22	McCain, Paul Timothy	11/25/20
Horkey, Charles E	1/14/22	Krause, Fred C	8/11/22	McCown, Chester L	6/21/22
Houppert, Ernest R (Rod)	3/19/22	Krause, Kenneth E (Ken)	1/24/21	McKelvey, Donald B Sr	6/13/21
Howanitz, Darrell K	3/20/20	Krepps, Thomas J	7/4/20	Medley, John Elmer Jr	1/19/20
Howard, Donald R	2/11/21	Kresken, Albert S Jr*	1/13/18	Melms, John Harvey	9/27/21
Howen, Russell H	10/21/22	Kriete, Robert L	6/8/22	Mentink, Lee R	11/3/19
Hoyer, Martin O	2/24/21	Krogen, Joel R	7/26/21	Merrell, William D	4/6/21
Hoyer, Paul Martin	1/3/23	Krogen, Richard A	1/14/21	Metcalf, Max P	5/18/20
Hrachovina, David A	11/20/20	Kroll, C Douglas	8/3/21	Metz, Erwin A	12/18/19
Hummel, Horace D	10/7/21	Krueckeberg, David E	4/20/20	Meyer, Christoph Rodger	5/6/22
Huneke, Paul R	7/12/19	Krueger, Dale Bernard	9/22/22	Meyer, David P	11/23/22
Hunze, Shawn David	8/7/19	Krueger, Robert H	11/13/21	Meyer, Melvin M	12/13/22
Illian, Donald C	6/13/21	Krugler, Richard Adolph	9/2/19	Meyer, Norman C	12/7/20

Meyer, Richard H	1/7/23	Pfingsten, Michael Drew	2/6/22	Schmidt, Alvin J	11/28/22
Meyer, William Joseph	9/16/20	Pflueger, Irvin E	8/8/19	Schmidt, Don L	1/12/22
Meyr, Victor Herbert	7/18/22	Pillack, Roland E	12/29/20	Schmidt, Leland P	3/6/20
Milbrath, Gerald L	12/30/19	Pingel, James A	11/19/21	Schmidt, Paul R	9/9/19
Miliner, Derrick Keith	8/10/21	Pittelko, Roger D	11/12/20	Schmidtke, John R	5/12/22
Miller, John A III	12/11/21	Platzer, Martin M	8/14/21	Schmiel, David G	11/3/20
Mitchell, Robert E	12/11/21	Pohlod, George M	4/23/20	Schneider, David J	2/20/20
Montgomery, Allen O	3/19/22	Pollatz, Raymond R Jr	6/15/22	Schneider, Du Wayne R	1/21/23
Moore, Leonard A	11/12/21	Poppe, Leonard B	8/15/21	Schnelle, Paul V	8/25/20
Moore, Thomas L	12/4/21	Powell, Chris	12/21/19	Schockman, Gary E	8/8/22
Muehlberg, Scott A	2/3/20	Preisinger, Don C*	7/6/19	Schoenherr, Mark A	6/20/22
Mueller, Adam	10/29/20	Preus, Jacob A O III (Jack)	8/4/22	Schoenrock, Harlan R	10/12/20
Mueller, Charles S Sr	10/30/19	Prigge, Ronald B	11/24/22	Scholz, Alfred*	7/1/19
Mueller, David C	12/29/20	Pullmann, Carl E	10/18/19	Scholz, John G	8/12/21
Mueller, Gilbert E	6/8/22	Qualman, William A	5/24/21	Schramm, Martin Gustav	2/20/22
Mueller, Henry Charles IV	12/30/22	Quinn, Daniel B	10/9/19	Schrank, Robert J*	6/13/19
Mueller, Herbert C Jr (Herb)	3/21/20	Raabe, Bernard O	7/20/21	Schreiber, John R	4/14/22
Mueller, Howard W	7/10/22	Rabe, Gerald L	4/7/20	Schroeder, John E*	5/4/15
Mueller, James W	11/8/19	Rabe, W Gail	11/21/21	Schroeder, Paul R	9/9/20
Mueller, Orval D	11/19/19	Rabon, Lawrence C Jr	11/13/22	Schroeder, Roy P	1/20/21
Mueller, Theodore Charles	11/28/22	Rakos, George A	12/20/21	Schroeder, Theodore William	2/9/21
Muench, Herbert E	9/25/19	Rall, E Eugene (Gene)	7/18/21	Schudlich, Gerald E	10/27/21
Muenchow, Fred Albert	7/24/22	Rand, Gregory Orion	6/6/21	Schuelein, Virgil L	12/3/21
Munch, Jan Truman	10/11/22	Rasch, Lyle H	11/26/20	Schultz, Gerald N	9/3/21
Murray, James E	11/15/20	Rassbach, James W	7/30/20	Schultz, Joseph A	4/2/22
Musgrove, Alvin W Jr	7/26/21	Rathjen, H Douglas	6/19/21	Schultz, Ronald L	6/16/21
Nabinger, David E	10/18/21	Redeker, William N	9/8/22	Schultz, William M	10/14/19
Nagel, Norman E	10/8/19	Redmann, Louis J (Bud)	10/10/19	Schulz, Norman L	5/16/20
Nass, Bernard F	6/15/22	Reeder, Thomas N Sr	2/10/22	Schulz, Victor P	3/3/20
Naumann, Frederick Albin	7/7/22	Rehrer, Ronald Leroy	3/8/22	Schwab, Dennis L	3/30/22
Neisch, Waldemar O	6/29/20	Reimnitz, Charles A Jr	11/6/19	Schwandt, James L	8/24/21
Nelson, Richard A	12/20/21	Reiter, Gerald R	11/11/20	Schwengel, Kenneth E	9/9/19
Nenow, Charles D	6/3/22	Richardson, Carl John	11/2/21	Seitz, Ronald W	1/22/21
Neumann, Paul D	7/30/21	Riley, William R	5/17/21	Senn, Arthur C	10/7/19
Nguyen, Luc	3/17/21	Ristow, August K Jr	4/15/21	Senter, John D	8/22/21
Nichols, Gerald L	4/12/21	Ristow, Leonard E	9/7/19	Sepmeyer, Merlin	9/14/20
Nicol, Lloyd E	5/9/22	Ristvedt, James W	6/27/22	Seter, Bernhard M	3/22/22
Nicolaus, Mark J	4/28/22	Rivett, E James (Jim)	7/8/20	Seying, Laokouxang (Kou)	11/23/19
Niebanck, Richard J	5/5/21	Robinson, William L	8/14/20	Siebrass, Lowell L	8/11/22
Niemoeller, Mark A	1/20/22	Rodewald, Alfred William	9/24/20	Siedschlag, John Arthur Sr	1/11/22
Nietubicz, Christopher Ryan	6/3/20	Rosin, Walter L	1/24/20	Sigmon, Stephen D	6/1/21
Nord, Donald D	12/3/20	Rottmann, Ellis T	8/21/19	Simminger, K Michael	1/1/21
Nordman, Mark Andrew	10/30/21	Rowan, Robert H	12/5/22	Sims, Marcus P	12/19/21
Odum, Frazier N	4/20/21	Rubel, Warren G	6/3/21	Skov, Frederick A	7/22/19
Oermann, Ervin R	10/14/21	Rubke, David A	10/17/20	Smith, Ernest G	4/5/22
Olse, Noel Carl	6/26/22	Ruiz, Jose Ovalle	9/16/20	Snyder, Robert E Jr	3/31/22
Olson, Donald L Jr	5/23/21	Rumsey, John C Sr	5/17/22	Sorensen, John K	11/27/19
Olson, Edward G	2/29/20	Russell, Randall H	7/24/22	Soule, Marvin L	2/6/20
Olson, Robert W	9/12/22	Rutter, Edward J	6/16/22	Spangler, John L Sr	12/4/20
Ostgren, Stanley M	10/27/19	Ryding, John A	11/22/22	Sparling, Paul W	1/28/22
Pankratz, Adolph W	11/7/20	Rynearson, Stephen Paul	12/15/22	Steinke, Mark A	9/15/21
Pannier, Clarence W	12/4/21	Saatkamp, Ronald E	4/26/21	Steinke, Norman E	9/5/19
Panning, John F	12/23/20	Saeger, Maynard H	12/11/22	Steinke, Peter L (Pete)	7/13/20
Park, Paul Y	3/25/21	Sandate, Isidro	8/27/19	Stenzel, Kent Charles	3/29/22
Parks, Allen E	1/31/22	Saresky, Edward L	9/9/21	Stephen, David Martin (Dong Chin Kim)	5/23/21
Pask, Wayne Marshall	9/29/21	Sattelmeier, Daniel J	8/24/22	Stephens, James P	5/31/20
Pauling, Ruclare D	11/22/21	Sauls, Ottis L	1/19/21	Sternbeck, David	10/26/21
Paulson, John Robert	4/14/22	Savage, Leon Ernest Jr (Ernie)	4/12/21	Stevens, David J	10/11/20
Paulson, Warren L	10/13/20	Schackel, James H	9/16/19	Stevenson, William Edward	1/10/23
Pearcy, David L	9/15/19	Schaibley, Robert W	12/13/22	Steyer, Martin W	10/17/20
Pera, Gerhard A	10/26/20	Scharff, Kim L	5/27/20	Stockman, William K	7/29/20
Persson, Robert Eugene	2/9/20	Scheck, John F	12/24/22	Stoeppelwerth, Henry P	8/3/19
Petersen, John M	1/9/20	Schemm, Milton R	2/13/21	Stohlmann, Stephen C	2/15/21
Petersen, Reynold B	10/29/19	Scherbarth, Ray E	6/23/22	Strasen, Luther G*	6/25/19
Peterson, Carl L	7/19/19	Scherer, Arthur W	1/10/20	Strelow, Lloyd J	7/28/22
Peterson, Eric G	3/4/22	Schermbeck, Robert H	1/15/22	Struckmann, Otto G	1/24/20
Peymann, Donald R	3/2/20	Schinkel, Norman H	10/17/19	Struckmeyer, Alan D	3/18/21

Stuckwisch, Don Richard Sr	11/5/19	Young, Kenneth R	12/13/22	Cluver, Ellen	8/3/21
Sunderman, Bryon L	8/23/20	Yungmann, Ronald R	9/7/19	Colangelo, Charlene M	1/11/22
Teller, Daniel J	11/28/20	Yunker, Ward Irwin	1/13/21	Consoer, Paul G	11/3/22
Temme, Hubert H	3/4/21	Zahrte, Carl E	11/6/22	Cook, Priscilla C	1/4/23
Temple, Evan J*	1/25/19	Zeeb, Otto T	6/12/20	Cordes, Nancy A*	6/29/19
Teuscher, Harold J	5/17/21	Zeile, Erhard Adolph (John)*	9/19/17	Craig, Beverly J*	12/20/18
Thompson, Richard Bernard	7/8/21	Zerbe, Roy M	10/24/22	Daenzer, Gilbert H	12/9/19
Thur, Gary R	11/30/21	Ziegler, Eric R	9/24/19	Dahm, John W	7/24/20
Tibbetts, Ronald Eugene	4/9/20	Ziekert, Wilfred L	7/24/21	Danz, Shirley M	11/30/21
Tin, David S G	11/11/20	Zielke, Kenneth E	4/26/21	Dardeen, Phyllis Joan	1/25/21
Toncre, Wesley M	1/13/22	Zimmerman, Earl J	9/5/19	Dart, Anne Louise	2/16/21
Traugott, Frederick W	10/7/22	Zimmerman, James G	10/8/22	De Cuir, Luther A	12/22/19
Trickey, Eric L	5/28/20	Zimmermann, Timothy J	9/5/22	Dede, Albert W	4/3/21
Trimberger, Dale H	10/20/21	Commissioned Ministers		Dibos, Wayne W	9/25/22
Trinklein, Edgar A	12/18/21			Dierks, Werner E	7/24/21
Tyler, Gregory C	2/28/20	Adler, Richard W	1/24/22	Dieters, Troy F	11/2/21
Tyler, James W	12/10/20	Ahlers, Arlen George	3/22/20	Doering, Ruth E	2/1/20
Ulm, David M	5/26/20	Alexander, Robert Michael	10/15/22	Dressler, Linda K	7/21/22
Umbenhaur, Rexford E III	8/2/21	Allen, Chris B E	9/13/19	Droege, Ralph E	11/24/20
Updegrave, Stephen W	1/3/22	Andersen, Larry Allen	3/10/22	Ebert, Janane F	10/14/22
Urban, Otto H Jr	8/28/22	Arlt, Judith L	4/4/21	Eggert, John R	8/16/22
Urberg, Soren Strat	5/16/22	Ash, William N	9/4/19	Ehlers, Kathryn M*	10/20/16
Van Der Bloemen, Thomas G Sr	8/3/20	Barg, Esther M	4/26/20	Ehlers, Viola	2/14/21
Vernick, Roger	12/11/22	Barnes, Robert D	1/13/20	Eicholtz, Donald G	2/26/22
Vincent, Arthur M	12/7/20	Bartels, Walter O	7/13/22	Elder, Gloria A*	2/29/16
Visoky, Paul	4/24/20	Batchelor, James	7/2/22	Elmshaeuser, Orville L	6/16/21
Voelker, William R	9/8/21	Bauer, Donald W	3/17/21	Erber, Glenn R	1/28/22
Voelzke, Paulus E	8/8/19	Becker, Harlan H	3/23/20	Fabry, Timothy J	1/17/20
Vogt, William Henry	10/22/21	Beckmann, Robert Theodore*	7/9/18	Faszholz, Eugene R	10/11/21
Voitko, Paul A	1/24/23	Berg, Paul A	2/3/20	Fick, Elaine Carol	11/16/19
Vokt, Michael E	1/25/21	Bernthal, Edward H*	4/4/19	Fiedler, Eugene K	12/12/21
Waetjen, Raymond W	7/17/22	Beyer, Marilyn A	7/20/20	Fields, Sandra C	10/16/20
Wahl, Harold Irvin	2/5/20	Beyer, Norman C	12/29/20	Fisceri, Darlene N*	3/14/18
Walter, James Carl	12/2/20	Bickel, Elaine C	1/10/23	Fisk, Dale B	6/3/22
Walther, Jeffrey H	10/25/20	Bliese, Elizabeth Dorothy	1/10/22	Flett, Douglas E	6/4/20
Warneck, Richard H	6/8/21	Block, Richard A	11/6/21	Fode, Ronald August*	3/8/19
Warren, William W	8/22/20	Boardman, Ralph H*	10/30/15	Fountain, Joseph C	8/10/20
Wartick, Kent G	4/28/20	Boerger, Fred L Jr	10/13/19	Frank, Donald D	7/7/21
Watts, Wayne Edward Jr	11/11/22	Boerger, Mark A	7/29/20	Frank, Glenn W	3/13/21
Weaver, Gerry L	12/1/21	Boetel, Robert C	12/26/20	Frank, Reinhold E	8/16/20
Webster, James David	11/13/21	Boettcher, Ardella A	5/18/22	Frank, Sherry J*	4/16/19
Wegener, Kenneth W	1/9/20	Boettner, Martin R	1/1/22	Fredel, John R	8/14/21
Wenger, Mark P	9/12/22	Boldt, Dennis H*	2/21/19	Fritz, Zelma Ethel*	10/20/16
Wessling, Edward W	2/2/21	Boldt, H James	9/19/19	Gade, Donald Eugene	11/14/20
Wesson, Jim R	6/18/22	Bolland, Katherine H*	6/17/19	Galen, Betty Jean	4/7/20
Westerlund, Paul L	1/21/23	Bowden, Sue Ann	12/25/20	Gallup, Kathleen Marie	5/10/22
Westphal, Leroy R	4/18/20	Boye, Jane A	4/1/21	Garrison, James M	10/3/20
White, Harry W	10/7/21	Brandt, Nadine M	11/19/21	Gauger, Andrea Jean	8/25/22
Wied, Henry C Sr	8/31/20	Brauer, Ethan R	1/24/21	Geheb, Theodore O	8/22/22
Wiggins, James Jr	3/23/21	Braun, Theodore T	3/20/22	Geisler, Ralph L	9/13/22
Wilkens, James D	1/29/22	Brott, Eugene C	4/5/22	Germeroth, Paul L	1/31/20
Wilkie, Wesley H	1/25/20	Brueske, Mertice Adelle	1/30/23	Gieschen, Roselyn M*	4/13/17
Wille, Eugene E	11/25/21	Brutcher, June Elva	6/6/22	Glaeser, Kristy Lea	9/28/21
Wille, Warren H	8/3/19	Bude, Catherine	7/28/19	Glanzer, Ellen E	1/15/21
Williams, D Georg	12/16/21	Burch, Mary J	5/13/22	Gnewuch, Minnie Mathilda	1/20/23
Williams, Herman J	12/24/22	Burnett, Charles R	7/20/20	Gomez, Carlos A	1/5/21
Winker, Eldon K	2/14/21	Burtner, Carol A	7/23/21	Grapatin, Edward R*	6/28/19
Winterrowd, Donald H	6/2/22	Busseau, Craig Robert	6/14/22	Greenwald, Linda Lee	4/10/22
Wittmaier, Gerald L	8/30/20	Butz, Kimberly Ann	5/14/21	Gregory, Dahlas A	10/27/21
Wolters, Melvin R	12/10/21	Carter, Karla Abel	5/8/20	Greimann, Steven Paul	1/31/21
Woodworth, Harold G	4/16/21	Caspersen, Carol Ann	3/21/21	Gresens, Walter F	5/30/20
Wunrow, Gerald B	2/8/20	Caulkins, Gary W	12/31/20	Grewe, Ralph A	8/18/20
Wyneken, Karl H	2/8/21	Claus, Kenneth F	10/27/20	Grice, Richard Thomas	11/5/20
Yates, Alvey A Jr	9/17/21	Clawson, James Everett	10/16/21	Grothaus, Larry H C	10/4/22
Yeadon, Timothy R	1/16/22	Cloeter, Waldo H	1/12/22	Gruetzmacher, Gene E	8/11/21
Yiech, Simon B	10/11/20	Cluver, Daniel D	11/20/21	Grupe, Elizabeth F	3/17/21

Guenther, Vernon C*	6/27/19	Kraft, June E	5/2/21	Mueller, John G	1/24/20
Haak, Carol L	9/10/20	Krause, Madge R	10/2/19	Mueller, Ruby L	12/22/19
Haake, Dale L	9/22/21	Kreienbrink, Gene Harry*	4/17/19	Mueller, Wilbert C*	3/28/17
Hafeman, Norman H*	10/20/18	Kremer, James Gilbert	6/12/21	Nebel, Ingrid A	8/26/21
Hagenmueller, Ernest H	2/24/20	Kroeger, Janice	8/5/19	Nee, Karoline Lucille	7/18/20
Halfmann, Walter K	3/10/21	Kroll, David Lee	11/27/22	Needler, Melinda Michelle	3/21/20
Hansen, Tim Mark	1/13/20	Krueger, Edward F	10/21/20	Nieman, Anna E	1/11/23
Harman, Ronald Vern	11/8/19	Kuh, Elaine Louise Leona	8/22/22	Niermeier, Arthur H	5/25/20
Haseman, Irma L	7/15/19	Kuhlman, David W	1/2/22	Nightlinger, Cathy Jo	10/27/21
Hauser, Ronald L	11/2/20	Kuhn, Kathleen R	2/24/21	Niss, Muriel D*	6/2/19
Havrilesak, Laura Ann	7/1/22	Kuntz, Cynthia G	4/29/21	Novak, Charles J Jr	1/13/21
Hay, Donna D	3/3/21	Kunz, Reynold Walter	6/19/21	Oetting, Donna L*	5/4/19
Heider, Joanne W	3/9/20	Kupsky, John A	6/20/22	Offermann, Glenn W	1/15/23
Heidorn, Paul E	11/3/21	Laabs, Charles William	5/2/22	Ohlmann, Margaret	4/27/20
Henke, Stephen M Jr	9/22/22	Lacey, Howard Wayne	9/18/21	Okun, Jackie M	4/29/22
Hennig, Sharon F	7/23/20	Laeder, Leroy D	6/10/20	Ortman, Carolyn Ruth	2/27/22
Hensley, Douglas Dwight	11/12/22	Lassanske, Roland R*	4/17/17	Osborn, James M	8/5/20
Herbold, Glenn Louis	2/21/21	Latzke, Henry Raymond	10/22/19	Palm, Lori Ann	1/9/22
Herring, Louis B*	6/30/19	Lawin, Priscilla A	2/24/21	Pankow, Shirley M	1/14/20
Herrmann, Robert L	9/18/20	Lazarchic, Julie Anne	12/2/21	Parker, Eva M	7/1/21
Herzog, Guenther K	5/23/20	Leapaldt, Reuben Lester	8/28/22	Patrick, William D	12/27/19
Hessler, Edward A	9/30/20	Legge, Jean L	6/4/22	Peek, Mary Lee	7/12/19
Heuton, Eugene W*	6/10/19	Lehmann, Robert A	11/24/21	Penney, Tina Marie	8/13/20
Highfill, Vickie L	9/6/19	Lehr, Robert W	3/3/20	Perez, Judith Moria*	10/7/17
Himmler, Marvin M	10/19/22	Leiningner, Robert W	10/9/20	Perez-Arche, Sara	3/16/21
Hingst, Duane E	2/13/21	Leonard, Thomas*	6/27/18	Perkins, Katherine S	7/22/22
Hoehne, Emil E	5/21/20	Levenhagen, William A*	7/5/16	Peter, Carroll E	3/1/21
Hoffmann, William A	1/3/21	Liese, Lloyd D	2/19/22	Peter, Herbert E	2/13/20
Hoffschneider, Gertrude Delores	4/29/20	Lindsay, Kay E	10/28/21	Petersen, Ralph L	2/23/21
Holliday, Robert D	3/27/20	Linnemann, Arthur L	3/18/21	Peterson, Lavonne M	10/1/19
Holmes, Dennis L	7/23/20	Linnemann, Vernetta M	5/15/22	Pfefferle, Kathie M	6/19/21
Honig, Lucy B	9/30/19	Lipscomb, Beverly R	9/19/20	Pieper, Darald A	4/28/20
Hotz, Leroy F	1/10/21	List, Rose M	5/17/21	Pingel, Milton J*	5/25/19
House, Joseph Albert Sr	2/20/22	Lockhart, John Wesley	8/3/19	Pinnow, Arthur C Jr	2/20/20
Hoy, Blair A	10/27/20	Loesch, Carol Janet	4/15/22	Pitsch, Leland A	8/1/20
Huebner, Barbara Patricia	8/21/22	Loesel, Alvin E	11/30/21	Pittelko, Beverly M	11/30/20
Jacob, Norma B	10/5/20	Lofmark, George E Jr	1/24/22	Priehs, Warren F	12/27/20
Janssen, Leland L	9/29/21	Loomans, Dale C	3/16/22	Proft, Marlene Kay*	12/13/16
Janzow, John F	3/11/20	Loomans, Lowell A	12/12/21	Pruitt, Thomas H*	1/20/18
Jenks, Albert N	10/9/22	Lorenz, Donald W	10/20/22	Rabe, Neal F	11/4/19
Johnson, Margaret R	4/9/21	Lu Ersland, Jac E	10/11/21	Rath, Richard L	8/2/20
Jording, David C	3/27/22	Lucht, Wayne E	4/6/20	Rawlings, Emily Kathryn	5/12/21
Jostes, Richard Alan	3/26/21	Luetgert, Lynn L*	8/10/15	Ries, Christine Charlotte	12/23/22
Kaiser, Roy G	11/24/20	Lunsford, Amy Jo	1/20/21	Rincker, Kent Frederick	11/3/19
Kamprath, Fredric W	3/22/22	Lunz, Robert G	11/21/20	Rische, David*	1/26/15
Kanning, Marceil E	10/16/20	Lutz, Nancy Ann	8/12/19	Robbins, Kenneth	12/10/19
Karner, Dale F	1/30/20	Mackie, James D	6/29/21	Rodenbeck, Ronald P	8/20/21
Keinath, Kay A	9/13/19	Mailand, Roger Lee	3/12/21	Rohmaller, Duane J	10/12/20
Kell, Luther P	1/8/21	Markworth, Alfred E*	4/21/18	Rolf, Elda C	3/1/22
Keup, Allan L	1/21/21	Martens, Edmund R	10/27/22	Rolf, John Eugene	10/25/21
King, Katherine Lyn	5/4/21	Martin, Walter W	10/13/20	Rose, Richard R	8/23/20
King, Ross E	12/4/20	Martinez, Jesus Jr	1/23/21	Roth, Edgar N	1/7/22
Kinnett, Linda S	9/13/21	Marxhausen, Gary P	10/18/21	Rumbold, Paula Christine	10/26/20
Kinzer, Anita M	11/22/20	Maurer, Diane B	12/19/21	Rutherford, William D	5/19/20
Klages, Kenneth J	12/31/20	Mc Peek, Lynn E	9/23/22	Rutz, Harold A	11/17/20
Klemz, Harlan H	11/21/19	Meadows, Sharon Lea*	9/30/16	Sabourin, Walter E	2/18/20
Knauff, Raymond H	11/21/22	Meier, Marjorie A	5/25/20	Salas, Dolores M	6/6/20
Knoedler, Walter G	12/31/19	Meier, Robert J	2/13/20	Sattler, Eugene A	7/11/21
Knopp, Allen M	12/6/20	Melcher, Cynthia A*	11/22/18	Schalk, Carl F	1/24/21
Knorr, William H*	10/16/18	Menke, Steven A	12/16/21	Schatte, Paul D	7/19/20
Knueppel, Henry Paul	9/8/22	Meyr, Delvin G*	3/20/19	Schempf, Richard H	10/6/21
Koehler, Henry E	7/10/22	Mills, Ellen K	3/9/20	Schepmann, Darrell William	4/3/22
Koehnke, Paul E	7/23/22	Milz, G David (George)	6/19/21	Schepmann, Judith Ann	7/14/22
Koenig, David L	3/9/21	Moeller, Elizabeth A	10/14/22	Schlie, Orlyn A	7/8/19
Koenig, Herman E	10/4/19	Mohr, Lynn C	12/1/19	Schlueter, Kenneth Eugene	10/12/22
Kosinsky, John P	4/6/22	Moyo, Doreen T	9/13/20	Schoenfeld Grigg, Pauline E	4/22/21
Kraatz, Ronald A	10/4/21	Mueller, Edward H A	6/25/22	Scholz, Arnold E	11/21/21

ENTERED INTO REST

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Schorr, Charlene Hunsicker	12/25/22	Stork, Martin L	1/1/20	Weerts, Edward R	4/17/20
Schramm, Walter H	1/9/20	Stortz, Steven B	12/19/21	Wegner, Jeffrey S	6/20/20
Schreck, Jerry D	12/16/21	Streit, Richard F*	6/18/18	Wegner, Richard	12/27/20
Schuetz, Lois M	1/31/21	Stueber, David J	10/28/22	Wegner, Wilhelm R	10/11/22
Schultz, Dennis N*	7/8/12	Sutter, Irene Norris	5/7/20	Weidner, Donald R	8/10/21
Schultz, Robert L	7/10/19	Swett, Arthur	11/9/20	Weikal, Norma Jane	1/5/22
Schulz, Marlin W	7/7/21	Swickard, Patricia A*	6/6/18	Weiss, Lori A	4/21/20
Schulz, Robert L	3/6/20	Teske, Ingeborg Louise	9/14/21	Werning, E Kathy	7/28/22
Schuster, Philip A	9/28/20	Tewes, Wilbur G	12/7/22	Werth, Gerald J	7/11/19
Schutte, Susan E	11/14/21	Thacker, Jess Michael	1/22/21	Westerfeld, Judith A	8/22/21
Schwab, Jerome T	9/14/19	Thayer, Roy Elmor*	2/4/17	Wiggins, Katie G	2/28/20
Scott, Mablelean D	8/27/19	Theilgaard, Diana Lynn	11/22/19	Williams, John Herbert	6/18/21
Selking, Barbara J	10/24/19	Theurer, Joan L	9/22/21	Winterstein, Charles A	12/31/21
Senecal, John W	12/29/19	Thompson, Harry A III*	3/14/18	Winterstein, Jerome A*	11/2/18
Sharadin, Dolores E	2/13/21	Tiemann, Larry G	3/7/20	Winterstein, Lucille M	9/20/20
Shoaf, Chester W Jr	1/23/20	Toensing, David W*	2/20/19	Wismar, Richard W III	7/13/22
Siefker, Dorothy I	1/23/22	Tonn, Gloria J	10/17/21	Wolf, Harold E*	3/7/19
Sievert, David R	12/1/19	Trautsch, Monica E	11/14/20	Wrase, Dianne L	6/4/22
Sims, Carolyn C	10/7/19	Troutman, John R	5/10/20	Wuensche, Elmer Lee	3/30/21
Smidt, Donald J*	12/12/16	Tschatschula, M Leroy	11/6/19	Wurdeman, Bruce E	11/21/20
Snurka, Nancy C	9/24/21	Ulmer, Richard B	1/27/22	Zachek, Karen Ann*	5/28/19
Sodemann, Betty J*	1/27/19	Unger, Garry Dale	10/16/21	Zielke, Donald Henry	8/9/21
Sopko, Marvin L	12/28/19	Unzicker, William L III	7/24/19	Zielske, Edwin E Jr	9/11/19
Spieler, Gary Albert	2/13/23	Vandemark, Steven Michael	9/25/20	Zill, Steven E	10/6/22
Spitzer, James R	9/7/22	Vanderbles, Audrey E	7/14/20	Zimmerman, Lester H*	11/4/16
Steffens, Stephen F	6/11/20	Voelker, Donald F	10/1/19	Zobel, Glen F	9/21/21
Stegall, Bobette Lois	12/11/19	Von Behren, Erich W	5/12/20	Zoch, Melvin C	9/14/20
Steinbach, Arlon John	8/1/22	Von Dielingen, David P*	5/7/19		
Stewart, Dennis L	2/10/20	Wallis, Aileen C*	2/18/19	*Deceased prior to July 7, 2019, with information received too late to be included in prior list.	
Stigge, Mary Ann*	12/15/18	Waterman, David M	12/9/20		
Stoeckel, Linda M	5/5/20	Weber, John Mark	10/30/21		
Storck, Charles L	4/10/21	Webern, Marilyn	11/29/21		

R1

President

“We preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God” (1 Cor. 1:23–24).

In the same letter Paul says, “If Christ be not risen then our preaching is worthless and so is your faith” (1 Cor. 15:14). The risen Christ, having borne the sins of the world in His body unto death, and having justified the world by His resurrection (Rom. 4:25), forever remains the crucified one we preach so that this crucified and risen Christ be believed for eternal life. Luther describes this life wondrously:

For Christ crucifies the devil, kills death, damns sin, and binds the Law. As one who believes this, I am liberated from the Law, etc. Therefore the Law is deaf, bound, dead and crucified to me; and I, in turn, am deaf, bound, dead and crucified to it. Thus I live by this very death and crucifixion, that is, by this grace or liberty. (LW 26:165)

God’s wisdom is not found in pomp and circumstance, worldly splendor, passing vainglory, great demonstrations of lawful progress or human glory, political decisions, huge numbers or popular entertainment. God’s ways, God’s wisdom, God’s heart, God’s love, God’s purpose, God’s salvation is demonstrated in an offensive and hidden way in the crucifixion and death of the Lord of Glory. “He who knew no sin became sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God” (2 Cor. 5:21). This truth scandalizes the human mind because it precludes any human morality, any alleged human goodness, any human ability, any human choice from playing a role in salvation. There is no human path to God. There is only Christ’s path to us. The scandal is that Christ “became sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God.”

Therefore, until the Day of Christ’s return, as long as He blesses us with this church body, “we preach Christ crucified.” In times comfortable or challenging, in prosperity or persecution, come what may, we preach Christ crucified.

The COVID-19 Crisis

At the beginning of the pandemic, none of us could have anticipated how long it would last or what trials we would have to endure. Everyone was flying blind. Despite the First Amendment, established constitutional law gives government broad powers to act in times of pandemic. While our congregations were coping with various laws and jurisdictions, often making different decisions based upon local context, we in St. Louis assisted districts and congregations with legal consultation and connection with legal advocates so that they could push back against government overreach. I, for one, in retrospect, believe the government has no business forcing its way into the sanctuary, much less dictating the sacramental life of the Church. We must reserve the right to say no to the government, no matter the law. “We must obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29).

Online Communion

The Council of Presidents (COP) met twice a month by Zoom during the pandemic and worked through the difficult issue of “online” Communion, as well as other important matters and needs of our people and congregations. Regarding online Communion, I also sought opinions from our seminaries and the Commission on Theology and Church Relations. The COP agreed with those opin-

ions and unanimously rejected the practice of online Communion. We’ll discuss this at the convention.

Soldiers of the Cross

The LCMS was able to assist over 1,000 church workers—including both professional church workers and many others on staff in congregations—with grants during the pandemic. We’ve also been able to provide some 45 DOXOLOGY retreats for many more pastors and commissioned workers.

Concordia Universities

The Resolution 7-03 Task Force proposals to revamp the governance of the universities continue to change in light of conversations with the presidents of our treasured schools. I’m hopeful that something agreeable to the major parties involved—which provides the schools the flexibility they need and the congregations of the Synod the accountability they need—will be ready prior to convention time and brought to the convention floor. I am delighted with the final outcome of the presidential search at Concordia University Wisconsin and Ann Arbor (CUWAA). CUWAA is a great school with a great future. See my visitation report below (**Report R63**). Visitation of Concordia University Texas (Austin, TX, CTX), and its board of regents’ attempted removal of the university from the Synod’s governance, confirmed concerns about a number of issues (**Report R64**). The Synod Board of Directors (BOD) sent a team to meet with the CTX regents and leadership. Conversations remain hopeful for a return of the school to Synod governance. The closures of Concordia University, Portland and Concordia College—New York (Bronxville) by their regents were sad. The students and dollars simply were not sufficient for the schools to remain open. Millions loaned and granted by the Lutheran Church Extension Fund (LCEF) and the Synod allowed them to operate far longer than would have otherwise been possible.

New presidents this triennium include Dr. Russell Dawn at Concordia University Chicago; Dr. Michael Thomas at Concordia University, Irvine; Dr. Bernard Bull at Concordia University, Nebraska, (Seward); the Rev. Dr. Brian Friedrich at Concordia University, St. Paul; and Dr. Erik Ankerberg at CUWAA. We have the strongest group of Concordia presidents in a long time. My staff are working with President Dawn in Chicago on a biblical approach or alternative to secular Diversity-Equity-Inclusion philosophy, since such philosophy is, at a number of points, antithetical to the Scriptures.

Synod Seminaries

The Rev. Dr. Thomas Egger was appointed president at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, over a year ago. What a great choice! Our seminaries are working together at the vital task of educating our future pastors. We must remain flexible in providing options for seminary education (and we provide many), while not diminishing residential education but growing it. Many people have no idea how vital residential education is, not only for the LCMS but for the world. Without our strong faculties, confessional Lutheranism would be horribly crippled globally. Hundreds of students come to our seminaries and return to their home countries making vital contributions to their churches in doctrine and life. Our faculty travel the globe, bringing the solid biblical teaching of the LCMS and strengthening the mission of the Gospel exponentially. The Synod has been able to provide over \$4 million per year to our two seminaries, to continue to assist them in remaining financially solid.

International Church Partners

The LCMS continues to work globally through LCMS Church Relations and the LCMS Office of International Mission. Our plate is full. It's impossible to respond to all the needs and requests for church fellowship. See the Church Relations Report (**Report R1.1**). Read especially the section on Ukraine.

World Leaders

We look forward to hosting many leaders from our international partner churches at the convention. During the convention, the Synod will enter into and/or confirm church fellowship with several church bodies. It will be a joyous occasion! We will also host our friends from Finland who have stood against woke-ism and the attacks (prosecution!) of the Finnish government just for publishing a tract confessing and advocating the biblical teaching on marriage.

Spanish Lutheran Hymnal

The new Spanish Hymnal is an amazing accomplishment of our mission staff, partner churches, and the Lutheran Heritage Foundation. This hymnal is larger than our *LSB* and has more Luther hymns! Work is underway for a mobile version available in a phone app.

Office of International Mission (OIM)

Though Covid caused some attrition and recruiting difficulties, we've still got over 100 missionaries (about 50/50 lay/clergy), plus 20 alliance missionaries in the field. The Synod staff of 12 continues to care for some 300 missionaries and families. Our missionaries are funded nearly a year in advance, thanks to generous contributions from individuals and the 1,700 congregations who specifically fund a missionary. The support is amazing. The Livonian Project trains pastors for Europe and Eurasia. Concordia the Reformer Seminary in the Dominican Republic continues to have a huge impact on all of Central and South America. We are working to launch a seminary in Chiayi, Taiwan. The LCMS helped rebuild the seminary for our partner church, the India Evangelical Lutheran Church, after a typhoon destroyed much of it. We support some 15 Lutheran seminaries in Africa in one way or another!

Office of National Mission (ONM)

By the time you read this, the Rev. Dan Galchutt will have just begun as the new executive director of ONM. Galchutt previously served as the mission executive for the Kansas District. The Church Planting Initiative is moving forward. We've taken a hard look at what makes for successful church planting. Large grants don't do it; a top-down approach does not yield long-term vitality. Successful church plants usually come from local support, a mother/daughter congregation relationship, and a local team of committed people. Over 20,000 people in the Synod have been trained in "Every One His Witness," the Synod's new outreach effort available through CPH. Rural and Small Town Mission continues to provide useful resources, as do our other ministry departments for many other areas of concern and interest.

Council of Presidents (COP)

Missouri District President Rev. R. Lee Hagan now serves as chairman of the COP. During COP meetings, we pray together; we counsel one another; we wrestle with the many challenges our congregations face. We study God's Word and the Lutheran Confessions, and we support one another in the myriad tasks of tending to the serious needs of our dear people, pastors, teachers, and workers. Currently we are studying issues regarding the Office of the Holy

Ministry and the spiritual priesthood of all believers, the Church's mission, and the current challenges of sexuality and culture.

District Visitations

In one way or another, I have visited every district of the Synod. Since becoming president in 2010, I've been to over 100 district conventions. Since 2013, my staff and I have been visiting with each district's president, board of directors, circuit visitors, and others. Over the last triennium, despite Covid cancellations and rescheduling, we held district visitations—some in person and some via Zoom—with 31 of 35 districts (with more scheduled before the 2023 Synod convention!), 18 of which I was personally able to do. These visits provide vital opportunities to clarify issues, ask questions, inform others, be informed, and strengthen relationships. These visits require lots of time and work, but each visit has borne benefits aplenty.

Million Dollar Life Match

The network of volunteers working with LCMS Life Ministry continues to grow. Due to the success of the first match, we are making plans for a second Million Dollar Life Match for our congregations and agencies as they care for the unborn, newborn, and mothers in need. In the wake of the horrid pro-abortion legislation sweeping many states, we continue to put our money where our mouth is and care for people—from before birth until death—in need.

Youth Gathering

More than 18,000 youth and adults attended the LCMS Youth Gathering in Houston. While other church bodies canceled their youth conventions due to lingering Covid concerns and waning interest, our young people gathered in Houston for worship, Bible study, prayer, and fun. The great event was a joy for thousands. We are receptive to concerns received about the Youth Gathering and are committed to making the 2025 event even stronger.

Child Protection Program

LCMS Schools Ministry has worked with MinistrySafe to assist our congregations and ministries to ensure the safety of the children in our care.

Set Apart to Serve (SAS)—Church Work Recruitment Initiative

SAS seeks to encourage synodwide conversations with young people to encourage them to consider church work vocations. SAS has gained traction in all 35 districts, with a pilot school or congregation from each district. Many of our parochial schools are booming in the wake of Covid and the craziness of "woke" culture taking over so many of our public schools. We need LCMS teachers and other church workers.

Finances

I am thankful to report that the Synod is in good financial shape—in fact, the best in many decades. Our strong position results from a combination of fiscal conservatism by the LCMS BOD and our LCMS staff, generosity by God's people, some outstanding investment returns, and a determined effort to eliminate unproductive debt. Your voluntary giving to the LCMS was such that our costs to receive and administer donations temporarily fell to (around) 8 cents for every dollar given. While this cost ratio fluctuates and is unlikely to be sustained over a long term, it is

a sure sign of confidence and joy among the generous people in the Synod. The amount of money spent on operations (the things the Synod tells us to do, like missions, congregational and district services, individual ministry areas, etc.) was 75 to 78 percent of all spending (a very respectable number). We continue to be thankful for our districts—our single largest “donor”—who together provide around \$13 million annually in vitally important unrestricted funding. These are the dollars coming from the gifts you put into the offering plate during worship each weekend, some of which your congregation gives to your district.

Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR)

The CTCR has produced significant documents in recent years, and they have assisted me on several occasions in matters of doctrine and practice. I’ve requested their assistance with the issue of “lay readers,” that is, laymen who lead a service, read a sermon written by a pastor, and do not administer the Lord’s Supper. With their help, we hope the COP will provide guidance and a theologically acceptable way to provide for congregations which simply cannot get a pastor regularly.

Conclusion

Thank you for consenting to serve the Synod at this 2023 convention. There is, of course, much more about your church’s work in the U.S. and around the world I could report, but I thought I’d make this report as short as possible and easier for you to read. These and many other issues will come before us in Milwaukee. I’ll mention more of them in Part II to be delivered at Floor Committee Weekend in June.

We face tremendous challenges. The devil, the world, and our sinful flesh would seduce us to veer this way or that, as Luther says, “Like a drunk riding a donkey who swings to this side and now the other.” But I’m confident, even in the face of strong headwinds faced by so many of our blessed congregations, in spite of a world that hates us, our sin which besets us, and the devil who relentlessly attacks us precisely because the LCMS confesses the Gospel throughout the world, that the LORD will provide exactly what we need to be His people at this moment.

What we need most will always come in a cruciform package. The Lord blesses under crosses and grants us the joyful hope of the resurrection in Christ. “Have no fear, little flock. The Father has chosen to give you His kingdom.”

“We preach Christ crucified.”

Matthew C. Harrison, *President*

R1.1

Church Relations

Jesus is Lord!

Jesus is Lord! This first, short creed of the Christian Church was confessed by Christ before Pilate (Matt. 26:63–64), fleshed out in the Apostles’ Creed for Baptism into Christ, and confessed robustly in the Nicene Creed for fellowship at His altar. “Jesus is Lord!” continues today as the summary of the Christian faith, the certainty of the forgiveness of our sins, and the power which creates church fellowship through faith in Christ.

To confess that Jesus is Lord means that Jesus is Yahweh, God from eternity, our Savior. The Son of God was sent by the Father to take on our human flesh by the power of the Holy Spirit in the womb of the Virgin Mary. As the God-Man, He kept the eternal Law of God for us by His holy life, He atoned for our sins on the altar of the cross by His substitutionary death, He justified sinners before God by His glorious resurrection from the dead, and He opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers by His victorious ascension into heaven.

The redemptive words and deeds of Jesus have the power to create fellowship with God because Jesus is the Son of God, of one substance with the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit. That is why we preach Christ crucified! Faith and Baptism unite us with Christ, and by way of His shared human flesh, we are united with the Holy Trinity (2 Pet. 1:4) and one another. This is the unity expressed in the LCMS Church Relations (CR) vision statement: “Worldwide confessional Lutheran churches ... United in Christ’s Word, Gathered at His Altar, Witnessing to the World.”

Fellowship in Christ is created by faith and Baptism, which unite us with Him and He with us (*unio mystica*). All believers in Christ are united internally in the “one holy, Christian and apostolic church” (*una sancta*). But because in this sinful world false doctrine and truth are often mixed with grave danger to souls, external or church fellowship may only be manifested where God’s saving Word is taught purely and Christ’s Sacraments are administered rightly according to His institution. These are the external marks of the Church through which the Spirit works (Apology of the Augsburg Confession [Ap] VII and VIII 5). Thus, Jesus prays for His disciples, “Father, ... [grant] that they may be one as We are,” adding the means of that unity, “Sanctify them by Your Word. Your Word is truth” (John 17:11, 17). Church unity is confessional unity, agreement in the truth of God’s sanctifying Word. Article VII of the Augsburg Confession puts it this way: “For this is enough for the true unity of the Christian Church, that there the Gospel is preached unanimously according to a pure understanding, and the Sacraments are administered in conformity with the divine Word” (Augsburg Confession [AC] VII 2, German text, our translation). In sum, we confess the Holy Scriptures as the inspired, inerrant Word of God, the only rule and norm of faith and practice, and we subscribe to the entire Book of Concord as a faithful exposition of the Word of God (*quia* subscription).

The purpose of CR is to advance church fellowship in Christ worldwide. As part of the LCMS Office of the President, CR collaborates with 42 sister church body “partners” to share Christ’s Word and Sacraments, strengthens 40 church body “friends” toward future fellowship, and engages 19 “other” church bodies for faithful ecumenism and united ethical expression to the world. With partners—those with whom we are in altar and pulpit fellowship—we share Word and Sacrament, meet to study the Word, and address church challenges together. With friends, we cooperate in theological dialogue, education, and/or mercy support to move toward future fellowship, God willing. With others, we practice faithful ecumenism to be honest about our theological differences, grow in mutual understanding, and work on Christian ethics statements to bear witness to the world. We seek to confess the goodness and value of God’s created orders ... of all human life (from the unborn to the very old, and those of every race and culture), of human sexuality (being made male or female, and instituting one man—one woman marriage), of the estate of government (for protecting

good and punishing evil; Rom. 13:1–5), etc. For the list of our 101 LCMS partners, friends, and others, see the end of this report.

The Church Relations Team

The President of Synod is the Synod's Chief Ecumenical Officer and represents the LCMS in its global church relations and its world leadership of confessional Lutheranism. Within the Office of the President and on his behalf, the CR director oversees day-to-day CR operations, planning, dialogues, conferences, and engagements. This position was vacant for two years prior to the calling of the Rev. Dr. Jonathan Shaw in May 2021. The Rev. Michael Frese was called to serve as CR deputy director in May 2022.

In addition to the Office of the President CR team, many others play vital roles in advancing confessional Lutheran church fellowship in Christ worldwide. Most important are the 101 global church bodies themselves, with their presiding presidents and bishops. CR works together with them to support faithful fellowship, wise oversight, and effective leadership in meeting the challenges of the Church. LCMS members, congregations, and district presidents provide prayers, offerings, and ministry support coordinated through CR, and work in their own backyard with the global church diaspora. The Synod's Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR) conducts critical reviews and approvals when church bodies formally request consideration for altar and pulpit fellowship. The LCMS Office of International Mission (OIM) engages with nations around the world in preaching the Gospel, in conducting missions-based theological education, and in developing missions to become self-governing partner churches of the LCMS. Our two LCMS seminaries send world-class theologians around the globe to strengthen church partners and friends in confessional Lutheran theology and receive students for formation as pastors and church leaders. Finally, the International Lutheran Council (ILC), approaching its 30th anniversary, promotes confessional Lutheranism around the world through theological education, joint study, and mutual encouragement.

Some Recent CR Highlights by Region

Europe

In August 2021, President Harrison and Dr. Shaw attended the joyous consecration of Juhana Pohjola as Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Mission Diocese of Finland (ELMDF), a partner church of the LCMS. On the same visit in Loimaa, Finland, President Harrison, Dr. Shaw, and Bishop Pohjola met with Baltic confessional Lutheran leaders to discuss church persecution by the state, pastoral formation, and the boundaries of church fellowship. Additional dialogue participants included Bishop Thor Henrik With of the Evangelical Lutheran Diocese in Norway (DELSIN), Archbishop Janis Vanags of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Latvia (LELB), and Bishop Bengt Ådahl and the Rev. Dr. Rune Imberg of the Mission Province in Sweden. In a related action, the LCMS provided leadership to help generate and distribute the International Lutheran Church document signed June 25, 2021, by 50 global religious leaders, "A Protest and Call for Free Religious Speech in Finland: An International Lutheran Condemnation of the Unjust Criminal Prosecution of the Rev. Dr. Pohjola and Dr. Räsänen, and a Call for All People of Good Will to Support the Freedom of Religious Expression in Finland." Bishop Pohjola and Minister of Parliament Räsänen stand accused of hate crimes for speaking to the church on divinely ordered human sexuality.

In November 2021, Dr. Shaw participated in the LCMS OIM-sponsored *Missio Dei* (Mission of God) Conference in Wittenberg, Germany. His paper, "One Mission, Two Kingdoms, and Innumerable Uncertainties: Contending with Covid" provided principles from Holy Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions to address state challenges to the Church's conduct of its divine services and ministry. In charting the way forward, the powers of the spiritual and civil governments must not be mixed. Pastors have no power to use force in their ministry. Civil officials have no power over the Church's preaching, teaching, or sacramental life together.

On Oct. 21, 2022, in Freising, Germany, President Harrison and his representatives from the LCMS met with Bishop Maschewski of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Ukraine (ELCU) to further explore possible altar and pulpit fellowship between the LCMS and the ELCU. This meeting followed up on an Aug. 3, 2021, LCMS–ELCU church relations meeting in Prague. Dr. Shaw facilitated the daylong discussion around four main points: (1) Unity in Christ (*una sancta*, mystical union), (2) Unity in Confession (*quia* subscription), (3) Unity in the Way of Worship (*ordo*), and (4) Unity in the Church Working Together (*martyria, diakonia, koinonia*). The dialogue demonstrated clearly that President Harrison and Bishop Maschewski were confessing the same doctrine. Both were happy to move the process forward for fellowship recognition. Due to heavy fighting in Ukraine, Bishop Maschewski was unable to meet with the CTCR in December 2022, but he was able to travel and attend the CTCR meeting in February 2023.

The Covid pandemic put a hold on the 2021 Old Latin School (OLS) fundraising tour of Wittenberg, but the extra time enabled planning for a much more robust tour. From Oct. 21 to Nov. 2, 2022, 28 LCMS laity and pastors participated in a once-in-a-lifetime tour of Lutherland, beautiful Germany, Wittenberg, and the OLS. President Harrison, Vice-President Scott Murray, OLS Director Rev. Wilhelm Weber, CR staff, and others provided theological and historical commentary at each stop. We started in the beautiful Bavarian Alps (where the weather was unseasonably warm and sunny) and continued north into the heart of Lutheran and Reformation cities and sites—Heidelberg, Worms, Marburg, Eisenach, the Wartburg castle, Erfurt, Eisleben, Leipzig, Nuremberg, and Wittenberg. In Wittenberg, Rev. Weber gave a tour of the OLS, explained its Gospel mission for locals and visitors, and demonstrated its hospitality ministry; currently the OLS serves as a safe haven to Ukrainian refugees where they can live and worship in peace. Tour travelers generously contributed \$53,500 for OLS ministry.

Africa

In May 2022, CR hosted a seven-member delegation from the Malagasy Lutheran Church (FLM), a conservative Lutheran church body with over 4.5 million members. Along with the FLM president, the Rev. Dr. Denis Rakotozafy, the team included the vice-president/bishop, the general secretary, the treasurer, a second bishop, a leading medical doctor, and the translator. Through visitations and theological discussions with LCMS leaders at the LCMS International Center, the CTCR, and the two seminaries, the FLM delegation became familiar with the LCMS, was heartened to witness a strong confession and fervent love in Christ, and was excited to move ahead with further dialogue and church body engagements aiming at possible future church fellowship.

One of the immediate fruits of the FLM visitation was the request from the FLM High Committee, based on a petition from President Rakotozafy, for the LCMS to send theologians to teach at their six seminaries and one graduate school of theology. This

showed exemplary trust, as all their current instructors are from the FLM. Requested areas of instruction include liturgics, the Lutheran Confessions, and church leadership, with initial instruction at the graduate school of theology. As of the writing of this report, CR is scheduled to teach a one-week intensive in March 2023 at the graduate school in these areas. The March trip will also include visits to the FLM headquarters, congregations, and institutions of mercy. Going forward, plans will focus on available LCMS seminary professors, OIM theological educators, and others for FLM instruction.

Following the September 2022 ILC World Conference in Kisumu, Kenya, the LCMS conducted its 2022 International Church Relations Conference Sept. 17–18, 2022, at the same location. All LCMS church body partners and select friends were invited. Five sessions addressed the top five joys and challenges of our confessional Lutheran partners (with presenters): (1) Pastoral Oversight and Visitation (President Harrison, LCMS), (2) Recruiting and Training Young, Faithful Pastors (President Geraldo Walimir Schüler, IELB, Brazil), (3) Confessing the Truth through Association: ILC and LWF (Dr. Naomichi Masaki, LCMS CTCR representative), (4) Arming for the Assaults of the Heterodox Woke: Ordination, Fellowship, Ethics, and Pandemic (Bishop Juhana Pohjola, ELMDF, Finland), and (5) Church Planting Today (Panel: Bishop S.M.A. Modise Maragelo, LCSA, South Africa; Archbishop Joseph Omolo, ECLK, Kenya; Bishop Torkild Masvie, LKNI, Norway and Iceland; President Y. Suviseshamuthu Muthu, IELC, India; President Timothy Teuscher, LCC, Canada; President Arturo Truenow, IELA, Argentina). Lively discussion confirmed the joys, addressed the challenges, and reinforced unity in the faith.

During the third session, “Confessing the Truth through Association: ILC and LWF,” CR facilitated a discussion involving those partner churches who are also members of the Lutheran World Federation. The goal included meeting the intent of 2019 Resolution 5-07: “To Clarify the Relationship between LCMS Partner Churches and the Lutheran World Federation” (*Proceedings*, 152–53). The LCMS is currently in fellowship with 11 church bodies who are members of the LWF, nine of whom were represented at Kisumu. These partners expressed to the entire assembly that they understood their continued LWF affiliation not as being part of a “communion,” but a “federation.” They did not agree with LWF values and liberal theology, but continued with a confessional Lutheran voice of dissent for the truth. Most especially they rejected the LWF endorsement of open Communion and abandonment of biblical sexual ethics. Different church body leaders offered additional comments. One bishop of a church body with a decades-long LWF affiliation said that immediately leaving the LWF would be contentious for his church, so he was being careful and catechizing his pastors on the Confessions toward that end. Another bishop noted his firm resistance to LWF theology, but also his happiness to accept LWF scholarships and sponsorships for students. Yet another mentioned that he appreciated the social-humanitarian aspects of support, and inclusion in the broader Christian community.

While at Kisumu, LCMS CR also met with representatives from the 10 church bodies which compose the African Union of Francophone Confessional Lutheran Churches. We discussed the theology, practice, and path for church fellowship with the LCMS and look forward to working together toward this goal.

The highlight of the conference was the concluding Sunday Divine Service, when the LCMS and ELCSS/S (South Sudan/Sudan) gave thanks to God for their altar and pulpit fellowship. LCMS

President Harrison and the ELCSS/S Bishop Peter Anibati Abia read their respective letters of church fellowship and celebrated fellowship at the altar—thought to be a first for the LCMS. Over 60 archbishops, bishops, presidents, and lay representatives from LCMS partner churches around the world communed together, receiving the holy body and blood of Christ, for their forgiveness, life, and salvation, and in testimony of a united confession in His name. Many communicants commented that it was the most moving Divine Service they had ever experienced.

Asia

At an April 2022 meeting in St. Louis between LCMS President Harrison and Rev. Eun Seob Kim, President of the Lutheran Church in Korea (LCK), the LCMS received the happy news of LCK internal church unity and peace but also word of an LCK 2021 convention action to study women’s ordination (WO). In response, a fraternal LCK–LCMS dialogue on WO was convened in January 2023 at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Ind. Two other topics were also discussed at President Kim’s request: recovering the historic Church practice of *diakonia* (by President Harrison) and documenting church history in Korea (by Dr. Daniel Harmelink, Executive Director, Concordia Historical Institute). The dialogue addressed WO in terms of the Apostles’ Creed, First Article (“The Ordination of Women and God’s First Article Gifts of Human Sexuality and Order in Creation,” Rev. Dr. Adam Hensley, Lutheran Church of Australia), Second Article (“Women’s Ordination: Government and Culture Ruling in the Place of Christ and His Apostles,” Rev. Dr. David Scaer), and Third Article (“Women’s Ordination and the Doctrine of Scripture,” Rev. Dr. Roland Ziegler). This successful dialogue led to an LCK invitation for a November 2023 LCMS theological education conference with LCK clergy to discuss these matters.

As of the writing of this report, the Rev. Michael Frese will travel to Seoul, South Korea, as an observer of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS) at their 2023 Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conference (CELC) Convention in June 2023. CELC has 34 member churches and is a worldwide fellowship of confessional Lutheran church bodies. Like the ILC, the CELC exists to encourage confessional Lutherans, but unlike the ILC, it is a church fellowship, not an association. Following the CELC conference, Rev. Frese will meet LCK leaders and Luther University faculties, and will discuss plans for the upcoming LCMS–LCK November 2023 theological education conference.

In May and June 2022, Dr. Shaw joined a number of LCMS leaders in a combined effort with international missions (Rev. Charles Ferry, Rev. Dr. Arthur Just, Rev. Dr. Charles Cortwright, and Rev. Steven Mahlborg), the Concordia Historical Institute (Rev. Dr. Daniel Harmelink), LCMS Disaster Response (Rev. Dr. Ross Johnson), and CTSFW pastoral ministry and missions (Rev. Dr. Detlev Schultz). The team visited Concordia Theological Seminary in Nagercoil, of the India Evangelical Lutheran Church (IELC), to dedicate the seminary’s four-year rebuild following an enormously destructive hurricane, to discuss fellowship and theological development, to conduct a “Theology of the Cross” refresher course for 200 IELC pastors, to review IELC historical documentation, and to support the seminary graduation. Afterward, leaders traveled north for an initial visit to Bible Faith Lutheran Church, with 43 congregations located in remote villages in a 70-mile radius of Guntur. The purpose of the visit was to meet with Bishop Shalem, Bishop Bhanu, and other BFLC pastors; visit congregations; and get to

know the church better for church relations. May God bless this confessional Lutheran church body.

Regarding the Japan Lutheran Church (JLC) and the 2023 Synod convention consideration of the dissolution of fellowship with the JLC, please review the CTCR Convention Report (**Report R14**). Significantly, on Sept. 16, 2022, in Kisumu, Kenya, Rev. Tatsuomi Yoshida, president of Japan Lutheran Church (JLC or NRK), met with Dr. Shaw, LCMS CR director. Dr. Shaw arranged the meeting, seeking a possible positive way to address church relations with the JLC in light of the JLC's Apr. 29, 2021, decision at its 18th General Convention to ordain women to the pastoral office. Dr. Shaw asked President Yoshida if there might be a possibility of the JLC limiting its ordination of women—perhaps allowing those currently ordained to continue serving, but ordaining no more women—or reassessing its practice of ordaining women, or later ending the ordination of women. After a period of silent contemplation, President Yoshida responded, “No, this is what we decided and are practicing—women’s ordination—now and for the foreseeable future.” What a sad, adamant rejection of the Father’s order of creation, its applicability within the office of the pastoral ministry as established by Christ through His apostles, and the authoritative, Spirit-inspired Word of God which establishes male-only ordination to the pastoral office. The LCMS continues its outreach to invigorate a confessional Lutheran presence in Japan through its missionaries, through Pastor Manubu Wakabayashi, and others.

In February 2023, Dr. Shaw attended the 20th Convention of the General Synod of the Lutheran Church of Australia (LCA) at the invitation of LCA Bishop Paul Smith. The convention passed a resolution “to work through various theological, constitutional, and governance requirements to operate as one church with two different ordination practices ... with the expectation of women’s ordination” beginning as early as 2024. The plan would seek a subsequent two-thirds majority vote at the 2024 convention to change the LCA Constitution to allow for women’s ordination, although Bishop Smith allowed that a decision for women’s ordination might be achievable with a simple majority. The convention also dismissed the 1875 Galesburg Rule, “Lutheran pulpits and Lutheran altars for Lutherans only,” citing it as too restrictive. (The LCMS never accepted the rule, judging it to be too loose and accommodating of those who were “Lutheran” in name only.) The LCMS is working to sustain confessional Lutheranism in Australia.

South America

The December 2021 ILC Latin America Regional Conference in Mexico City allowed good LCMS CR coordination with a myriad of South American partners and strengthening of the bonds of confessional unity. Rev. Geraldo Walmir Schüler, president of our sister church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Brazil (IELB), provided important bishop support for Bolivian ordinations (see next paragraph).

In March 2022, Dr. Shaw accompanied the team of Rev. Ted Krey (OIM Regional Director for Latin America and the Caribbean, LAC) for meetings with the Christian Evangelical Lutheran Church of Bolivia (ICEL). OIM support and 10 years of theological education have well tilled the theological soil of ICEL. This meeting, scheduled as OIM’s first FORO in Bolivia, allowed time for CR dialogue with the Rev. Limberth Fernández, ICEL president. IELB Vice-President Rev. Airton S. Schroeder conducted ICEL ordinations with a *quia* subscription oath, the ICEL standard. ICEL has adjusted its constitution and bylaws as a confessional Lutheran church body. On July 18, 2022, ICEL officially requested the be-

ginning of dialogue with the LCMS aimed at eventual recognition of altar and pulpit fellowship. Toward that end, an LCMS–ICEL theological dialogue is planned for April 2023, prior to President Fernández and other ICEL representatives meeting with the CTCR in its April 13–15, 2023, meeting.

The June 2022 visit to the 63rd National Convention of the IELB held at Guarapari, Espírito Santo, Brazil, was momentous. Rev. Schüler was elected to a second term as president; the convention affirmed historic, Christian teaching on homosexual relations and the ordination of women; and the IELB and LCMS signed a working agreement for clergy calls between the two church bodies in support of our 1980 protocol document. The working agreement puts pulpit fellowship into action, addresses the ministry needs of the Portuguese-speaking diaspora in the U.S., and honors calling authorities and processes in both church bodies. The IELB is the oldest and largest sister church of the LCMS.

CR looks forward to collaborating with Rev. Krey at the May 2023 OIM symposium for Central and South America church leaders to be held in the Dominican Republic. Current plans include a Church Relations Day to address protocol agreements, faithful confession, and emerging needs which flow from church body relations.

North America

On conversations held with the Evangelical Lutheran Synod (ELS), the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Church (WELS), the North American Lutheran Church (NALC), and the Anglican Church in North America (ACNA), please see the CTCR Convention Report (**Report R12**). LCMS CR is thankful for the CTCR’s superb leadership in shepherding these past conversations, with CR assuming LCMS responsibility in July 2021.

On Nov. 21–22, 2022, Lutheran Church—Canada (LCC) and LCMS representatives met in Windsor, Ontario, Canada, to discuss the work and scope of the LCMS English and SELC Districts in Canada. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss improving mission outreach, especially regarding new ethnic-specific congregations and mission starts, in light of the May 1988 protocol document between the two church bodies. For more information see the “LCMS and LCC Joint Statement on Mission and Ministry in Canada” posted on the *lcms.org* website. In accord with the “Joint Statement,” both church bodies met Feb. 26–28, 2023, at Christ Our King Lutheran Church (LCC) in Mississauga, Ontario, for a *Koinonia* meeting where the church body presidents, the English and SELC district presidents, the LCC regional leadership, and all affected pastors met with the “aim to enhance understanding of perspectives on mission and ministry, and to empower lively Word and Sacrament ministry in LCC and LCMS congregations in Canada.”

On Jan. 31, 2023, the Rev. Dr. Cary Larson, presiding pastor of The American Association of Lutheran Churches (AALC), and the Rev. Dean Stoner met with Dr. Shaw and Rev. Frese to discuss the 2007 AALC–LCMS protocol document, two operating agreements, and forums for continued mutual support. In this CR meeting, the first since Dr. Larson was elected presiding pastor, he expressed his desire to strengthen our relationship for the sake of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. How pleasing it is for brothers to dwell together in unity in Christ!

Jonathan E. Shaw, *Director*

Church Bodies with Whom the LCMS Has Active Church Relations

Partner Churches (sister church bodies, in altar and pulpit fellowship with the LCMS)

Evangelical Lutheran Church of Argentina, IELA
 Evangelical Lutheran Church in Belgium, ELKB
 Evangelical Lutheran Church of Brazil, IELB
 Lutheran Church—Canada, LCC
 Confessional Lutheran Church of Chile, ILCC
 Evangelical Lutheran Free Church in Denmark, ELFC
 The Evangelical Lutheran Church of England, ELCE
 Evangelical Lutheran Mission Diocese of Finland, ELMD [1]
 Evangelical Lutheran Church—Synod of France, EEL—SF
 Independent Evangelical Lutheran Church, SELK (Germany)
 Evangelical Lutheran Church of Ghana, EELG
 Lutheran Church of Guatemala, ILG
 The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Haiti, ELCH
 The Lutheran Church—Hong Kong, LCHK
 India Evangelical Lutheran Church, IELC
 Japan Lutheran Church, JLC [2]
 Evangelical Lutheran Church in Almaty, ELCA (Kazakhstan)
 Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya, ELCK
 Lutheran Church in Korea, LCK
 Evangelical Lutheran Church of Latvia, LELB
 Evangelical Lutheran Church of Liberia, ELCL
 Evangelical Lutheran Church of Lithuania, LELB
 Lutheran Synod of Mexico, SLM
 Lutheran Church of Nigeria, LCN
 Lutheran Church in Norway and Iceland, LKNI
 Gutnius Lutheran Church, GLC (Papua New Guinea)
 Evangelical Lutheran Church of Paraguay, IELP
 The Lutheran Church in the Philippines, LCP
 Portuguese Evangelical Lutheran Church, IELP
 Siberian Evangelical Lutheran Church, SELC (Russia)
 Evangelical Lutheran Church of Ingria in Russia, ELCIR
 Free Evangelical Lutheran Synod in South Africa, FELSISA
 Lutheran Church in Southern Africa, LCSA
 Confessional Lutheran Church of South Africa, CLCSA
 Evangelical Lutheran Church in South Sudan and Sudan, ELCSS/S [3]
 Evangelical Lutheran Church of Spain, IELE, active OIM Mission [4]
 Ceylon Evangelical Lutheran Church, CELC, active OIM Mission (Sri Lanka) [5]
 China Evangelical Lutheran Church, CELC (Taiwan)
 Lutheran Church of Togo, ELT

American Association of Lutheran Churches, AALC (U.S.)
 Lutheran Church of Uruguay, ILU
 Lutheran Church of Venezuela, ILV

Friends (church bodies cooperating with the LCMS in theological dialogue, education, and /or mercy)

Lutheran Church of Australia, LCA
 Lutheran Church in Africa—Synod of Benin, ELA—SBE
 Christian Evangelical Lutheran Church of Bolivia, ICEL
 Evangelical Lutheran Church of Burkina Faso, EELBF
 Lutheran Church in Africa—Synod of Burundi, ELA—SBU
 Cambodian Lutheran Church, CLC
 Evangelical Lutheran Church in East Congo, CELCE
 Evangelical Lutheran Confessional Church in the Congo, EELCC
 Evangelical Lutheran Church in Congo, EELC
 Lutheran Church in Africa—Synod Cote D'Ivoire, ELA—SCI (Ivory Coast)
 Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in the Czech Republic, ECAV
 Silesian Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession, SCEAV (Czech Republic)
 Evangelical Lutheran Church of Eritrea, ELCE
 Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus, EECMY
 Ethiopian Evangelical Lutheran Church, EELC
 The Lutheran Church of The Gambia, LCG
 Evangelical Lutheran Church of Guinea, EELG
 Manipur Evangelical Lutheran Church, MELC (India)
 The Indonesian Lutheran Christian Church, GKLI
 West Japan Evangelical Lutheran Church, WJELC
 Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Republic of Kazakhstan, ELCKR
 Lutheran Church Concordia, LCC (Kyrgyzstan)
 Malagasy Lutheran Church, FLM (Madagascar)
 Confessional Lutheran Church—Malawi Synod, CLC—MS
 Evangelical Lutheran Church in Malaysia, EELM
 Lutheran Church Synod of Nicaragua, ILSN
 Evangelical Lutheran Diocese in Norway, DELSIN
 Evangelical Lutheran Church of Panama, IELPA
 Evangelical Lutheran Church—Peru, IEL—P
 Lutheran Mission in Africa—Synod of Thousand Hills, LMA—STH (Rwanda)
 Christ Evangelical Lutheran Church—Sierra Leone, CELC—SL
 South Sudan Evangelical Lutheran Church, SSEL
 Mission Province in Sweden, MPS
 Confessional Lutheran Church in Switzerland, CLCS
 Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania, ELCT
 Lutheran Church of East Africa, LCEA (Tanzania)

Istanbul Lutheran Church, ILK (Turkey)

Lutheran Church of Uganda, LCU [6]

Evangelical Lutheran Church of Ukraine, ELCU [7]

The Lutheran Ministerium and Synod, LMSUSA (U.S.)

Others (church bodies engaging in conversation and/or ethical statements with the LCMS)

Bangladesh Northern Evangelical Lutheran Church, BNELC

Independent Evangelical Lutheran Church in Belarus, IELCB

Hope Evangelical Lutheran Church in Burundi, HELCB

Iglesia Confessional de Columbia, ICC

Church of Faithful Confessing Lutherans in Congo, CFCLCO

Bible Faith Lutheran Church, BFLC (India)

Evangelical Lutheran Conference and Ministerium of Kenya, ELCMK

Himalayan Evangelical Lutheran Fellowship, HELF (Nepal)

Evangelical Lutheran Church Society, DELK (Norway)

Norwegian Lutheran Mission, NLM

Lutheran Church of Rwanda, LCR

Lutheran Church in Singapore, LCS

Lutheran Church of the Republic of China, LCROC

Evangelical Lutheran Synod, ELS (U.S.)

Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod, WELS (U.S.)

Anglican Catholic Church, ACC (U.S.)

Traditional Anglican Church, TAC (U.S.)

Anglican Church in North America, ACNA (U.S.)

North American Lutheran Church, NALC (U.S.)

Endnotes

1. In keeping with Bylaw 3.9.5.2.2 (c), following CTCR approval, the Synod President recognized LCMS–ELMDF fellowship on Nov. 14, 2020, subject to 2023 Synod convention endorsement.

2. During dialogue spanning 14 years, the LCMS encouraged the JLC to uphold the clear teaching of the infallible Word of God that only men may be ordained to the pastoral office. Sadly, in its April 2021 convention, the JLC officially adopted the false doctrine and practice of women's ordination. By this action, the JLC broke the confession and unity of the true faith, making it impossible for the LCMS to continue to recognize and practice altar and pulpit fellowship with the JLC. The very serious matter of formal cessation of altar and pulpit fellowship will be brought before the Synod at its 2023 convention.

3. In keeping with Bylaw 3.9.5.2.2 (c), following CTCR approval, the Synod President recognized LCMS–ELCSS/S fellowship on Sept. 17, 2023, subject to 2023 Synod convention endorsement.

4. The IELE is a church body which is also an active OIM mission, and thus in fellowship with the LCMS.

5. The CELC is a church body which is also an active OIM mission, and thus in fellowship with the LCMS. In accord with Bylaw 3.9.5.2.2 (d), the 2023 Synod convention may consider a request to recognize the CELC as a self-governing partner church of the LCMS.

6. In accord with Bylaw 3.9.5.2.2 (b), recognition of LCMS–LCU fellowship is under consideration at the 2023 Synod convention.

7. In accord with Bylaw 3.9.5.2.2 (b), recognition of LCMS–ELCU fellowship is under consideration at the 2023 Synod convention.

R1.2

Chief Mission Officer

Working under Bylaw 3.4.3ff. as a member of the Office of the President team, the Chief Mission Officer (CMO) is responsible to the President for all mission, ministry, programmatic, and coordinative functions implementing Board for National Mission (BNM) and Board for International Mission (BIM) policies. He supervises the Office of National Mission (ONM), Office of International Mission (OIM), Office of Pastoral Education (PED), and the Synod's Mission Advancement (MADV) and Communications (COMMS) units, ensuring appropriate resources, planning, and coordination within and across these teams. The CMO serves on the Operations and Administrative Teams, chairs the Pastoral Formation Committee, represents the Synod and/or its President on several LCMS-established or affiliated entity boards (including the LCMS Foundation and Concordia University System) and regularly interacts with various agency and auxiliary heads and church partners of the Synod in furtherance of LCMS objectives.

For the sake of our common unity and mission in the Gospel, the CMO and units reporting to the CMO strive to serve the Synod's members in full accord with and fulfillment of the direction provided by our congregations and church workers (i.e., as occurs at the Synod's national and district conventions), such service and fulfillment often functionally accomplished through district offices and staffs (Bylaw 4.1.1: "The Synod is not merely an advisory body ... but establishes districts in order more effectively to achieve its objectives and carry on its activities"). Over the past quadrennium, units reporting to the CMO have worked diligently to advance the Synod's current triennial mission and ministry emphasis, adopted under 2019 Resolution 4-03A: *Making Disciples for Life (Proceedings, 134–35)*. That same resolution also reaffirmed the Synod's current seven mission priorities—which constantly drive planning, implementation efforts, and strategic/operational considerations within ONM, OIM, PED, MADV, and COMMS:

- 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, elementary, and secondary education, and youth ministry; and finally,
- Strengthen and support the Lutheran family in living out God's design.

For a summary of accomplishments within the ONM, OIM, PED, MADV, and COMMS units, see **Reports R1.2.1–5** immediately following in this convention workbook. Significant accomplishments emerging from the CMO's office itself over the past quadrennium include (but are not limited to):

- Ongoing improvements to collaboration, coordination, cooperation, and communication within and between all units

under supervision and with corporate Synod's other units working from the LCMS International Center.

- Development and implementation of an effective planning/reporting template used in strategic planning, operational, and budgeting efforts with the BNM, BIM, and Board of Directors (BOD).
- Management of all units under supervision within annually established operating expenditure budgets.
- Recruitment to fill key vacancies and provide interim management consequent to executive director leadership changes in the ONM, OIM, and COMMS units.
- Formation of a Ministry Support Team within the LCMS International Center, pooling, cross-training, and leveraging administrative assistant and project coordinator resources under a single manager to provide crucial services in support of ONM, OIM, PED, MADV, and COMMS regular work, special events, and assignments.

Most notable CMO overarching objectives (among others) for the coming triennium fall under the following categories:

- Expand the Synod's mission and ministry to proclaim the Gospel of Christ and further the kingdom of God, making most effective use of all available resources to tell more people about Jesus:
 - BNM and BIM—Increased integration of mission board policy-making with mission office strategic and operational plans and budgets, and expansion of mission boards' and offices' working connections with districts;
 - ONM—Church and school planting in U.S. mission field, expansion of the Synod's work among ethnic immigrant groups, and growing momentum in mercy work, especially in human care, ministerial support, and disaster response;
 - OIM—Recruitment and deployment of LCMS and alliance missionaries in close collaboration with international church partners, and sustaining the Synod's premier role in global Lutheran theological education, especially through overseas seminaries in all four of the Synod's international regions;
 - PED—*Set Apart to Serve* church worker recruitment initiative;
 - MADV—Informing and fully engaging current and new contributors who find fulfillment, gratitude, and joy in their participation in the Synod's mission and ministry; and
 - COMMS—Increased reach into and engagement of stakeholder audiences and a major transition into a new and improved, multifaceted digital platform.
- Foster outstanding working relationships between units under CMO supervision, and BNM and BIM with congregations, districts, other agencies, Recognized Service Organizations, and auxiliaries of the Synod.
- Fully support and contribute to efforts by the Office of the President, Operations Team, BNM, BIM, and BOD to significantly extend the Synod's planning horizon.
- Facilitate—through PED, Pastoral Formation Committee, and other Synod agencies—ongoing study, rigorous analysis, and the issuance of appropriate recommendations and guidelines pertaining to beneficial adjustments and/or reaffirmation of LCMS pastoral formation programs and routes to ordination (including residential and non-residential approaches), church worker recruitment, and continuing education.

firmation of LCMS pastoral formation programs and routes to ordination (including residential and non-residential approaches), church worker recruitment, and continuing education.

- Address evolving challenges and opportunities among the Synod's international schools in Asia pertaining to Lutheran identity and operational ethos and strategic alignment with LCMS mission emphases and priorities.

Kevin D. Robson, *Chief Mission Officer*

R1.2.1

Office of National Mission

The Office of National Mission (ONM) implements the policies of the Board for National Mission (BNM) under the supervision of the Chief Mission Officer and is responsible for domestic ministries that especially serve congregations and schools through the districts of the Synod.

In carrying out its mission responsibilities, the ONM receives its primary focus from the mission and ministry emphases developed triennially by the national Synod in convention and from the policies developed and determined by the BNM. Through the Chief Mission Officer, it also receives direction from the President of the Synod on all aspects of its responsibilities.

A. Human Care and Ministerial Support

The Human Care and Ministerial Support ministry area of the ONM has prioritized responding to key challenges over the past triennium. This ministry area is focused on providing support to rostered church workers through the districts' work with congregations as they preach Christ crucified.

A.1. Deaconess Ministry

LCMS Deaconess Ministry encourages and supports deaconess formation and mercy work.

Accomplishments over the Past Triennium

- Coordination with the Synod deaconess training programs.
- Support of deaconess internship opportunities with grant funds received from the Lutheran Women's Missionary League.
- Providing support and care for deaconesses through coordination and financial support of recognized service organization (RSO) programs.

Plans for the Next Triennium

- Coordination of vocational awareness and recruitment through the *Set Apart to Serve* initiative, and among RSOs and the Synod deaconess training programs.

A.2. Family Ministry

The seventh current LCMS mission priority is to strengthen and support the Lutheran family in living out God's design. ONM created a new program area to focus on this mission priority. Family Ministry has been aligned with Life Ministry to uphold and defend the link between marriage, life, and family (2019 Resolutions 1-06A; 11-02A).

Accomplishments over the Past Triennium

- Created a position for a director of Family Ministry.

- *Making Disciples for Life* Conferences hosted by ONM have offered sessions on marriage, life, and family. The *Making Disciples for Life* resource center, with print and video resources, can be found at makingdisciples.lcms.org.
- In response to 2019 Res. 11-03A, ONM formed an ad hoc task force in order to study, summarize, and articulate the current state of Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI) resources available to the Synod's people and institutions.
- Through the work of the ad hoc task force, ONM established an initiative titled *Created Male and Female*. The initiative offers resources for the church body to confess and uphold God's design for marriage and the family while preaching Christ crucified and proclaiming the Gospel to all who struggle with a myriad of sexual sins and identity confusion.

Plans for the Next Triennium

- Equip congregations for Family Ministry through the districts.
- Create resources to support the family in collaboration with LCMS School Ministry, Youth Ministry, CPH, and RSOs.

A.3. Health Ministry

LCMS Health Ministry works to support and promote Christ-centered health and wellness of body, mind, and spirit through congregational health ministries.

Accomplishments over the Past Triennium

- ONM collaborated with the LCMS Parish Nurse Council, which coordinates the districts' parish nurse leaders and health initiatives.
- Supported the annual meeting of district parish nurse representatives.
- Created a mental health resource page: lcms.org/social-issues/mental-health.

In response to 2019 Res. 3-04A, ONM formed an ad hoc task force that explored the encouragement of continuing education on mental illness, health, and wellness for church workers.

Plans for the Next Triennium

- Encourage congregational health ministries and parish nurses through the districts.
- Create resources to increase awareness and understanding about mental illness. Create training opportunities and professional development so that church workers are equipped for compassionate and supportive care to those in need.

A.4. National Grant Administration

Accomplishments over the Past Triennium

- Implemented a grant-making software solution in fall 2019.
- Transitioned from a paper-driven, manual system to a cloud-based computer system designed for efficiency, collaboration, and insight.
- In all, nearly 1,500 national grants, totaling more than \$9 million and supporting various mission priorities of the Synod, were awarded during this extended triennium.
- Pandemic response: Awarded 221 Esther 4:14 national grants totaling \$244,767 to congregations in 35 districts. The

Esther 4:14 grants supported congregational use of technology to proclaim the Gospel in new and creative ways when gathering for worship was restricted or prohibited. Awarded grants totaling about \$1.5 million for clergy and commissioned minister "Take Heart!" respite retreats. Awarded 976 Soldiers of the Cross-Amplified grants in 28 districts for direct, emergency financial assistance to church, RSO, and district called and layworkers, totaling over \$1.6 million. Awarded 15 district pandemic resiliency grants totaling \$29,000 in support of district-led pandemic care for non-clergy workers.

- Awarded 72 national grants totaling \$713,576 to benefit projects throughout the U.S.
- Awarded 71 national disaster response grants totaling \$2,035,660 for work in 18 districts. These grants aided LCMS districts, congregations, and church workers involved in recovery work related to Hurricane Ida, Hurricane Laura, and Hurricane Ian. Assistance was also given in response to the Texas freeze event of 2021, various floods, and tornadoes in Alabama, Illinois, Tennessee, and Missouri.
- Awarded eight *Global Seminary Initiative* grants totaling \$1,573,317 supporting Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, and Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne.
- Awarded nine core support and scholarship grants totaling \$740,000 in support of church-worker wellness.
- Provided core budget support to pan-Lutheran partner Lutheran Services in America (LSA), \$140,000.

A.5. Life Ministry

Through LCMS Life Ministry, the Body of Christ comes together to value all human life—from conception to natural death. LCMS Life Ministry speaks up for life, cares for people in body and soul, and teaches about the sanctity of human life.

Accomplishments over the Past Triennium

- Held Life Conferences in 2021 and 2023, and a Life seminar in 2022, with free participation offered to campus and youth ministries (2019 Res. 3-02A; 11-01A).
- Collaborated with ONM Youth Ministry and School Ministry to provide recommended policies and strategies for continued vigilance in child protection (2019 Res. 1-07A) by identifying resources and supporting districts' efforts as they encourage training in congregations, schools, and RSOs.
- Facilitated LCMS participation in 4 national Marches for Life, and 12 state marches (2019 Res. 3-02A).
- Published over 200 new video, print, and audio resources with new authors and presenters on a new resource website with advanced search functionality, lcmslife.org. Created *Friends for Life* podcast kfuo.org/friendsforlife (2019 Res. 3-02A; 11-01A).
- Called and installed Deaconess Dr. Tiffany Manor as the Director of Life Ministry in 2020 (2019 Res. 11-01A).
- Created new resources and strategies to engage and educate children and teens on beginning-of-life issues (2019 Res. 11-01A). Curriculum and resources were funded in part by a grant from the Lutheran Women's Missionary League.
- Published domestic violence educational modules in an online Learning Management System.

- Published educational resources on physician-assisted suicide (2019 Res. 11-06A).
- Created a new volunteer portal, *lcms-life.org*, to share opportunities for Lutherans to participate in advocacy events such as marches for life, human-care efforts, and education events. Trained district coordinators to utilize the volunteer portal for district events offered to congregations.
- In collaboration with the Office of International Mission (OIM) Latin America Caribbean (LAC) region, developed print and video resources in Spanish that have been freely shared in the LAC region and through ONM Hispanic Ministry.
- Administered the Million Dollar Life Match grant program, which has awarded 85 grants across 28 districts, totaling \$533,736, during phases 1 and 2. This grant program supports local pro-life efforts with emphasis on beginning-of-life needs.

Plans for the Next Triennium

- Assist the districts in mobilizing congregations for expanded mercy efforts performed in close proximity to Word and Sacrament ministry to support families experiencing life challenges.
- Create new educational modules on the *Making Disciples for Life* online Learning Management System.
- Create suicide-prevention resources and training for rostered church workers and congregational lay leaders.

A.6. Specialized Pastoral Ministry

Specialized Pastoral Ministry (SPM) provides ecclesiastical endorsement and professional support for LCMS rostered church workers who bring the love of Christ through compassionate spiritual care to individuals in hospitals and health-care facilities; long-term-care facilities; prisons; law-enforcement, fire, and rescue agencies; disaster response; and workplaces.

Accomplishments over the Past Triennium

- Offered two conferences for church workers.
- Provided a prison ministry outreach program to distribute Lutheran print materials to inmates in collaboration with the Southern Illinois District and RSOs.
- Provided training scholarships for rostered church workers to participate in clinical pastoral education.
- Offered ecclesiastical endorsements for rostered church workers.
- Gave out the Henry Wind Award in 2023 for outstanding leadership in SPM to the Rev. Derek Wolter, the Rev. David Ficken, and Mr. Don Sundene.

Plans for the Next Triennium

- Expand the pilot program of Lutheran Spiritual Care Training.
- Facilitate opportunities for faithful service within RSOs and organizations where policies and practice support church workers' confession of Holy Scripture and their Lutheran identity. LCMS rostered church workers serving in SPM who are employed by independent health-care institutions and other government- or private-funded organizations are increasingly being pressured to commit to diversity, equity,

and inclusion employee policies that are in conflict with Holy Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions.

A.7. Stewardship Ministry

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.

Accomplishments over the Past Triennium

- Held stewardship workshops. Pastors and lay leaders gathered at the circuit, bi-circuit, or regional level to learn the theological foundations and the practical implementation of faithful stewardship.
- Held Generational Generosity workshops. Many of our congregations serve in demographically challenging areas that have a real impact on the financial health of the churches. Our Generational Generosity workshops help pastors and lay leaders understand the demographic landscape around them and how to make faithful stewardship plans in response.

Plans for the Next Triennium

- Provide 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.

A.8. Worker Well-Being

The fifth mission priority of the LCMS is to promote and nurture the spiritual, emotional, financial, and physical well-being of pastors and professional church workers. ONM staff collaborated with Concordia Plan Services, RSOs, and LCEF through provision of special pandemic funds.

Accomplishments over the Past Triennium

- The COVID-19 pandemic shifted the worker well-being efforts to focus on crisis care. In spring 2020, programs were developed by ONM and the districts to provide care via phone calls and Zoom.
- Worker pandemic respite retreats were started in the summer of 2020. Online supportive small groups were offered during the summer and fall of 2020. ONM also provided financial support for district-worker wellness programs.
- ONM and Concordia Plan Services provide leadership for the Ministerial Care Coalition, made up of district-appointed representatives to exchange information and further best practices to care for church workers.

Plans for the Next Triennium

- ONM will further develop a Worker Well-Being Alliance group that will collaborate to determine strategies and resources for the Synod, her entities, and districts to care for workers and increase their spiritual, emotional, financial, and physical well-being, allowing them to continue serving in the Church's ministry.

Finally, within Worker Well-Being, two ONM programs work through the districts to provide emergency financial support and pastoral care for LCMS church workers.

A.8.a. Soldiers of the Cross

Soldiers of the Cross provides assistance to rostered church workers facing specific financial challenges. The program was quickly mobilized with an enhanced programmatic function in March 2020 to meet the needs of church workers impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The ongoing Soldiers of the Cross program continued simultaneously alongside the pandemic efforts. Over the past triennium, care and financial support was given to 95 rostered church workers. ONM provided \$150,049 as of Jan. 31, 2023, with districts offering matching funds.

A.8.b. Veterans of the Cross

Veterans of the Cross provides assistance to retired rostered church workers facing specific financial challenges. Over the past triennium, financial support of \$712,587 as of Jan. 31, 2023 was provided by ONM via Concordia Plan Services administration.

B. Congregations and Districts

The Congregations and Districts ministry area of the ONM is focused on providing resources and support to congregations and districts as they preach Christ crucified.

B.1. Disaster Training

LCMS Disaster Training seeks to provide guidance, counsel, and resources to congregations, districts, and RSOs through a variety of ways. We have engaged in a number of projects to formalize the Synod's training processes and volunteer coordination. These include the following:

- **Conferences:** We hosted National Disaster Response Conferences in St. Louis (2019, 2021) and Fort Wayne (2022), with an average of 80 participants and over 20 districts represented at each event. They covered a variety of topics and best practices, including practical sessions, case studies, and encouragement. We also engaged leaders for smaller leadership training exercises in first-aid/trauma and specialized chainsaw training.
- In light of the many challenges that COVID-19 presented for many in-person volunteer agencies, we took the opportunity to build a volunteer management platform: *LCMS-LERT.org*. Interested volunteers receive automatic notifications about trainings and deployment opportunities; the platform allows them to register to participate, tracks their responses, and runs background checks for certain types of deployments. Since the rollout of this software in fall 2020, we have registered nearly 6,500 users, run 209 trainings and deployments, and logged over 29,500 hours. This tool is multiplying our capacity and integrates our volunteer efforts with others in ONM as well, including Youth, Life Ministry, and Campus Ministry.
- In spring 2022, we purchased an enclosed trailer and outfitted it with basic disaster-response supplies and equipment. This trailer serves as a sign of the work our volunteers engage in as they serve their neighbor and share the Gospel. It was displayed at the 2022 Youth Gathering, highlighting our change to open Lutheran Early Response Teams (LERT) to high school-age youth. We will use it as a display for future gatherings as well. It is available for districts and congregations to use on a short-term basis.

- **Train the trainer resources:** As the LERT program has grown from just a few to hundreds of congregations, a formalizing of processes was required. We've established regular protocols for the raising up of trainers in our active districts. The result has been an exponential growth in the number of LERT trainers. We have 57 LERT trainers, a 10-fold increase from five years ago.
- After years of requests from our volunteers, we were able to produce a formal training curriculum for chainsaw use in the LERT program. To date, we have certified 14 trainers from various districts.
- As a result of the additional trainers, our staff has been able to shift their focus to more strategic training. Rather than providing LERT trainings for congregations, we've been able to lead a number of districts (staff and circuit visitors) through the training, coupled with strategic conversation to help each district identify methods of communication before and after disasters and to encourage district-wide participation in disaster preparedness and response.

Future focuses for LCMS Disaster Training will be the support of regional practicum gatherings for our volunteers.

A final goal for our program is to help our congregations and districts engender a robust desire among their members to love and serve the neighbor in both body and soul. LERT teams have an incredible capacity in between disasters to perform works of mercy and connect their churches with their respective communities.

B.2. Disaster Response

In the last four years, we responded to five major hurricanes (Category 4 or 5). We set up multiple disaster-response camps in the Southern District and the Florida/Georgia District. LERT volunteers prepared and distributed meals, "mucked out" flooded homes, and did significant amounts of chainsaw work with the assistance of skid steers and aerial lifts (provided via grants from LCMS Disaster Response). We facilitated responses to numerous tornadoes across Alabama, Missouri, Kentucky, Illinois, and other states; we also responded to floods, house fires, and a significant derecho in Iowa.

Between July 1, 2019, and Dec. 1, 2022, we awarded \$1,950,489.70 in 75 domestic grants for the work of response and building capacity. We are currently engaged in mapping equipment, available for use within the LCMS.

Major responses:

- **2019 Hurricane Dorian** was the most intense tropical cyclone on record to strike the Bahamas. We gave a grant to help run a food pantry for the underserved community on Nassau Island and collaborated with the Florida/Georgia District in rebuilding homes.
- **2020 Hurricane Laura** was a deadly and destructive Category 4 hurricane. We set up disaster-response centers in Sulphur and Lake Charles, La. Our volunteer response assisted 2 LCMS Churches, 169 homes, and 1 pastor's home. We cut up 515 trees and moved them to the street. Our volunteers worked 2,900 hours.
- **2020 Hurricane Sally** led us to set up a disaster-response center at Redeemer Lutheran Church in Fairhope, Ala. We assisted 6 LCMS churches, worked in 189 homes,

helped in 9 LCMS pastors' homes, and removed 430 trees. Our teams worked a total 2,970 volunteer hours.

- **2021 Hurricane Ida** was a deadly and extremely destructive Category 4 Atlantic hurricane. We developed three disaster-response centers, in Slidell, Metairie, and Houma, La. LERT teams worked in 157 homes, providing over 3,254 hours of service.
- **North Alabama spring 2021 tornadoes** resulted in volunteers working in 48 homes and 1 pastor's home; we cut 492 trees. Our volunteers worked a total of 2,725 hours.
- **2022 Hurricane Ian** continues to prompt an ongoing response. Our LERT volunteers completed 311 jobs, cut 545 trees, and worked 3,846 volunteer hours. There were 91 LCMS church workers who received \$7,000 each in financial assistance, and 12 LCMS churches were granted \$20,000 toward hurricane damage repair.

B.3. Recognized Service Organizations

"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." (LCMS Bylaw 6.2.1)

We currently have 184 RSOs providing a diversity of programs and services, from conception to end of life. These organizations serve nationally and internationally as they extend the mission, ministry, and outreach of the LCMS. The 184 RSOs previously were listed under six categories; however, with the 2019 Synod RSO resolution, they currently fall into the following three categories: Mercy, Witness, and Educational. Since the 2019 Synod convention, 16 new organizations have been granted RSO status and 35 have had their status renewed. Also, 27 RSOs were either terminated or denied, or asked to withdraw their applications for RSO status.

Currently, 139 association and independent schools also sit under RSO status. Three new schools have been granted RSO status and 6 schools have had their status renewed. At the 2019 Synod convention, the RSO resolution was passed to develop a plan to transition many of the current RSO schools back to their district or congregations. We are currently in the process of working with each district to notify each school directly regarding its RSO status.

Grants continue to be provided to RSOs for leadership training, board development, strategic planning, and conference attendance related to the above. Resource items, including Bibles, devotional material, children's Bible story books, and such are purchased for use by RSOs in their ministry areas, with 279 boxes or bags being distributed. During COVID-19, all RSOs were mailed devotional material and 28 RSOs received masks from the RSO unit.

RSOs strive to live out their Lutheran identity as they show 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 gifts in meeting the needs of their neighbors.

B.4. Youth Ministry

LCMS Youth Ministry hosted two LCMS Youth Gatherings. On July 11–15, 2019, over 1,500 congregations and over 20,000 youth

and adults gathered in Minneapolis, Minn., under the theme "Real. Present. God." On July 9–13, 2022, over 1,200 congregations and over 18,000 youth and adults met in Houston, Texas, under the theme "In All Things."

The five-day events provided opportunities to learn more about the Lutheran Christian faith along with emphasis on current and future vocational roles. Both gatherings closed with the Divine Service on the final morning. The 2022 gathering was planned through the pandemic with much uncertainty and many changes to the planning process and arrangements in Houston.

Roughly 2,000 program planners, volunteers, exhibitors, speakers, and special guests provided planning and support for each event. The events showcased Concordia University System institutions, LCMS ministries, RSOs, and other LCMS-related ministries.

Using the 2017–18 research on youth retention, LCMS Youth Ministry published with CPH *Relationships Count*. The book continues to be available in digital format. LCMS Youth Ministry developed the platform of "Seven Practices of Healthy Youth Ministry." Resources have been developed on *youthsource.com*, and presentations given in various settings, including LCMS district church-worker conferences and LCMS events.

In spring 2020, participants in the Lutheran Young Adult Corps program returned home due to the pandemic, and the program permanently ended. Through three 3-month summer terms and three 10-month "gap year" terms, 36 young adults participated and contributed 40,800 hours of service in the name of Christ. Participants lived and served in six cities. Of the 36 total participants, 4 participants are currently called church workers and another 6 are in programs at CUS institutions or the seminaries, pursuing professional church-work careers. Three participants have gone on to serve in positions at KFUO, the LCMS Office of International Mission, and an LCMS district office.

LCMS Servant Events hosted 38 events in 2019. COVID-19 has impacted events since 2020, when only one agency was able to host youth at its outdoor event. Hosts, especially camps, welcomed youth and their adult leaders in 2021. The summer of 2022 provided over 225 youth and leaders 22 service opportunities. Leaders for 2023 events gathered in November 2022 for training on the new digital platform designed to increase partnership with other mercy initiatives of the Synod.

Lutheran Youth Fellowship went through an evaluation and re-branding as "YouthLead" and focused on the annual youth leadership training event, usually held in March in St. Louis. The 2021 event was held in July in conjunction with the National Lutheran Youth Workers Conference in Houston. The 2022 event returned to St. Louis in March. Through three years, 211 participants attended.

In 2022, a new executive team was elected to a three-year term. This team will facilitate the trainings in 2023, 2024, and 2025.

Leadership training for adults included the 2021 National Lutheran Youth Workers Conference in July in Houston, Texas, with 340 adults participating. This conference was geared to prepare for the 2022 LCMS Youth Gathering. Resources and training were provided for adult leaders who attended the LCMS Youth Gathering.

Resource development included new resources added to YouthESource (*youthsource.com*). Bible studies, devotions, articles, and other supports for youth, college student, and young adult ministry are available. In July 2022, a year's worth of resources

for congregational youth ministry around the “40 End Goals” were released.

B.5. School Ministry

To better serve more than 21,000 educators and the 180,000 students annually attending Lutheran schools, School Ministry has been involved in the management of ongoing programs, specialized projects, infrastructure, and implementing engagement strategies. Of the 1,855 Lutheran schools, 1,714 provide programs for early childhood children, 730 provide programs for elementary students, and 99 provide programs for high school students.

We give thanks to God for the work of educators and administrators from early childhood through high school, and especially for their navigating school ministries through COVID-19. In spring 2020, over 93 percent of Lutheran schools (elementary and high school) halted in-person classes and pivoted to alternative methods of delivering their educational programs. Nearly half of all Early Childhood Centers provided online learning at some point, while another third completely suspended operations for at least several weeks. In fall 2020, 82 percent of Lutheran schools returned to in-person instruction. Early Childhood Centers saw an increase in enrollment, and nearly a third of Lutheran schools experienced an increase in enrollment.

National Lutheran School Accreditation (NLSA) encourages, assists, and recognizes schools that provide quality Christian education and engage in continuous improvement. Currently, 643 schools are accredited through NLSA. There are currently NLSA committees to develop a high school accreditation protocol, an additional early childhood protocol, and an emerging schools protocol. Formal partnerships with regional accrediting agencies (Cognia, 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. In addition, recognition of the NLSA protocol by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) allows Lutheran schools, if they so desire, to apply for approval to accept international students. The School Shepherd Award was developed and awarded to four outstanding pastors.

The School Leadership Development (SLED) project serves to recruit and prepare the next generation of administrative leaders to serve in Lutheran schools. The program includes face-to-face events with an online platform for communication and course structure and a curriculum to reflect practical topics and experiences. During the past triennium, 65 educators (16 in 2019, 0 in 2020 due to cancellation because of COVID-19, 15 in 2021, 34 in 2022) were prepared in the SLED program. Participants are offered the option to take SLED for course credit through Concordia University Wisconsin and Concordia University, Nebraska.

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. Twelve 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.

School Ministry continues to develop and distribute Chapel Talks, National Lutheran Schools Week (NLSW) materials, and

the School Ministry Mailing. School Ministry started a series of Zoom events focusing on topics that are impacting the success of Lutheran schools. Topics include Finance, New Lutheran Teacher Support and Encouragement, and Communications. Future topics include Strategic Planning, Fundraising, and Enrollment.

The Genesis Study and LSCS documents were updated. Most School Ministry material is available for congregations and schools free of charge on *LuthEd.org*.

The following resolutions were addressed:

- *Res. 1-07A: To Promote Adoption of Policies That Continue Vigilance in Child Protection.* School Ministry has joined with ONM, HR, and Synod Legal to collaborate on the development of specific documentation and resources to share with LCMS schools and all LCMS ministries. We are also collaborating with Youth Ministry to identify exemplary child-protection programs. This includes working with MinistrySafe to provide on-demand child protection training for all church workers.
- *Res. 4-06A: To Amend Bylaw Section 6.2 to Revitalize Synod's Recognized Service Organization Program.* School Ministry has worked with a task force as established by the Rev. Dr. John Sias and Deaconess Dorothy Krans.
- *Res. 6-01: To Support and Participate in the Comprehensive Church Worker Recruitment Initiative.* School Ministry has connected and collaborated with the Office of Pastoral Education for a focused inclusion of Commissioned ministers in the church-worker recruitment initiative.
- *Res. 11-03A: To Encourage Synod to Develop Resources to Aid Congregations and Schools regarding Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Issues.* School Ministry is working with the task force on developing sexual-orientation and gender-identity resources for schools.
- *Res. 12-01A: To Commend and Give Thanks for Our Lutheran Early Childhood Centers, Elementary Schools, and High Schools.*
- *Res. 12-02A: To exhort the Congregations of the LCMS to Actively Encourage Future Lutheran School Teachers.*

An annual Lutheran Schools Week campaign provides celebratory resources to our Lutheran educators, highlights schools and workers, and celebrates the work of our 1,855 Lutheran schools. School Ministry is collaborating with the *Set Apart to Serve* initiative to communicate the need for Lutheran school educators, intentionality of recruiting future Lutheran school educators, and efforts to retain and encourage current Lutheran educators.

Lutheran schools continue to help students grow in knowledge, skills, and love of Jesus, which prepares and equips students for life in this world and for eternity.

B.6. Campus Ministry

The last triennium marked the 100th anniversary of Campus Ministry in the LCMS (2020). We rejoice in the tremendous gift that our campus ministries have been to the life of the Church over the past century, and still are. There continue to be increasing opportunities and obstacles going forward.

God continues to open doors for outreach to international students (there are now over 1 million studying on our soil), as well as to those who have either lost the faith or are simply searching for truth.

We are uniquely positioned to effect change in the academic square on campus, precisely by being who we are—joyful and faithful confessional Lutherans. That which is lacking on the collegiate quad is precisely what we have been given to confess.

LCMS U is The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod’s official campus-ministry network. There are currently 256 LCMS U chapters with various levels of engagement; some are engaged in full-time work, while others simply recognize the importance of reaching out to this particular demographic in their communities and serving them with Bible studies and various other means.

The impact of COVID-19 continued to linger in our campus ministries. The second century of LCMS Campus Ministry has begun with many campus ministries seeking to get reestablished.

In spring 2023, we have scheduled a Campus Ministry practitioners conference, with the goal of gathering our most active partners (and those who are not so active) in encouraging one another and learning best practices from one another. We’re hoping that this is something that we can replicate on an annual basis.

C. Church Planting, Renewal, and Support

The Church Planting, Renewal, and Support ministry area of ONM is focused on the first mission priority of the LCMS: plant, sustain, and revitalize Lutheran churches. This ministry area is the primary ministry area for planning and executing activities in support of the Synod’s current triennial mission emphasis, *Making Disciples for Life*, with special attention to three of its four domestic themes: evangelizing the lost, strengthening congregations, and planting new churches and schools.

C.1. Church Planting

Planting new churches is an essential activity of a church body in order to maintain or expand its presence. A study of LCMS church-planting practices during the 20th century and first part of the 21st century showed that over the past 30 to 40 years, our church body’s planting pace has fallen far below the maintenance rate.

In compliance with 2019 Res. 1-02, the Synod’s *Church Planting Initiative* (CPI) was launched during this triennium to address the rate of and approach to church planting. The initial focus of the CPI is evaluating past, current, and future church-planting practices to determine how we can, under God’s blessing, increase church-planting activities and improve church-planting results across the Synod.

Accomplishments over the Past Triennium

- Completed the Church Planting Study.
- Developed and implemented training for church-planting teams.
- Created the grant-making process and protocols to financially support church-planting endeavors.

Plans for the Next Triennium

- Expand the CPI to encourage local groups to identify church-planting opportunities.
- Support the locally identified church-planting efforts with training and resources.

- Publish findings from the Church Planting Study in a series of practical monographs.
- Distribute funds to the locally identified church-planting endeavors through CPI grants.

C.2. Revitalization

The *Revitalization Initiative* was launched in January 2015. The suite of resources developed in support of the Revitalization Initiative are distributed through the *re:Vitality* program.

At present, *re:Vitality* resources are available to LCMS congregations at no cost to the congregation. The 2016 Res. 1-03 affirmed *re:Vitality* and encouraged the use of *re:Vitality* resources.

Accomplishments over the Past Triennium

- Developed and released the production versions of “Shepherding Our Strays: Actively Serving Our Inactive Members” and “Serving in God’s Mission: Strategic Planning for Congregations.”
- Revised “Connect to Disciple: Engaging the Non-churched People in Our Community.”
- Created and piloted “Beyond the Classroom,” a resource for outreach through Lutheran schools.
- Developed “Members of One Body: Prospering in the Body of Christ,” the assimilation and incorporation module of *re:Vitality*.
- Implemented a major revision of the CADDs self-assessment tool.

Plans for the Next Triennium

- Complete production versions of in-process modules.
- Develop Creating Community Connections, a self-directed version of the former Gospel Seeds program.

C.3. Supporting Congregations

The ONM is chartered to support LCMS congregations through their districts. The support that ONM provides is primarily through the resources that the unit develops, distributes, and supports.

Because congregations across the Synod vary in size, ethnicity, settings, and other contexts, Church Planting, Renewal, and Support is organized to provide support for various types of congregations.

C.3.a. Witness and Outreach

Through promoting and enhancing *Every One His Witness*, the Witness & Outreach Ministry seeks to equip the priesthood of believers to be “3rd article witnesses, telling the 2nd article story, using their 1st article gifts.” Since its release in September 2017, *Every One His Witness* has been used to equip upward of 20,000 Lutherans for sharing the Word of God in their everyday lives.

Every One His Witness core module resources are also available in Spanish. The program has been widely used in Latin America through the Office of International Mission (OIM).

The 2019 Res. 1-01A encouraged LCMS congregations, districts, and other entities to make use of *Every One His Witness* to equip people for evangelism.

Accomplishments over the Past Triennium

- Created a self-study version of the core module workshop for use by individuals during the COVID-19 restrictions.

- Completed context modules for witnessing to people after an abortion, witnessing to the “nones,” witnessing to people influenced by critical theory, and witnessing to Jehovah’s Witnesses.

Plans for the Next Triennium

- Create six to nine additional context modules.

C.3.b. Black and African Immigrant Ministry

The LCMS has conducted and supported Black Ministry for over 140 years. The current focus of Black Ministry is the establishment and support of Rosa Young Academies.

Accomplishments over the Past Triennium

- Participation in and support of the Black Clergy Caucus.
- Participation in and support of the Black Ministry Family Convocation.

Plans for the Next Triennium

- Promote Rosa Young Academies.
- Promote and support the planting of African immigrant churches.

C.3.c. Hispanic Ministry

Hispanic people make up the largest and fastest-growing ethnic demographic in North America. As such, they also make up one of the largest mission fields in our context. The role of the Director of Hispanic Ministry is to work with districts, RSOs, and other LCMS entities to enhance our outreach to Hispanic people and support Hispanic congregations.

Accomplishments over the Past Triennium

- Established a full-time position in the ONM for the Director of Hispanic Ministry.

Plans for the Next Triennium

- Design and implement a strategic plan to promote and support Hispanic ministry.

C.3.d. All Nations Ministry

The population of North America continues to become more diverse. People from all nations, tribes, and languages have become our neighbors. However, the LCMS continues to be a largely homogenous church body. The role of the director of All Nations Ministry is to enhance outreach to ethnic and immigrant peoples and support ethnic, immigrant, and multiethnic congregations in support of 2019 Res. 1-05A.

Accomplishments over the Past Triennium

- Established a full-time position in the ONM for the Director, All Nations Ministry.

Plans for the Next Triennium

- Design and implement a strategic plan for engaging congregations, districts, and other LCMS entities to promote and support ethnic and immigrant ministry.

C.3.e. Rural and Small Town Mission

Rural and Small Town Mission (RSTM) is focused on providing guidance and resources for congregations in communities of fewer than 15,000 residents. The decline of congregations over the past 40 years has disproportionately impacted these small communities. In cooperation with several districts, RSTM has been working to

develop resources that assist congregations in rural areas and small towns with developing partnerships with other congregations and, when advantageous, merging congregations.

Accomplishments over the Past Triennium

- Helped create resources for congregations considering mergers and/or partnerships.

Plans for the Next Triennium

- Continue development of resources for congregations in rural areas and small towns, including assessment tools for guidance in making use of existing merger, partnership, and revitalization resources.

C.4. Making Disciples for Life

The 2019 Res. 4-03A commended *Making Disciples for Life* (MDFL) as the mission and ministry emphasis for the 2019–22 triennium. The resolution identified five areas of emphasis:

1. Evangelize and disciple the lost.
2. Retain the faithful.
3. Strengthen congregations and schools.
4. Plant new congregations and schools wherever possible, especially in urban and multicultural communities.
5. Engage in international mission in partnership with the OIM.

The ONM is focused on the first four of these emphases and the corresponding mission and ministry priorities of the LCMS.

Accomplishments over the Past Triennium

- Developed the MDFL Resource Center (currently in its second version).
- Partnered with Concordia Publishing House to create a resource for equipping students and parents for responding to issues related to Contemporary Critical Thought (*Prepared with a Reason*).
- Identified and purchased a conference platform that supports virtual and hybrid conferencing (Cvent Event Management and Attendee Hub).
- Planned and conducted virtual and hybrid conferences in January 2021, January 2022, and October 2022.

Plans for the Next Triennium

- Complete and publish *Prepared with a Reason*.
- Maintain and enhance the MDFL Resource Center.
- Expand the use of Cvent Event Management and Attendee Hub to support virtual and hybrid conferences.

D. Worship

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. (Col. 3:16)

LCMS Worship supports and encourages the Synod’s congregations, pastors, and musicians with faithful resources, through teaching efforts, and by fostering opportunities for connection and growth among our church workers. We echo St. Paul’s exhortation, to the end that all Lutheran services may be faithful, honest, excellent, and devoted to the saving work of Christ crucified.

The Rev. Sean Daenzer was installed as director in January

2020, just as the pandemic began. It must be remembered how greatly corporate worship and the Church's boldness were hindered in that year, as much by human mitigation attempts as by disease. In hindsight, the director would have given more voice simply to this: *Do not neglect to meet together* (see Heb. 10:25). Lord, have mercy on us! Now, God be praised, our songs are again being heard.

The LCMS continues to call the director to serve also as chaplain for its International Center employees under the Office of the President, indicating the resolve that faith in Christ should enliven the work of corporate Synod. Chapel is now broadcast daily online and through KFUE, allowing the Synod to see if and how her servants pray for her and live also from the same Word of God. This capacity also serves our missionaries, especially as they prepare for deployment.

LCMS Worship produces a regular salvo of consistent guiding resources, including the calendar and hymn suggestions for both lectionaries; seasonal midweek services with sermon helps; and the "LetUsPray" series (by subscription and at *lcms.org*), highlighting prayers for home discipleship (2019 Res. 12–07B). Efforts of lasting, repeatable value are prioritized over projects of single or time-sensitive use. In 2022, we also saw publication of the long-awaited *LSB: Companion to the Services*, begun under the former Commission on Worship. Celebrations were facilitated for LCMS's 175th anniversary. Production of *Thy Strong Word* was returned to KFUE, freeing the director for other service, including radio and podcast appearances, visibility at church music conferences both prominent and emerging, and accessibility to the workers of the Synod. Rev. Daenzer also served as director of the worship team for the 2022 LCMS Youth Gathering.

LCMS Worship will continue to make and gather faithful resources for pastors, musicians, and congregations, with an eye toward making them more easily accessible. A children's coloring guide to the Easter Vigil and a new podcast serving church musicians are planned for release in spring 2023.

The shift from a continuing commission to a director also signals the Synod's desire for greater collaboration. It is the ongoing goal of LCMS Worship to bring together the many interested entities and people, especially the network of LCMS church musicians, for the good of the Church. Finally, we wish to invite pastors, musicians, and the whole Church to join us at Concordia University, Nebraska, in July 2024 for the return of the LCMS Institute on Liturgy, Preaching, and Church Music.

Tiffany M. Manor, Michael W. Meyer, and Mark A. Wood
Managing Directors

R1.2.2

Office of International Mission

The Office of International Mission (OIM)—in faithfulness to the triennial mission and ministry emphasis and mission priorities of the LCMS—aims to *Spread the Gospel, Plant Lutheran Churches, and Show Mercy* to the ends of the earth. OIM exists to recruit, fully support, and care for LCMS missionaries and, under the Office of the President of the LCMS, to serve as the Synod's primary collaborative working interface in all international mission endeavors and to be the primary mission interface with partner and emerging-partner church bodies worldwide in accordance with Bylaw 3.8.3. OIM further exists to prepare pastors and other church workers in international settings wherever possible, and to

model and support faithful Lutheran theological education and the church's ecclesiastical offices in such endeavors.

Mission statement: 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.

OIM ensures that this work can continue around the world in a manner that is consistent with the Word of God and the Lutheran Confessions. Since the 2019 LCMS convention, the population of missionaries has remained stable, and currently there are 105 U.S. missionaries serving in 28 countries around the world. Half of these are pastors, and the other half are teachers, deaconesses, and layworkers. In addition to these, there are 20 alliance missionaries (rostered church workers called and sent from other international church body partners) serving in 15 different countries alongside LCMS-rostered OIM missionaries.

God has richly blessed the work of OIM with abundant gifts. The gifts of laborers for the harvest cannot be overemphasized. As the missionary population continues to grow, it also continues to mature. More than 60 percent of missionaries have accumulated more than five years of experience in the field. The blessing of this maturity is the wisdom and understanding that is passed to new missionaries on the field as they are mentored for the work to which they have been called. The gifts of financial support for the mission have supported faithful servants to *Spread the Gospel, Plant Lutheran Churches, and Show Mercy*. In fact, the gifts have not only supported the work but have also laid a foundation to ensure its continuation well into the future. As the of the prior convention, the OIM had enough cash on hand for five to six months of missionary expenses. Not only has God provided for the continued work since then but this balance has also grown to 12 months of cash on hand. Thanks be to God for his provision through his faithful servants in the church.

A. Overview

The mission of the church is a multi-generational effort and will not end until the Last Day. The church sees the fruit borne of the efforts of missionaries, past and present. One of these fruits is the alliance missionary project highlighted in the relationship with *Igreja Evangélica Luterana do Brasil* (Evangelical Lutheran Church of Brazil). The alliance missionary project has as its goal to send pastors from partner churches to work alongside U.S. missionaries to *Spread the Gospel, Plant Lutheran Churches, and Show Mercy*. This project has been a partnership in bringing benefit to all involved.

The mission of the church is not without challenges. Over the last decade, and in particular over the last few years as a result of the global pandemic, it has been increasingly difficult to move people and funding across borders. This impacts the ability of the OIM to achieve its strategic goals and to support the needs of our partners globally. This has been addressed with the addition of a Manager for Global Safety and Security and a relationship with International SOS, one of the premier entities in the world for providing proactive and reactive support for expats living abroad. Looking ahead, we see that there are likely to be many geopolitical changes and challenges that impact OIM's strategic work. With these tools in place, the OIM is already preparing for the challenges that can be anticipated—and even those that can't.

While God has richly blessed the mission of the church with workers for the harvest, the need for more workers remains. Over

the next five years, the OIM seeks to recruit 140 workers in order to meet the requests of our partners and our strategic goals. Over the next five years, about one-third of the missionary population is eligible to retire. This, along with the plethora of new opportunities, requires collaboration with many. Thanks be to God that there has been great collaboration with many, including LWML; CUS Schools; Concordia Seminary, St. Louis; Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne; Office of National Mission; Concordia Plans; and a great number of RSOs, congregations, and individuals.

Since the last convention, there has been a significant effort on the part of the LCMS Board of Directors and the Synod's officers to bring tools and technology to support the work of the OIM. This includes leveraging internal shared services to ensure that the work is being done in an orderly way that does not put the mission at risk. Such tools allow the OIM to do its work and have confidence that it is properly supporting missionaries, carrying out its work in compliance with U.S. and local laws, and ensuring transparency.

In the years ahead, the OIM will continue the work that the church has called it to do. Delegates to the 2026 LCMS convention can expect to hear encouraging reports on new work, expanded theological education, and the translation of new resources into a variety of languages. Let us together give thanks to God for His faithfulness and provision. As the OIM continues to *Spread the Gospel, Plant Lutheran Churches, and Show Mercy*, you are invited to continue walking with your missionaries as they carry out the mission of the church to the ends of the earth.

B. Latin America Caribbean (LAC) Region

The OIM LAC region is comprised of Central and South America as well as the Caribbean. The mission work of the LCMS in the LAC region began in Brazil in 1900 and has expanded to more than 18 countries, continuing without interruptions for the past 123 years. Brazil is an example of a daughter church, fully matured, in that she now plants churches and forms pastors in Portuguese-speaking Angola and Mozambique.

These efforts have been realized through sons and daughters of the LCMS, who were and continue to be sent as missionaries to build schools, plant churches, and form national pastors and church workers. Work to establish a Lutheran church body in a specific country tends to take three generations (70 years), with missionaries constantly transitioning roles within that country until they are sent elsewhere.

The Lord has provided alliance missionaries (pastors from LCMS partner churches) for over two decades to serve on our field. This initiative has expanded in the last three years. As a fruit of our work, places that were once mission fields are now partner churches. They are sending their pastors, often third-generation Lutherans, to serve as missionaries, working alongside our LCMS missionaries to *Spread the Gospel, Plant Lutheran Churches, and Show Mercy*.

B.1. Spreading the Gospel

Teaching the Gospel is throwing the Gospel seed out far and wide. This is always at the forefront of any mission initiative that is serious and sustained. The sower must go before and with abandon sow his seed as his love is for all types of soil. This is done through a variety of mediums such as literature, professors, continuing education courses, Luther Academy, and missionary ventures.

VDMA is a digital initiative of OIM LAC to provide Lutheran literature to 400 Lutheran Latino pastors across 22 countries. Since its inception nine years ago, more than 40 books on systematics, preaching, history, exegetics, and Bible studies, and hundreds of academic journal articles, have been provided to pastors. A team of 24 translators continues to partner with Concordia Publishing House, Luther Academy, Lutheran Heritage Foundation, and others to provide good solid literature for the church's mission.

Additionally, in collaboration with our partner churches of the Southern Cone (Chile, Argentina, and Paraguay), the *Himnario Luterano* was produced and financially supported by Lutheran Heritage Foundation and OIM LAC. The rights to this hymnal are with our Chilean Lutheran church partner who initiated this work. This hymnal contains all three of the Divine Services as found in *Cantad al Señor* and *Culto Cristiano*, as well as the *Deutsche Messe* of Luther. Additionally, all of Luther's hymns are included as well as the liturgical psalter, Small Catechism, and a few different rites. This hymnal also passed LCMS doctrinal review. An initial printing of 20,000 hymnals saw distribution to 20 countries and 3,000 to the LCMS. A second printing of 25,000 copies is expected to be ready by June 2023, with 5,000 copies for the LCMS.

A Spanish-language daily devotional called *La Palabra de Dios Permanece para Siempre* (The Word of the Lord Endures Forever) was launched in January 2023 in partnership with Lutheran Heritage Foundation. It includes hymn stanzas from *Himnario Luterano*, the daily assigned reading, a liturgical order, a daily devotion, and daily prayers.

Luther Academy courses continue to be taught twice a year in Bolivia, Chile, Guatemala, Mexico, Paraguay, and Venezuela. These continuing education courses are taught in countries where seminaries do not exist and are meant for the strengthening of the Lutheran ministerium in their knowledge of the Gospel.

In the *Iglesia Cristiana Evangelica Luterana* (ICEL) of Bolivia, as a result of teaching numerous Luther Academy courses since 2010 and graduating six men from our seminaries (Concordia Argentina and Concordia Dominican Republic), the OIC LAC has recommended this national church with Norwegian roots to engage in conversations with LCMS Church Relations toward becoming a partner church. Additionally, in March 2022, their remaining ministerium was ordained by our partner Lutheran church representatives of IELB Brazil, with a *quia* subscription to our Lutheran confessions. LCMS observers were present alongside delegates from their national convention. Formal talks between LCMS and ICEL were held for the first time in St. Louis in April 2023.

An initiative called *Abundant Life* has been launched, which is meant to serve our OIC LAC field and partner churches in the area of marriage, family, and sexuality through materials such as devotions, workshops, and Bible studies.

B.2. Planting Lutheran Churches

The planting of Lutheran churches is done because our triune God has determined that as He has sent His Son, so He sends His Church to bring His means through the Church for the furthering of His kingdom. As the Word is proclaimed, the Spirit works on hardened hearts and works repentance and faith in Jesus for the forgiveness of sins. Churches must be planted because this is where Jesus is found. Here He disciplines His people through Word and Sacrament and sends out the baptized in their vocations as His witnesses.

Church planting in 12 countries continues to be a major focus of OIM in countries where church partners do not exist. Daughter missions of the LCMS include Belize, the Cayman Islands, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Honduras, Jamaica, Panama, Peru, and Puerto Rico. LCMS partner churches include Guatemala, Mexico, and Uruguay. In these countries, 45 LCMS missionaries and/or alliance missionaries are actively planting churches. Plans call for an additional 25 missionaries to strengthen and expand this effort over the next five years.

One exception is Cuba, where we currently do not plant churches but provide seminary formation to men to return and serve their own people. Mission work in Spain was planted by LCMS LAC with Argentina and, in 2010, transferred to the responsibility of the LCMS Eurasia region in 2021.

Currently, 45 Lutheran churches are being planted in 11 countries supported by partnerships called FOROS. FOROS exist in Belize, Bolivia, Chile, Dominican Republic, Honduras, Jamaica, Panama, Peru, Puerto Rico, Mexico, Uruguay, and Venezuela. In each of these countries, the focus is on bringing salvation to every people and nation as we *Spread the Gospel, Plant Lutheran Churches, and Show Mercy*. Districts, congregations, RSOs, and individuals of the LCMS visit our FOROS twice a year to receive reports, attend worship, study theology, visit mission sites, and prayerfully support the efforts of our missionaries through short-term teams, vocational opportunities, and financial support. Over 200 partners attend a dozen FOROS across LAC.

Exploratory work is being carried out in Colombia and Ecuador.

B.2.a. Pastoral and Diaconal Formation

Where Lutheran churches are planted, the Office of the Keys is necessary. Raising up Lutheran pastors began in 1900 with LCMS missionaries founding its first LAC seminary in Bon Jesus, Brazil. A second seminary, Concordia, was built in Buenos Aires, Argentina, in 1948. Both seminaries continue to form pastors and deacons for their respective church bodies. A third seminary was established in Mexico City together with the ALC and LCA but concluded its joint work in the 1990s.

Concordia Seminary the Reformer, Palmar Arriba, Dominican Republic, was established in 2017 by OIM LAC and concluded its sixth academic year in May 2023. She prioritizes her service as a regional seminary to the Dominican Republic, OIM LAC mission fields as mentioned above, and partner churches that don't have a route to ordination.

Currently, 15 men are studying in the four-year residential program (Greek and Hebrew included), which includes an emphasis on forming men as evangelists, shepherds, and teachers. Men are taught to plant churches by the time they graduate from the seminary. Additionally, 30 men are studying in the four-year online *Formación Pastoral Hispano* (FPH) program, a joint program with Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne.

A deaconess training program began three years ago, with 99 graduating in 2022. An additional 75 deaconess students have enrolled in the second cycle of studies, which began in January 2023. These women represent the Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Panama, Peru, Uruguay, and Venezuela.

Thus far, at the conclusion of May 2023, thirty pastoral students have graduated for service to Lutheran churches in Bolivia, Chile, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Mexico, Peru, and Spain. Two Haitian men joined the residential program this

year, adding another country to the already diverse student body. Residential professors come from Argentina, Brazil, Canada, the United States, and Venezuela. Adjunct professors are from an additional five countries, making for great diversity in the faculty as well while professing a shared commitment to the teaching of the Gospel and the Lutheran Confessions.

B.3. Showing Mercy

Mercy initiatives flow from a triune God who loves His people through the altar and pulpit. Those who have received God's gifts then carry this love to their neighbor in need. Again, the Gospel needs to be taught. This is done through workshops that teach deaconesses and laypeople who give witness and pastors who proclaim the Gospel.

Our mercy center in the Dominican Republic (an institute of Concordia Seminary the Reformer) offers several workshops for the laity, including *Everyone His Witness*, *Ambassadors of Reconciliation*, and *Disaster Response*. These workshops are taught across 15 countries in a repeated fashion, as requested by congregations and their pastors. The courses are primarily for the laity, to equip them to be the hands, feet, and mouths of mercy as they fan into their communities in love for their needy neighbors.

Additionally, our 99 national deaconesses in the Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Mexico, Panama, and Venezuela—who work in their local congregations, Lutheran Hour offices, Sunday schools, youth groups, hospitals, food kitchens, etc.—are a force for mercy, prepared to speak the Gospel and teach the faith as they are called upon to do so in their vocations.

Mercy houses in Belize, Chile, the Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Peru, Puerto Rico, and Venezuela include Lutheran schools, group homes, a rehabilitation center for people with disabilities, after-school programs, food kitchens, disaster centers, and refuge centers. In each of these areas, we strive to share the Gospel alongside whatever kind of bodily care is provided.

Due to the dire socio-economic situation in Haiti, OIM LAC has begun to support our partner church through quarterly donations to each of its six districts. Starvation is a reality for 50 percent of the population. The situation is critical. Tens of thousands are fleeing to the Dominican Republic and across the Americas. Fervent prayers are solicited.

The Venezuelan exile now exceeds six million people and is the largest exodus of a people from any Western nation in the past 50 years. OIM LAC has supported the stalwart and faithful efforts of the ministry and mission of the *Iglesia Luterana Venezuela* (our partner church) over the past four years. This work entails bringing the board of directors of this church body to the Dominican Republic for a FORO on a yearly basis, hearing her reports, supporting her church plants, providing medicine and food, and supporting Venezuelan refugees as they connect in foreign countries with OIM and our Lutheran church partners across the region. Despite the suffering, they continue to raise up men for the ministry and had almost 40 women graduate from last year's deaconess studies.

C. Eurasia Region

The Eurasia region of OIM is the largest of the four OIM regions of the world, comprising all of (1) Europe, (2) the Middle East, (3) the countries that made up the former USSR, (4) most of South Asia (India and Pakistan), and (5) Mongolia for its connection with Eurasia work begun in Kazakhstan (cf. no. 3). The Eurasia region is blessed to have many partner churches with whom LCMS

missionaries are able to communicate, collaborate, and coordinate in numerous mission ventures throughout this vast region. The Indian Evangelical Lutheran Church is the oldest partner and the first overseas mission of the LCMS, which began over 125 years ago. Other established church partners include the Independent Evangelical Lutheran Church of Germany (SELK) and the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Latvia (LELB). These stand out as prominent partners with LCMS OIM Eurasia, as they are larger church bodies of the region who have grown to the point of being able to carry out foreign mission work of their own in Africa, Asia, and other countries outside of Germany. Even smaller established churches like the Evangelical Lutheran Mission Diocese of Finland (ELMDF) and the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Lithuania (ELCL) have been active in mission in places like Japan, Belarus, and Russia.

A heart for mission work is alive and well among our Eurasia regional partners, and much of this zeal has been fostered and encouraged by LCMS missionaries who have and continue to help spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ through on-the-ground gathering into the harvest lost souls by church planting, by the formation of national pastors in the fields where they work, and setting a faithful example through acts of mercy coupled with Word and Sacrament ministry and Lutheran identity.

The Eurasia region has been blessed with ever more doors being opened to us by the Lord, enabling us to undertake numerous new church plants in countries and fields where the LCMS has heretofore never worked. Thanks be to God! And thanks be to God for our faithful missionaries, whom God has called into this service.

C.1. Spreading the Gospel

C.1.a. Through Theological Education

Bringing the Gospel to the lost is often a matter of recognizing a door being opened to us by the Lord. In a region as large as Eurasia, spanning 13 time zones, there are more mission opportunities than anyone could undertake. How do mission opportunities present themselves that drive the region to consider gospel outreach here or there? One of the main ways in Eurasia is regular and various Lutheran theological conferences held in strategic locations in the region. These are promoted through the miracle of technology, by which information can be so widely disseminated. Participants attend from far and wide. Relationships are formed, and out of this, new mission work is planned, fields are opened, and missionaries are sent.

Currently, OIM Eurasia plans, supports, and/or participates in numerous and varied regional pastoral conferences aimed at enhancing theological education and pastoral formation.

Since last convention, OIM Eurasia has embarked on an ambitious project of forming a regional seminary for pastoral formation. The purpose for this project stems from the need for training pastors in an institution that is decidedly Lutheran. Most of the Eurasia partner churches cannot provide a graduate level theological education for pastoral formation. The options for study are, for the most part, secular universities or ecumenical seminaries, which are actually worse, due to the heterodoxy espoused in them. EU law now makes a provision for colleges of member countries, accredited in their own countries, to receive EU-wide accreditation by offering their curriculum in English. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, when this law took effect, the Eurasia office and the bishop responsible for theological education in the LELB (Latvia) began to discuss a plan to establish such a regional residential seminary in collaboration with the Luther Academy of Riga, an already accredited

institution in Latvia. OIM Eurasia is providing the human resources and funding to add a BTh professional degree program in English (somewhat like the old BDiv offered by U.S. seminaries until the shift to the MDiv degree), which can be accredited throughout the EU. However, with the outbreak of COVID-19, the project hit a wall. The choices were (a) close down the project or (b) pivot to a hybrid program of online learning with biannual live intensive courses plus extensive mentoring of the students on their respective fields by LCMS missionary pastors or pastors of partner churches, with the goal of returning to the residential seminary concept once the pandemic would end. The choice was the latter. While online learning has its own difficulties, it has attracted more students than expected, and from areas of the region unexpected under the original residential seminary plan. While the program is still very much a work in progress, the BTh program in English has begun and has attracted students from over 12 countries of the Eurasia region. Now that COVID-19 is over, plans for the residential seminary with an online option, where necessary, are again underway. A qualified team of missionary theological educators has been called for this work and are pressing forward in training future pastors.

C.1.b. Through Literature and Publishing

OIM Eurasia is also active in the translating and publication of Lutheran literature. It collaborates with *Lutherova společnost* (The Luther Society, a Czech NGO dedicated to promoting the theology of Dr. Martin Luther through conferences and publications of *Luther's Works* and other works dealing with the theology of the Lutheran Reformation). This organization translates works into Czech and publishes several books per year, including works of Martin Luther, a *Sborník* (similar to the LCMS *CTQ*), and various articles and papers delivered at conferences organized by the Luther Society.

OIM Eurasia is also involved in translating works of partner churches and their theologians, for example, works of Rev. Dr. Darius Petkunas, PhD *habilitatus*, of the ELCL (Lithuania) on the history of Lutheranism and the development of Lutheran worship practice from the Reformation through the Prussian Union. Work with the Lutheran Heritage Foundation on translations in Russian, Romanian, Czech, and other regional languages is yet another collaboration for which the region is grateful. And finally, the region is currently working on the development of the Lutheran liturgy in Ukrainian, Czech, Romanian, Bulgarian, Russian, and Italian, with hopes of soon adding modern Greek.

C.2. Planting Lutheran Churches

St. Paul wrote to his missionary protégé Titus: “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” (Titus 1:5). This is the pattern of church planting laid out in the letters of Paul and in Luke’s Acts. It is the pattern we continue to follow in OIM Eurasia. Currently, the region has missionary church planters—LCMS, Alliance, and Indigenous, both clergy and lay—in the following countries: Mongolia, Kyrgyzstan, Asian Georgia, Russia (now evacuated due to the Russia’s war against Ukraine), Ukraine (evacuated due to the war in Ukraine), Czech Republic, Slovakia, Romania, Moldavia, Italy, Spain, Germany, Iceland, and Latvia. (cf. detail in.)

There have been several developments that have impacted Eurasia church planting. COVID-19 put restrictions and limitations on missionaries. Some had to leave their country of service and have only recently returned. But most stayed and carried out their duties

bravely and resolutely. For their devotion to duty under extreme circumstance they are all to be heartily commended.

The war in Ukraine caused OIM Eurasia to require all missionaries to leave or be diverted from both Russia and Ukraine. At the same time, the outpouring of LCMS support for the multitude of Ukrainians fleeing the war into the EU has been remarkable and has been instrumental in bringing the Gospel to these people outside of their homeland. The major hubs of Ukrainian refugee work in Eurasia are in Germany, Romania, and Slovakia, but smaller efforts in cooperation with regional partners are also underway in Latvia, Lithuania, and the Czech Republic. OIM Eurasia is also able to send medicine, food, and other supplies to our partner church in Ukraine for distribution among church members and their communities. The Ukrainian bishop of the ELCU, with whom OIM Eurasia cooperates, reports that in spite of the fact that many of their members have fled the country, the war has actually caused their membership in country to expand. Soldiers are receiving catechesis and Baptism on the battlefield. Laypeople are turning or returning to the church in the realization of the transitoriness of this world. The brave pastors remaining in Ukraine have been given helmets and Kevlar body armor for ministry near the war zone. The bishop himself was saved by it after being hit in a mortar attack. It is truly awe-inspiring to see how our merciful Lord turns even such evil to the salvation of the lost.

C.3. Showing Mercy

Mercy connected to Word and Sacrament ministry is an important part of the mission endeavor, even as Jesus says in connection with the Beatitudes: “Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful” (Luke 6:36).

Again, the war in Ukraine has caused difficulties in the region, but also many blessings. With sanctions on against Russia, due to its aggression, Eurasia mercy projects in Russia have become problematic. Sending support to the Hope Center of the ELCIR in St. Petersburg and to the Faith and Hope Center in Novosibirsk is difficult, if not impossible, so long as the Russian war rages on.

At the same time, Eurasia mercy work has expanded exponentially due to the war. The Eurasia concept of mercy is to connect such efforts to the preaching of Christ crucified, proclaiming the Gospel of forgiveness of sins in accordance with the Scriptures and the true testimony of the Lutheran Confessions. As stated, a large mercy effort within Ukraine is reaching many in the war-torn country. Faithful Ukrainian pastors are risking their lives to connect their members and the newly catechized and baptized to Word-and-Sacrament ministry. While missionaries cannot go into Ukraine, mercy projects for refugees in the EU are serving more people than ever. These projects are also strongly tied to Word and Sacrament ministry.

As it has been with Eurasia work among Iranian and Afghani immigrants (former Muslims) to Germany, so it is now with the refugees from Ukraine. It is impossible to send missionaries into countries dominated by Islamic governments that deny Christian witness in their countries. Still, the Lord has opened the door to the Gospel to them outside of their oppressive countries. And now this is happening again with refugees from Ukraine. The Lord can open doors beyond our imagination. If we cannot bring the Gospel to the people, God, in His grace, will bring them to us. We only need to see it when He does it and follow His lead.

D. Africa Region

The OIM Africa Region, in furtherance of the mission emphases of the LCMS, seeks to *Spread the Gospel, Plant Lutheran Churches* (and train church workers), and *Show Mercy* across the region. Under the office of the President, we serve as the primary collaborative internal interface in all the Synod’s Africa mission endeavors and the primary mission interface with Lutheran church bodies in Africa, in accordance with the Synod’s fraternal covenant. This region carries working relationships with local church bodies, supports the ministries they prioritize within our own emphases, and embodies a loving, trusting, interdependent, and humble community of exceptional professionals who preach Christ crucified.

The OIM Africa Region supports relationships with church bodies in 25 countries across the continent. Within these countries, the LCMS has relationships with some 35 church bodies—including church bodies at all stages, from very small and young to the three large church bodies in Madagascar, Tanzania, and Ethiopia. In line with the region’s strategic plan, the Synod’s resources entrusted to this work through the OIM are invested primarily in the two most frequent requests from these varied church bodies—walking with the local church body in the formation of church workers and walking with the local congregation in the showing of mercy. The LCMS, through OIM Africa Region, supports 15 seminaries in 13 countries, offering a variety of programs up to accredited master’s degrees to prepare candidates to preach Christ crucified to those communities entrusted to their care. Three of these institutions provide deaconess training programs in addition to the pastoral training programs. Each year, roughly half of the financial resources invested in church bodies in Africa are expressions of compassion and mercy in close proximity to Word-and-Sacrament ministry, with the most notable ongoing project being Christ’s Care for Children.

After a quadrennium of decline in missionary numbers in the region, and the recombination of the two areas into one region under one regional director, the area is stabilizing the missionary force through a renewal of the longstanding use of Alliance Missionaries, currently sent primarily from the IELB in Brazil but also from the ELCK in Kenya. A renewed emphasis on recruiting within the LCMS is encouraging, and the region’s workers and church bodies are praying that, over the next triennium, the Synod will be able to fill the more than 40 new positions requested by those church bodies in addition to replacing missionaries who are retiring from field service. Such additional personnel will greatly expand the Synod’s ability to respond to the myriad of opportunities and requests to support the local church in preaching Christ crucified.

The significant numbers of individuals, congregations, districts, 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 God-glorifying complements to the work of the LCMS through the OIM. Unfortunately, those same independent LCMS-affiliated mission endeavors can also support heterodox groups, foster conflict within the autonomous church bodies with whom we have a relationship, or undo generations worth of work through the Synod’s mission arm and thus act at odds to our Synod’s endeavors and to the Gospel itself. The region’s missionaries continue, despite the desperate shortage of personnel, to improve and extend our ability and resourcing to cooperate, collaborate, coordinate, and communicate

with the Synod in line with the charter entrusted to the OIM that we, together, as one body, may preach Christ crucified.

This region deeply appreciates the resources and personnel that have been entrusted to the Synod's work in its supportive role on the continent and encourages the Synod to continue to send missionaries and resource them and the programs and projects they engage so that we may continue to *Spread the Gospel, Plant Lutheran Churches, and Show Mercy*—and preach Christ crucified.

E. Asia Region

The OIM Asia Region was hard-hit by restrictions related to COVID-19 since the last convention, largely due to the fact that the virus originated in one of our countries. Many people in Asia still remember dealing with the SARS virus just 20 years ago, and surgical masks were already commonplace in everyday life. The restrictions in all our Asia Region countries came swiftly and absolutely, shutting borders, denying visas, closing public spaces, and eliminating travel. The OIM properly instituted a ban on non-essential travel in March 2020, but gave unflagging support and opportunity to any missionaries who wanted to return to the U.S. The vast majority elected to stay in their countries of assignment.

During those restricted times, Asia Region missionaries turned their attention to projects of translation (particularly in Japanese, Indonesian, Khmer, Pidgin, and Chinese) and to helping our local partners think through a proper Lutheran response to pandemics and other such challenges. We met largely over remote electronic means, like the rest of the world. Our missionaries used generators and batteries when electric power was unavailable, and cellular signals carried intermittent voices. Missionaries did without their visits home, most without seeing family for the entirety of two years. Some had family members die in the U.S. and have yet to see the graves, since they could not return for funerals and burials.

Travel restrictions also prevented our partners from receiving the expertise and instruction from visiting teachers typical for our region. Our educational programs were set back on numerous fronts since missionaries could often not visit, and we could not gather together church workers to be taught. We had to find ways of making do with the personnel we had in-country, since the opportunities to bring new missionaries into our Asian countries was curtailed and eliminated while immigration departments were shut.

We are thankful that most countries in Asia have now opened up for gathering and visitation, at least with lesser restrictions. We are still limited in some places by vaccination requirements, and some COVID-19 reactions have necessitated the relocation of missionaries to new fields. We are not experiencing the freedom we did before COVID-19, but we have certainly turned corners and are joyfully ramping up activities again.

Our international schools (in Hong Kong, Shanghai, and Hanoi) were particularly impacted during the pandemic in their respective countries. The strategic dialogues between LCMS and school leadership teams were brought to a standstill, despite having made two distinct stretches forward. The schools were each forced to pivot to online learning, even when portions of their student body were forced out of the country with no return in sight. Each of the three schools, in addition to the pandemic, also struggled with its own contextual challenges: Hong Kong International School with the passing of the new security law, and Concordia International School Shanghai and Concordia International School Hanoi with transitions (smooth and full of blessings) to new heads of school. With the re-opening of travel in each country (as of late 2022 and

early 2023), Asia Region collaboration with each school is proceeding once again.

We watched with heavy hearts during this quadrennium as our long-time partners in the Japan Lutheran Church (JLC) continued down a path we could not follow. Despite conversations that started before 2009, the JLC embraced the ordination of women to the pastoral office, voting to enshrine this practice in their constitution and electing a woman pastor to serve as the vice president of their church body. The Asia Region is now pursuing new activities and partners in Japan, led by second-generation LCMS missionary Rev. Dr. Daniel Jastram. The Lord has reserved for Himself a beautiful remnant in Japan who are still interested in hearing the truth of the Word and the Lutheran Confessions. We are excited to see the various parties in cities like Osaka, Niigata, and Tokyo involved in translation, proclamation, and catechesis. Our major effort at this time is to pull together these various parties and encourage them to work together. We have already supported and seen the translation of Walther's *Law and Gospel* into Japanese and are hopeful to see Chemnitz and Pieper completed in the very near future.

The Asia Region has continued to settle into its new regional headquarters in southern Taiwan. We enjoy an ongoing healthy and trusting relationship with the China Evangelical Lutheran Church (CELC), which was planted by LCMS missionaries decades ago. We saw our five-story headquarters building (owned by the CELC) become nearly vacant during COVID-19, with just two families remaining at one time. As 2023 gets going, we will have filled up nearly every available unit with missionaries and families.

The CELC Taiwan has requested the exclusive help of the LCMS in determining a new path for their church workers, which will form servants who are more distinctly Lutheran. OIM Asia has enjoyed a good partnership not only with the CELC in this task but also with our LCMS seminaries in Fort Wayne and St. Louis. Lock-downs during COVID-19 were used for online dialogues and planning with representatives from the seminaries, their partners, and OIM Asia. The first three years will be spent taking their current church workers through a seven-course colloquy program so they are better prepared to serve their current assignments and as mentors for the first cohort of new students. Now that many restrictions have been lifted, the program has been initiated: the first course was taught in August 2022. There will be at least three more courses in 2023, all taught by PhD-level LCMS educators and translated into Mandarin Chinese. We expect that the servants formed in this program will be a resource not only to the people of Taiwan but also to the entire Chinese-speaking world.

Lutherans understand that theology and music are closely connected. As we educate Lutheran laity and workers in Taiwan, we want others to understand and appreciate that relationship as well. The year 2023 will see the Asia Region engaging with David's Harp (davidsharpmusic.org), based in Council Bluffs, Iowa, to establish a conservatory of sacred music connected closely to the local church. This school will be set up in unutilized space on the ground floor of our regional headquarters, which also houses classroom and library space for the theological education effort. It will foster a proper understanding of the place and power of music in the church, offer opportunity for instruction in liturgy and hymnody, and provide a place for intersection with the public. Many in Asia in general, and the Taiwanese people in particular, have an existing interest in Western classical music, often attending concerts and sending their children for instruction. We hope to make use of this interest, offering recitals, demonstrations, lectures, and lessons

so more might have the Word of our Lord placed into their ears as it's carried along on musical notes.

The work of the Asia Region is focused on the goal of church planting. We continue to stand on the shoulders of previous generations of missionaries who came before us in the most historic mission fields of our Synod. Because of the work of those who preceded us, and because the Lord saw fit to bless their efforts, OIM Asia works almost exclusively through and with partner churches. So our efforts are not direct church planting by LCMS missionaries, as it was in prior days. Today we work at building up the pastors and people of the partner churches so they can do the work of church planting. We educate them so they can share, defend, and confess the faith. We equip them so their churches can have knowledgeable laity and clergy who understand and appreciate the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions. We lead and support resource projects so they can have theological works in their own languages. One of the foremost resource requests from partners is for their own Lutheran Hymnal akin to our *Lutheran Service Book*. We are currently leading such hymnal projects in Indonesian, Chinese, and Tamil, while much of the foundational work for one in Japanese is already done.

All of the above takes nothing away from the other partnerships we enjoy. Only space limits preclude the explicit mention of faithful work going on elsewhere in Taiwan and in places like Cambodia, the Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam, Nepal, Sri Lanka, South Korea, Hong Kong, and Papua New Guinea. Your OIM Asia missionaries are busy doing the work given to them by our church and by our partners. All of it is aimed toward bringing more people to join us around the banquet table of our Lord Jesus for all eternity, washed clean in the waters of Baptism, forgiven by the Word of the Absolution, and fed by the body and blood of the Supper.

The last four years have been as tumultuous in Asia as they have been anywhere in the world. Through it all, the Lord has been gracious and merciful. He has continued to bless the efforts of your Asia Region missionaries as they work to *Spread the Gospel, Plant Lutheran Churches, and Show Mercy*. We are not without our challenges, but we are also not without our Lord Jesus, who comes to us, meeting us in His Means of Grace. No matter what comes in this complex, confusing, wonderful part of the globe, we send out the Word, to which is attached the promise that it will not return void.

F. Disaster Training and Response

LCMS Disaster Training and Disaster Response have been tasked by the Synod in convention to respond, in love and with mercy, to natural and man-made disasters. Disaster Response/Training staff provides oversight for all disaster-related activities as subject-matter experts. This is done in consultation with regional staff and through local partner and affiliate church bodies. Training in Disaster Response and mercy is provided to regional staff and partner churches to facilitate effective and timely responses.

F.1. Disaster Training

Our work during the last quadrennium was greatly hampered as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak in early 2020. As countries started opening up, however, we were able to schedule and provide broad training in Kenya in February 2022. Included with this event were

- 2 days of missionary training (regarding a theology of mercy, general disaster-response topics, and personal safety/evacuation while in the field);

- 2 days of seminar at the Matango Seminary (regarding a theology of mercy, the acts of mercy, personal preparation, etc.); and
- 2 days of seminar with leaders of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya (regarding a theology of mercy, collaboration with partner churches in time of disaster, and responding to local disasters).

In addition to the above formal training, two Spanish-language trainers continue to provide local training across the Latin America Region in Lutheran Early Response Teams (LERT).

Future training plans/goals for the next triennium:

- A revision of the Spanish LERT manual to better reflect local response work in the LAC context, particularly in the area of flood response;
- A regional disaster-training conference in the Southern Cone of Latin America, with a mixed emphasis of theological and practical topics, including muck-out;
- A consecutive series of regional disaster trainings in the Asia Region, in collaboration with regional staff and multiple church partners.

F.2. Disaster Response

From July 2019 through the end of 2022, LCMS Disaster Response provided 23 grants for a total of \$1,289,328.70 for projects in three regions: (1) Latin America and the Caribbean received 5 grants for a total of \$722,323; (2) Africa received 13 grants for a total of \$164,305; (3) Eurasia received 5 grants for a total of \$402,700. The larger responses are highlighted below:

- In Valparaiso, Chile, a disaster-response center, medical clinic, and Lutheran church were built to serve an underserved community after catastrophic wildfires decimated over 3,000 homes. At these facilities, food was distributed to senior citizens, services such as medical and dental appointments and Christian counseling were provided, and weekly church services were conducted.
- In Haiti, three large churches in the cities of Plaine Martin, Carre Four Duclos, and Maniche were rebuilt following a 7.2-magnitude earthquake in August 2021. Additionally, through multiple Lutheran churches, over 360,000 meals were distributed.
- In Nagercoil, India, Concordia Theological Seminary was dedicated and blessed in June 2022 after a multiyear project to rebuild the campus. Over 200 pastors of the IELC and a contingent of representatives from the LCMS, including Ross Johnson, Dan Harmelink, Charles Cortright, Jonathan Shaw, Art Just, and Detlev Schulz were in attendance.
- In Balboa, Panama, the church was reroofed and the parsonage rebuilt after significant damage from Hurricane Iota in November 2020.
- In Ponce, Puerto Rico, a property was purchased to serve as a church and mercy center. This property was used for outreach and mercy work to the victims of Hurricane Maria and the “earthquake swarm” that left 8,000 people homeless in the greater Ponce region in 2019 and 2020.

G. Ministry to the Armed Forces

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 55 active-duty LCMS military chaplains. Another 104 chaplains serve in the Reserve, National Guard, Civil Air Patrol, Coast Guard auxiliary, and Department of Veterans Affairs. We also support three 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 70 active-duty chaplains and 120 Reserve, National Guard, Civil Air Patrol, Coast Guard Auxiliary, and Department of Veterans Affairs chaplains by 2025. 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 of the personnel served by military chaplains is 18–25 years old. It is a challenging calling; however, it is very rewarding as chaplains are always present, no matter what time 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 preach 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 pressure 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 16,000 copies of Lutheran devotional materials and re-

sources (including *Portals of Prayer* and *So Help Me God*) per quarter and mail them to over 3,500 military and retired personnel throughout the world, as well at Veterans Affairs hospitals. Our goal is to increase that number by 1,000 each year, as we know there are LCMS members who are serving our nation in uniform who have not contacted 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 is caring for veterans. Operation Barnabas, organized in 2007, supports not only 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 18 million U.S. veterans 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. Operation Barnabas engages, empowers, and equips LCMS faith communities, called by Christ’s love, 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 have 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 military members and are provided hope, healing, and support in their time of need through the sharing of the Gospel and the compassion of the congregation. Currently, 636 congregations have joined Operation Barnabas, providing outreach and care to their local military-connected individuals.

Many new veterans are returning to the civilian world after serving their country. We need to continue to establish Operation Barnabas congregations that 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 2024 is to have 1,000 LCMS congregations join Operation Barnabas, either as congregations or chapters, and be a part of our network of care for military-connected people.

Adopt-A-Chap is a program that connects congregations with currently serving LCMS military chaplains. Through this program, the congregation supports a chaplain during his military ministry through prayer and communication. This helps the military chaplain feel connected to the church body while educating the

congregation on the challenges and opportunities of military service. Within months of announcing this program, 72 of our active-duty and Reserve chaplains were adopted by LCMS congregations throughout the country.

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.

Christian J. Boehlke, *Interim Executive Director*

R1.2.3

Office of Pastoral Education

The Office of Pastoral Education (PED), supervised by the Chief Mission Officer (CMO), assists the President in executing responsibilities related to pastoral formation and care that are assigned to him: “The [CMO] 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). The PED Executive Director is responsible for facilitating the prior-approval process for initial appointments to seminary faculties (Bylaw 3.10.5.7.3[a]) and is a nonvoting advisory member of the Synod’s Pastoral Formation Committee (Bylaw 3.10.4.7).

A. *Set Apart to Serve (SAS)*

The 2019 Convention adopted Resolution 6-01, “To Support and Participate in the Comprehensive Church Worker Recruitment Initiative.” This resolution resolved “that all constituents of the LCMS be encouraged to commend, financially support, and directly participate in this comprehensive, multi-year church worker recruitment initiative with . . . the following objectives:

1. identifying, catechizing, encouraging, and supporting young boys and girls for church worker vocations;
2. instilling church worker vocations as sacred and joyful, a ‘calling from God,’ vocations of integrity and fulfillment, grounded in Christ and baptismal salvation;
3. developing the ‘whole person’ throughout this formation process: spiritually, in character, confessionally, physically, emotionally, synodically, and intellectually;
4. supporting, encouraging, and caring for existing church workers, for the welfare of the workers, for the proclamation and witness of the Gospel, and for workers to be healthy advocates of next-generation workers.”

SAS Team and Goals. Following the 2019 convention, SAS expanded our relationship with Standing Partnership, a St. Louis-based marketing and communications firm. Five experts from Standing Partnership dedicate their time to *Set Apart to Serve*, along with three persons from the LCMS Office of Pastoral Education (Dr. James Baneck, Mr. Glenn Rollins, and Ms. Robyn Armbrust), and the LCMS Communications team (Dr. Kevin Armbrust, Ms. Jennifer Duffy, Ms. Stacey Egger). These individuals make up the core SAS leadership team, while incorporating collaborators and subject-matter experts from across the Synod, including congregations, schools, universities, camps, RSOs, and other Synod institutions.

In the summer of 2019, this team developed a SAS strategic plan. During the last three years, SAS has pursued two primary goals:

1. Immediately increase fruitful engagement between youth influencers and youth who might embark on journeys toward professional church work vocations.
2. Significantly increase the number of individuals enrolled in church worker formation tracks at our Concordia University System institutions and LCMS seminaries to ensure that the LCMS continues to proclaim and teach the Gospel of Jesus Christ in our congregations and communities in the coming decades.

Giving this initiative a name was also a first priority. LCMS youth, church workers, and laity were polled to provide input for naming and messaging this initiative. *Set Apart to Serve* was the clear choice.

Messaging and Branding. Key messaging was also developed that would be used in SAS materials, communications, presentations, and more. The goal is for all Synod stakeholders to hear consistent language as we talk to our youth about opportunities to become church workers. Hearing this same messaging from our seminaries and universities, congregations and schools, RSOs and corporate entities, LCMS Communications and auxiliaries, congregations and schools, and pastors and all church workers reduces confusion and makes it more likely for young people to understand the opportunities to become future church workers.

SAS branding, logo, and messaging is currently used in seminary and Concordia University literature, promotional materials, videos, and websites. It is also used in district materials and websites, congregations, schools, and more.

Subject Matter Experts (SMEs). SMEs provided unique expertise that informed the launch of SAS. Their experiences in the LCMS and insights as church workers and leaders in the Synod guided the initial direction of SAS.

SMEs were assigned to our three core audiences: pre-Catechism (infant Baptism–6th grade), Catechism (7th–8th grade), and post-Catechism (9th–12th grade). They gave us direction in two fundamental areas: (1) how to identify potential for a vocation in church work, and (2) guides to creating critical experiences of youth. SMEs are named in the SAS 2022 annual report (files.lcms.org/file/preview/sas-annual-report).

Pilot Program. In January of this year, we launched the SAS pilot program. There is a pilot program congregation and/or school in every district, plus one NLOMA camp. Special thanks to all 35 district presidents for nominating and helping secure these pilot sites. The pilot program supports and equips congregation leaders so they can identify, nurture, and encourage youth in their congregation who aspire to humble, selfless service to others, honoring Christ and the Church above all else. The pilot program establishes an intentional structure, tools, and training for congregations around the essential experiences that youth need to successfully pursue church work. Pilot sites will serve the Synod in three significant ways:

1. They will evaluate SAS resources, such as conversation guides and experience-building toolkits, as they use them to develop an intentional structure of formation and recruitment of their youth.

2. They will provide feedback on what works, what does not work, and what is missing.
3. They will provide feedback as to improve *SAS*.

After this strategy and resources are tested and refined, they will be shared with the whole Synod. Target date for availability of these resources is fall of 2023.

CPH Curriculum. In 2022, *SAS* collaborated with CPH in plans to develop a full *SAS* curriculum, preschool through adult. This curriculum is being developed for congregations and Lutheran schools. Age-appropriate materials will cover these topics:

1. What is the Church?
2. What are the various church work vocations in the LCMS (ordained and commissioned)?
3. How do we care for our church workers?
4. How to develop a culture of church work formation and recruitment in our congregations and schools.

Through a major gift from LCEF and gifts from each of our Concordia universities, every preschool through high school in the LCMS will receive this curriculum free of charge, with the resources needed for every student. *SAS* and CPH are hoping to have this resource available by Lutheran Schools week in January 2024.

KFUO Coffee Hour. Andy Bates and Sarah Gulseth host *KFUO Coffee Hour*, which is a program that brings stories of the intersection of Lutheran life and a secular world. *Coffee Hour* has teamed up with *SAS* every Friday morning since August 2022, featuring church work formation, church workers, parents of church workers, pastors and professors, leaders and administrators in the LCMS, laypersons and key collaborators, and stakeholders. Go to kfuo.org/tag/set-apart-to-serve/ to view the lineup of guests and listen to these informative conversations. This is an excellent resource for personal or family use, Bible classes, youth groups, classroom use, or to share with someone you know who might be considering church work.

Synodwide Collaboration. To execute and sustain this work of the Church until the Lord returns, synodwide collaboration is absolutely necessary. From its inception, *SAS* has been collaborating, partnering, soliciting input, and teaming up with stakeholders throughout the Synod. These stakeholders provide significant expertise and contribution to *SAS*, helping build this initiative throughout its development. These include our seminaries, Concordia universities, all 35 district presidents, LCEF, Concordia Publishing House, LCMS schools, LCMS Youth Ministry, LCMS Mission Advancement, Concordia Plans, National Lutheran Outdoors Ministry Association (NLOMA), Higher Things, LCMS Foundation, Schwan Charitable Foundation, LWML, LCMS Board of Directors, 36 pilot project congregations and schools, several donors, Lutheran Education Association (LEA), Association of Lutheran Secondary Schools (ALSS), subject-matter experts, and more. The collaboration is reciprocal. *SAS* is strengthened by learning from and working with each of these significant partners.

Second-Career Phase. Phase 1 of *SAS* focuses on raising up a new generation of church workers as we strive to increase fruitful engagement between youth influencers and youth. The second phase of *SAS* started in December 2022, with an alignment meeting of critical stakeholders from the seminaries, Concordia

universities, Schwan Foundation, colloquy committees, and LCMS schools. Goals for this second phase include (1) increasing awareness of potential second-career opportunities to serve as a pastor, Lutheran school teacher, or other church work vocation, (2) increasing awareness of paths to church work vocations, (3) understanding the drivers, barriers, and influencers to a second-career church worker vocation, and (4) developing strategies to engage influencers and activate the drivers that increase the number of second-career pastors, Lutheran teachers, and other church workers. Next steps will include research, building short- and long-term plans, and integrating this second-career phase with the larger *SAS* initiative.

Research and Dashboard. *SAS* is multi-faceted, with several layers. It involves collaboration and research concerning CUS and seminary church worker enrollments and placements; worker well-being; church worker compensation; attention and readership of *SAS* articles, resources, and websites (e.g., *Reporter*, *The Lutheran Witness*, and *Lutherans Engage the World*); youth and adults enrolling in church work programs; congregations encouraging and supporting their members toward church work and Sunday School and VBS participation; participation at the LCMS Youth Gathering, Higher Things, and camps; routes to the pastoral ministry; colloquy requirements and completions; formation and recruitment of all ethnicities; missionary and international reach and impact; congregation closings and mergers; new mission and church plants; and more. *SAS* is continuously researching and analyzing important aspects of church worker formation and recruitment. *SAS* is currently developing dashboards that will provide metrics around each part of the initiative. This will not only provide the Synod with transparent, useful information, but will also help the *SAS* team continue to refine strategies and resources.

Concordia University Church Worker Program Comparison Guide. During 2022, the *SAS* team made several presentations (NLOMA, district conventions, Higher Things, LCMS Youth Gathering, *Vocatio* at CSL, Christ Academy at CTSFW, Best Practices, Council of Presidents, Theology Professors Conference, LEA, CONFEDEx, and Wittenberg, Germany) where attendees expressed that it was difficult to compare church work programs, tuition and costs, and discounts and grants for the Concordia universities. *SAS* is teaming up with the Concordia universities to develop a one-stop Concordia university church worker program comparison guide. This resource will help the viewer know what church work programs are offered at each of the Concordias, the academic path for each, and basic financial information. It will also direct the viewer back to the individual Concordias, providing direct contact information for each of the schools to obtain further information.

Information and Resources. *SAS* has been widely communicated throughout the Synod since 2019. Information, stories, and events have been communicated in several issues of *The Lutheran Witness*, *Reporter*, *Lutherans Engage the World*, and LCEF *Interest Time* magazine; on the LCMS Facebook page; via direct emails to church workers and congregations; and at district conventions. Delegates, church workers, and laity are encouraged to stay informed about *SAS* by watching for continued information and stories on *SAS* in the future.

The *SAS* website at lcms.org/set-apart-to-serve is also a valuable resource. It is populated with a library of videos that explain *SAS* and shares stories from current church workers and

students pursuing church work. These videos are a great resource for personal use, youth meetings, Bible class, and congregation and school meetings. The website also houses a *SAS* FAQ, a description of all LCMS ordained and commissioned church vocations, bulletin inserts, easy access to the *KFUO Coffee Hour* episodes, and resources for Church Worker Appreciation Month. This website will continue to be refreshed and populated with useful resources in developing a church work recruitment culture in your congregation and school.

Pray the Lord of the Harvest. 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). The number of church workers will always be few. Jesus said it. Luther said it. Walther said it. We say it today. At the same time, we don’t ask how many workers we will need in three or five or 10 years from now. There always will be sinners and there always will be millions of people who do not know Jesus Christ and are therefore without eternal life in Christ. There is a Synod focus on planting new churches. Neighbors of all ethnicities are in our very own communities, many of whom do not know Jesus Christ. The Office of International Mission is desiring to send at least 80 additional missionaries overseas just this year. Praying the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest includes actively and intentionally talking to our children about considering a church work vocation and supporting them through the journey. Praying the Lord of the harvest includes treating our church workers with love and respect for the sacred and joyful office they fill. Praying the Lord of the harvest includes believing that Jesus is the one thing needful and therefore encouraging our children to consider full-time church work and also supporting all those in your congregation and school who are pursuing church work. Praying the Lord of the harvest is forming and recruiting pastors and all church workers so that our children and grandchildren, family and friends, and all God’s people know Jesus Christ for life and salvation. Praying the Lord of the harvest is believing that this is what baptized children of God in Christ Jesus do until the day of His return.

B. Post-Seminary Applied Learning and Support (PALS)

PALS was created by the Council of Presidents and LCMS Commission on Ministerial Growth and Support (CMGS) in 1998. The purpose of PALS is to assist new seminary graduates and their wives transition into the first three years of his call. After restructuring in 2010, PALS is now under the LCMS Office of Pastoral Education.

PALS utilizes geographic cohorts. Each cohort is facilitated by an experienced pastor and his wife. The pastor facilitates the men and the pastor’s wife facilitates the women. Ideally, PALS cohorts meet six days per year. Pastors can self-report up to six PALS CEUs each year on their district Self Evaluation Tool (SET).

PALS also serves the purpose of the pastor’s first years of continuing education. Each time a PALS cohort meets, they participate in worship, a study topic, support and casuistry, and fellowship. Cohorts are free to use either curriculum developed by the PALS office or a study topic of the group’s choice. Courses written by the PALS office are always developed in response to the request of PALS pastors, wives, and facilitators.

PALS is designed for the transition and care of the pastor’s wife and children as much as for the pastor. Specific courses, books,

and topics are written for the pastor’s wife, dealing with issues of boundaries, vocation and expectations, loneliness and isolation, parenting, spiritual life, and more. The LCMS PALS office pays for all childcare during PALS gatherings, if so desired. Often, during a PALS gathering, the men and women meet separately for study topics that most pertain to each.

PALS is a rich partnership of the LCMS, districts, congregations, and pastors. The annual PALS budget is approximately \$145,000. This includes PALS administration, facilitator contracts and expenses, seminary presentation dinners to concluding-year seminarians entering PALS, conference expenses, and books and materials. Participating districts contribute \$500 per participating pastor per year. LCMS PALS more than matches that amount. It could be said that the Synod invests more than \$1,000 per year per pastor to facilitate a successful transition into his first call.

In the last four years, there has been an average of 28 active PALS groups across the Synod. Approximately 123 pastors and 81 wives have been active in PALS over this past quadrennium. We encourage congregations calling candidates from the seminary to support and expect their pastors to participate in PALS. Such participation is of great benefit to both the pastor and the congregation for many years to come. There are 27 of the 35 LCMS districts who currently participate in the PALS program. The LCMS Executive Director of Pastoral Education and the new full-time Director of PALS, Rev. Jonathan Manor, strongly encourage all 35 districts to participate in PALS for the benefit of the pastor, his wife and family, the congregation he serves, and the district and Synod at large. Some districts transition and train their new pastors in their particular context apart from PALS. PALS encourages our districts to integrate this training with PALS and to see the rich benefits of transitioning our new LCMS pastors in our life together. PALS is grateful to the delegates of previous Synod conventions who have strongly advocated and supported PALS.

To learn more about PALS, including PALS courses, annual report, and Facebook page, go to lcms.org/PALS.

C. Theology Professors Conference

The Theology Professors Conference is a biennial event. It is directed toward our Synod’s valued theology professors engaged in service at the LCMS colleges, universities, and seminaries. The Missouri Synod, the formation of pastors, and the teaching of theology in the Synod’s higher education institutions have all been strengthened because of these conferences.

This conference brings together the Synod’s theology professors to think carefully about God’s Word, the Lutheran Confessions, the Church, and society. This is the only event that gathers all those teaching theology to future church workers and students preparing for various God-given vocations at the Synod’s universities and seminaries. This conference is a prized opportunity for our Synod’s theology professors to examine Scripture, the ecumenical creeds and Confessions of the LCMS, church history, and world-view to address life in both of God’s kingdoms—the left-hand of society and the right-hand of the Church.

Due to the pandemic, the 2020 conference was canceled. The conference resumed in May 2022 at Concordia University Chicago. The conference theme each year is focused on a portion of the Lutheran Confessions. The 2022 conference focused on AC XI and XII, Confession and Repentance. Four plenary speakers presented on “The Natural Basis of Repentance,” “Repenting in an Age of Violence,” “AC XII, Clergy Sexual Misconduct, Clergy Discipline,

and Pastoral Care of Victims,” and “The Formation of Father Confessor and the Penitent.” Other features of the conference included sectionals, the two seminary faculties meeting together, CUS faculties meeting together, and professors meeting by theological discipline: exegetical, historical, practical, and systematics.

D. Life Together as Synod

“Life Together as Synod” is an informational video series on our mutual commitment to confession, mission, and good order in the LCMS. These short videos review LCMS history; the church’s structure and governing documents; its boards, entities and institutions; how a rostered worker is called; and everything in between. This series is written and produced by the Office of Pastoral Education. Each module includes a 5-minute video and talk sheet. Each talk sheet includes Scripture study, practical application, and suggested resources for further study. Intended audiences include church-work students, current church workers, and laity. This is an excellent resource for the classroom, pastor’s conferences, Bible studies, church meetings, PALS groups, and personal learning.

The purpose of the LCMS is to join with one another to support one another and to work together in carrying out our commonly adopted objectives (Article III). We do this as a church body that is committed to a common confession and mission. To accomplish this, it is good to know who we are as a Synod and how we promise to live together as we seek to serve our Lord Jesus Christ, the members of His body, and the world which stands in need of the Word and the impact of His redeeming love (Bylaw 1.1).

There are currently ten completed modules located at resources.lcms.org/life-together-as-synod-video-series/.

E. Preach the Word

St. Paul writes, “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). The Holy Spirit creates and sustains saving faith through the preaching of the Word. Preaching is the primary task of the pastor.

Therefore, Preach the Word (PTW) was developed to help pastors work together to hone the craft of preaching through video modules and accompanying resources. PTW also enables pastors to interact with seminary professors and fellow preachers, the authors of these modules. PTW is designed for pastors to gather with brother pastors to watch and discuss the modules and to learn with and from one another.

Since 2017, 10 modules have been completed. There have been several hundred plays and downloads. During the pandemic, downloads and plays decreased significantly. In 2022, the PTW steering committee decided to pause the production of any new modules and to reevaluate the project in 2024. During this pause, we encourage pastors to make use of the ten excellent completed modules, which are available online at resources.lcms.org/preach-the-word/.

While PTW was developed for pastors, the videos can certainly be viewed by anyone, including seminarians, laity, Bible class, and individuals. Everyone can benefit through these excellent resources—what to listen for in a sermon, understanding the craft of writing and preaching a sermon, or to gain new insights or fresh approaches to preaching.

F. Support of Our Seminaries through the Synod

The people of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod cherish our two seminaries, which supply the LCMS with faithful pastors. Many of these people support the seminaries through their prayers and gifts. Often, this support is given directly to the seminaries.

Significant support is also given to the seminaries through corporate Synod, or LCMS, Inc., which is headquartered at the LCMS International Center in St. Louis.

One means of seminary support through the Synod is called “Synod Subsidies.” This is that portion of congregational worship offering passed on by districts to support national-level work, then granted by the budgeting process as unrestricted support for seminary operations. Computed by an agreed-upon formula, based on student graduations, Synod subsidies to the seminaries has consistently been \$326,504 to CSL and \$267,223 to CTSFW each year for the last four years.

Donations and bequests restricted by contributors to support the operation of both LCMS seminaries is given through the LCMS Joint Seminary Fund (JSF). Over the past four years, these annual amounts have averaged \$1,236,364 to CSL and \$1,052,068 to CTSFW. The Synod’s total JSF distributions to the seminaries overall have been increasing since 2014. In FY22, JSF distributions totaled \$1,448,324 to CSL and \$1,294,714 to CTSFW.

Donations and bequests restricted to a *specific seminary* identified by the contributor (not included in the JSF) annually averaged \$30,717 to CSL and \$153,575 to CTSFW over the past four years.

The Global Seminary Initiative (GSI) provides donations voluntarily restricted for disbursement to both LCMS seminaries. It is also used to bolster assistance to qualifying international students and to send LCMS seminary faculty to teach overseas. An annual average of \$139,175 in GSI funds was given to each seminary over the past four years.

Income earned on the investment of certain donations (endowment) given to the historic Forward in Remembrance fundraising campaign were restricted by the contributors to the support of qualified international students studying at either of the Synod’s seminaries. In addition to GSI dollars, an annual average of \$64,376 from FIR was given to each seminary over the past four years.

Certain donations were voluntarily given to the Synod that carried a donor-imposed restriction to be given as financial assistance to students enrolled at either of the Synod’s seminaries. Over the past four years, these annually averaged \$245,676 to CSL and \$273,063 to CTSFW.

Over the past four years, other special and donor-funded grants disbursed from the Synod to the seminaries annually averaged \$5,047 to CSL and \$7,135 to CTSFW.

Seminary faculty services are undesignated or designated funds paid to seminaries in return for services provided by seminary faculty members (e.g., presentations, seminars, and short-term intensive teaching assignments). These amounts annually averaged \$40,685 to CSL and \$75,802 to CTSFW over the past four years.

Taking into account the aforementioned funding categories, total national Synod support to our seminaries over the past four fiscal years is thus:

Fiscal Year	CSL	CTSFW	Total
FY19	1,879,470	1,693,286	3,572,756
FY20	1,903,588	1,971,314	3,874,902
FY21	1,716,077	1,767,011	3,483,088
FY22	2,875,224	2,726,593	5,601,817

James A. Baneck, *Executive Director*

R1.2.4

Mission Advancement

Mission Advancement (including Mission Central in Mapleton, Iowa) serves those who—moved by the Holy Spirit—voluntarily contribute time, talent, and financial resources (entrusted to them by God) to support the mission and work of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, as well as those open to making their first contribution. The desired outcome is a solid, diverse, joyful source of voluntarily given charitable revenues working to proclaim the Gospel. The unit's goal is to carry out its assigned duties in complete accord with God's Word. Mission Advancement is a distinct programmatic (direct services) unit under the supervision of the Synod's Chief Mission Officer, per Synod Bylaw 3.4.3.6.

All giving in support of the church body is voluntary, as God's people respond in a visible way to the Good News of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ alone. During the period between the 2019 convention and the writing of this report, our Lord's disciples voluntarily contributed (whether as an individual, a family, a group, or a congregation) \$203,589,406.84 to support the international and national mission and mercy work (including disaster response) of LCMS-called or appointed missionaries, pastoral education, Worldwide KFUO, and a number of special focus projects through gifts to and through the Synod's corporate office, excluding donations for the Concordia University System, LCMS National Housing Support Corporation, and the Lutheran Center for Religious Liberty. Fifty-three percent of this gracious, voluntary outpouring of blessings came from 51,708 households. The other 47 percent came from 5,571 organizations, mainly LCMS member congregations and the 35 districts. Details regarding the intended use of contributions can be found in the LCMS annual reports, which are publicly accessible at lcms.org/giving/transparency. Other information relating to Advancement and voluntary contributions is available on the same website.

Mission Advancement gives thanks to God for every single person whose voluntary choice makes this type of report possible.

The Advancement unit's professional and technical staff, including those at Mission Central, are honored to serve God's children, who voluntarily respond to the Gospel and work to fulfill Synod policy, state and federal regulatory requirements, and ethical obligations on behalf of those who give and for the owners of the Synod. Advancement staff members are available to address the questions of laity and professional church workers about the Synod's work and to give presentations about the mission and mercy efforts of the Synod that embody the best her congregations and their members can offer in the name of Jesus. For more information, please contact Mission Advancement at 888-830-4438 or mission.advancement@lcms.org.

Mark D. Hofman, *Executive Director*

R1.2.5

Communications

LCMS Communications exists to tell the stories of the church body across an array of media, both print and digital, and to assist the Office of National Mission, the Office of International Mission, the Office of Pastoral Education, and Mission Advancement to achieve their goals as we work collaboratively to fulfill their communication and resource production needs. One of the major "stories" we tell every three years comes in the form of our comprehensive coverage of the Synod convention, including the lead-up to the convention, the event itself, and what follows.

A. Work Mandated by 2019 Convention

Resolution 4-07, "To Commend Actions to Synod Boards and Offices to Revitalize Synod's Recognized Service Organization Program": Work with the Office of National Mission (ONM) to develop a communication plan for use during the six months after convention. LCMS Communications worked with ONM to develop and implement a communication plan. This plan was immediately enacted as appropriate and continues to find new outlets and aspects of implementation.

Res. 11-01A, "To Give Guidance and Encourage Action on Beginning-of-Life Issues": Post "The Child as a Gift of God" paper. The paper is now available at resources.lcms.org/reading-study/ctcr-paper-the-child-as-a-gift-of-god/.

Omnibus Res. A, Ov. 4-28, "To Improve the Clarity of Written Communication." LCMS Communications regularly reviews its style guides, editorial processes, and overall presentation of materials. Clarity of communication continues to exist as an ideal and goal for all communications projects.

B. Future Plans

B.1. Multi-Platform Approach to All Publications

Print remains an important and necessary format for Synod publications. Yet due to both the rising costs of paper and postage and the rising availability and desirability of other media, LCMS Communications continues to explore avenues to make content available to a varied audience, understanding preferred consumption patterns of media by new and changing generations.

B.2. Social Media Advancement

Social media continues to change and grow. New platforms and adaptations of established ones require constant evaluation of strategy and content creation. Important to this decision-making process and strategy are the mores and appropriateness of each medium for the church body's presence therein and the communication of the Gospel. Though the media and platforms continue to change, our goals remain consistent with those previously stated:

- Employ new outlets where people gather online.
- Increase our use of social media analytics to inform content creation and posting.
- Redouble our efforts to help our congregations and ministries use these tools well and consistently according to our confession of faith.

C. Challenges

Many challenges remain and are inherent to the communications task. Even so, we continually strive to better serve the Synod by addressing the most pressing ones, chief of which are as follows:

- Reach more LCMS households directly through online and other forms of engagement.
- Reach a greater number of LCMS members under the age of 30. This is imperative for the future life of the church body.
- Increase the trust level of parish pastors so they feel confident in sharing our communications with their members. Our content is faithful to the Word of God and the Lutheran Confessions and well produced for the benefit of the church body.
- Be wise stewards of our resources while keeping up with the pace of communication technology in ways that serve the Church well.

D. Opportunities

- Continue creating a strong, confessional Lutheran voice worldwide through joint communications efforts with our partner church bodies.
- Continue to evaluate new media and formats to advise the Synod on the proper use of new ways to communicate with and to the world and one another.
- Continue to utilize new media and formats to present faithfully the precious Gospel of Jesus Christ to our Synod and throughout the world.

E. Departments

LCMS Communications presents the stories of our Synod's endeavors in compelling ways. The Communications department's structure focuses on different aspects of communication.

E.1. Editorial

The news and information of the Synod 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, offering news and actions of Synod offices, boards, ministries, task forces, events, congregations, and workers.
- Monthly print circulation: 33,000
- Email newsletter subscriptions: 13,000

The Lutheran Witness

(subscribe to print and digital issues at *cph.org/witness*)
witness.lcms.org/

- The official magazine of the LCMS, now in its 142nd year of continuous publication, making it one of the longest-running periodicals in America.
- Monthly paid circulation: approximately 77,000 (with a "pass-around rate" approximately double that)

The aim of *The Lutheran Witness (LW)* is to provide LCMS laypeople with articles on faith and life, theology and culture that

help them "interpret the contemporary world from a Lutheran perspective."

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, which shares uplifting stories about the church body's work in the world while also providing accountability on how financial gifts given to the LCMS are being spent.
- Circulation: around 75,000 (plus another 6,500 sent as free bulk subscriptions to congregations)

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 body. It includes stories, photos, videos, new resources, links to KFUO Radio programming, and more.
- Subscribers: 4,150

E.2. 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.
- Total inquiries for Jan. 1, 2020, through Dec. 31, 2022, is 31,544:
 - 53 percent laity queries
 - 17 percent clergy queries
 - 17 percent congregation or school staff queries
 - 13 percent other queries

E.3. Production

Our production team is at the center of every LCMS Communications project, orchestrating the daily work of the department and ensuring accurate and congenial interactions between Communications and the ministries in the building. These projects range from missionary prayer cards to published books, and from exhibit planning to brand management.

E.4. Web Services

In cooperation with the offices, ministries, and mission regions of the Synod, we create, manage, and update *lcms.org*. Web Services also facilitates email communications, online event registration, and calendar pages.

E.5. Graphic Design

This team creates and implements the look and presentation of Synod materials, including branding for the Synod and its ministries. This includes promotional materials, curriculum, and multiple exhibit opportunities. LCMS Communications designs the monthly *The Lutheran Witness* and *Reporter* and the quarterly *Lutherans Engage the World* publications. These resources are designed to

create and strengthen bonds with our target audiences to deepen their resolve and heighten their experience.

Our designers work with web, video, and social media to bring powerful visuals and design to strengthen our voice and image to our audiences.

E.6. Social Media

Social media continues to be the most immediate and far-reaching tool to disseminate news and information and to discover audience opinions and trends. LCMS Communications 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 body's messages.

On Facebook at 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.
- The Prayers of the Church and weekend church service posts continue to be requested and appreciated. Congregations and individuals share these posts frequently.

The LCMS has established its presence on Twitter and Instagram and continues to explore other media platforms for suitability and feasibility.

E.7. Photojournalism

lcms.org/photos

Through documentary photographic storytelling, we have visually shaped the national and international mission work of the LCMS. LCMS Communications offers a free church and liturgical images gallery for use by all LCMS congregations and partner churches.

E.8. Video Services

Our video team gathers video footage from across the globe to produce all manner of videos—documentaries, live streaming, webinars, missionary biographies, disaster relief, marketing, curriculum, training, interviews, and news—that help shape and tell the stories of our collective work, making a strong case for its support.

F. Support for Other Units

The Communications department makes a major contribution to the LCMS Mission Advancement and LCMS Disaster Response (LCMS World Relief and Human Care) work on behalf of the church body. This work includes publishing stories reflecting the Synod's mission and mercy work domestically and internationally, as well as publicizing and providing opportunities for contributions to the Church's work.

In summary, the Good News of salvation in Christ Jesus is at the core of all we do. This eternal truth straightforwardly compels us to strive for excellent communication.

Michael Behr, *Executive Director*

R1.3

KFUO Radio

KFUO Radio is the flagship for Synod broadcasting and is much more than just a radio broadcast station. We are the official broadcast voice of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. Our pro-

grams can be heard on AM and FM radio signals in the St. Louis region, worldwide on the KFUE app, and on internet media platforms.

A. Reaching the World with the Message of “Christ for You”

KFUO reaches a worldwide audience with sacred music programming and Christian talk programs. These programs proclaim “Christ for you.” The KFUE Radio signals are heard by thousands of people daily, and our internet offerings (live streaming, podcasts, KFUE app, etc.) are available in all 50 states and over 130 countries worldwide. Our KFUE podcasts are listened to by over 1,400,000 people each year. Based on our current growth rate, we project we will have a yearly podcast listenership of over 2 million by 2024. The KFUE app has 4,500 users, and our social media platforms combined (Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram) have 32,000 followers.

B. Broadcasting Growth

As we continue to solidify the foundation on which our LCMS worldwide broadcast ministry is built, we are acquiring a new tower site for KFUE with additional radio signals, giving our radio broadcast stations a better sound and coverage area in the St. Louis region. As the local region continues to grow along with the growth of our worldwide reach via internet technologies, we are well positioned as we move forward.

C. Revenue Streams

KFUO Radio depends on generous gifts from our listeners, underwriters, and partners along with endowments, bequests, and purchased airtime.

D. Radio Pioneer

KFUO is a Christian radio pioneer. Next year marks our 100th anniversary of proclaiming Christ. On Dec. 14, 1924, our founders embraced this new thing called radio to reach people with the Word of God. KFUE has remained at the forefront of broadcasts and internet technology from those early days forward. KFUE and LCMS broadcasting will continue to proclaim Christ crucified to a worldwide audience as “faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Romans 10:17).

Gary Duncan, *Executive Director of Broadcast Services*

R2

First Vice-President

The First Vice-President is a full-time executive of the Synod elected by the Synod at each convention. He is responsible to the President for the performance of his duties, many of which are established by the President (Bylaw 3.3.1.3 [i] and 3.3.2.2 [a]). Among his duties that are established by bylaw are to serve as:

- chairman of the Colloquy Committee for the Pastoral Ministry (**Report R2.1**);
- chairman of the Colloquy Committee for Commissioned Ministry (**Report R2.2**);
- a nonvoting member of the Board of Directors;
- a voting member of the Council of Presidents, where he also serves on the Program Committee; and

- a nonvoting member of the Commission on Theology and Church Relations.

The First Vice-President serves along with the five regional vice-presidents and the President on the Praesidium (**Report R3**). In addition to the duties listed above, during this triennium, the President also appointed the undersigned to serve as a regent for Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. In that capacity, he also served on the Academic Committee.

The summary paragraph above, along with the detail provided in the three reports immediately following this one, encapsulates most of the First Vice-President's activity during this triennium. A significant aspect of his work that isn't covered elsewhere in these reports is that the First Vice-President often serves as a liaison between various Synod leaders and the Synod President. This is especially true of his work with the district presidents. In this role, the First Vice-President assists the President through:

- regular communication with the chairman of the Council of Presidents;
- regular communication with district presidents regarding colloquy applicants;
- regular communication with district presidents, especially newer ones, to answer questions and assist them in the conduct of their office;
- regular communication with district presidents regarding matters of concern involving their districts that are brought to the attention of the Synod President (as well as assisting with responses to those who reach out to the Synod President);
- communication with district presidents regarding attendance at district conventions by the Synod President and vice-president(s);
- a triennial orientation of new district presidents, together with the Synod President and others, on the nature and conduct of their office (Bylaw 3.3.1.3 [b]);
- a triennial orientation of new district presidents, together with the Synod President, on how to conduct a district convention;
- regular reports to the Council of Presidents on colloquy and other matters; and
- annual presentations to the district presidents' administrative assistants, especially on colloquy matters.

Preparation for the Synod convention is another major area of work for the First Vice-President. This work begins approximately 18 months before the convention by working with the Secretary of the Synod to prepare district presidents for the circuit exception process (Bylaw 3.1.2). As circuit data and exception requests come into the Office of the President, the First Vice-President assists the President, who ultimately decides on these exception requests (Bylaw 3.1.2 [b]). Assisting the President with floor committee assignments (Bylaw 3.1.7) and the orientation of floor committee chairs and vice-chairs to their work is another aspect of the First Vice-President's duties. The First Vice-President also helps review all overtures to the convention (Bylaw 3.1.6.2 [c]). Finally, he is responsible for writing a report on his work (**Report R2**), the work of both colloquy committees (**Reports R2.1** and **R2.2**), and the work of the Praesidium (**Report R3**).

Lastly, the First Vice-President participates in frequent meetings of the Office of the President and regular meetings of the Administrative Team (Bylaw 3.5.1.1).

Though the work of the First Vice-President is largely administrative, he strives to stay diligent in the daily study and hearing of God's Word and to proclaim that Word as time and opportunity allow. And, with all who serve in the Synod's national office, he is honored to support the congregations, schools, agencies, and organizations of the Synod in giving bold witness by word and deed to the love and work of God, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. "We Preach Christ Crucified!"

Peter K. Lange, *First Vice-President*

R2.1

Colloquy Committee for Pastoral Ministry

Pastoral colloquy is the process by which a man who has served as a pastor in another church body or trained for the pastoral ministry in a non-LCMS seminary while being a member of another church body can be declared qualified for a first call in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS). Colloquy is not intended to be a route to train men for the pastoral office. Such pastoral formation leading to ordination is the task of seminaries.

The word *colloquy* (from the Latin *colloquium*) means "a conversation." In its narrow sense, the term refers specifically to the theological interview, which is central to the colloquy process and also explores the applicant's background in order to determine his fitness for ministry and whether to certify him for a first call into the pastoral ministry of the LCMS. In its wider sense, the term refers to the entire process defined above. Pastoral colloquy has had a place in our Synod's constitution and bylaws since the beginning. Today it is primarily Bylaws 3.10.2–3.10.2.5 that govern the pastoral colloquy process. [1]

By means of colloquy, the Synod vets and provides pastors for the congregations of the LCMS—above and beyond those men trained by our seminaries—thus indirectly supporting the third objective of the LCMS (Constitution Article III 3) to "recruit and train pastors ... and provide opportunity for their continuing growth." Colloquy is also one way that the Synod "work[s] in support of and on behalf of congregations to assist them in carrying out their ministries" (Bylaw 1.1.1). Lastly, colloquy supports the first, second, and fourth of the seven mission priorities that the 2019 Synod convention adopted for this triennium (Resolution 4-03A), namely to "plant, sustain, and revitalize Lutheran churches," to "support and expand theological education," and to "collaborate with the Synod's members and partners to enhance mission effectiveness."

The Colloquy Committee for the Pastoral Ministry (CCPM) administers the colloquy process by establishing policy, receiving and reviewing applications, conducting an in-person interview with each applicant, and making a determination for each applicant based on the application and interview. Applicants can be certified immediately, declined certification, or assigned one or more of the following: supplemental seminary coursework, mentored readings, a traditional vicarage, or a shorter-term internship. The composition of the CCPM is stipulated in Bylaw 3.10.2.1. Throughout this triennium, the committee has consisted of the undersigned (ex officio chair); Southern Illinois District President Timothy Scharr as the elected representative of the LCMS Council of Presidents (COP) (since 2012); Dr. Glenn Nielsen representing the president

of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis (since 2018); and Dr. Detlev Schulz representing the president of Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne (occasionally since ca. 2002; full-time since 2017).

Report of Work Performed / Progress Toward Goals

During this triennium, the CCPM continued its recent practice of holding five two-day meetings per year. This has proved sufficient for keeping the pace of interviews matched with the pace of applications. Generally, the first of these two days is devoted to conducting up to four 90-minute interviews, though interviews can also extend into the second day. The remaining time is spent reviewing applications and policy. Due to COVID-19, three of these regular meetings were conducted over Zoom, and in-person interviews were suspended for about nine months. But by December 2020 the committee was back to meeting in St. Louis with in-person interviews. In addition to the five regular meetings per year, a subset of the committee traveled twice to interview licensed lay deacons for Specific Ministry Pastors (SMP) colloquy. (See below for more on SMP colloquy.) During COVID-19, there were also numerous Zoom interviews conducted with licensed lay deacons. In addition, there were occasional shorter Zoom meetings for more urgent business other than interviews.

Colloquy for General Pastors

Since 2007 and the advent of SMP, the term *general* pastor has come to be used for pastors other than SMP pastors. The unique status and limitations of SMP pastors are delineated in Bylaw 2.13.1. Until the 2016 Synod convention, *all* colloquies resulted in general pastors who, among other things, are eligible to accept calls without restriction to any particular ministry context. With the end of the limited and temporary opportunity for SMP colloquy (see below), pastoral colloquy once again results only in general pastors.

The following are a few basic statistics for general pastor colloquies during this triennium from September 2019 through January 2023:

- Applications: 66
- Interviews: 49
- Certified (declared qualified) for first calls: 53
- Placed into first calls: 41

The SMP Colloquy Process: Final Report

Res. 13-02A from the 2016 Synod convention authorized a temporary opportunity for qualified licensed lay deacons to apply to an appropriate seminary program *or* to apply for colloquy as an SMP pastor (SMP colloquy). This temporary opportunity for colloquy as an SMP pastor is to be distinguished from the “regular” SMP program, which is a seminary program. See the CCPM report in the 2019 *Workbook* for a more detailed explanation of Res. 13-02A. The deadline for applications for SMP colloquy was July 1, 2018, though for several reasons, applications were accepted into early 2020. Now, seven years after Res. 13-02A was adopted, only two of the eligible deacons who applied for SMP colloquy are still finishing requirements. Hence some concluding statistics are in order.

A survey of district presidents in early 2014 by then-First Vice-President Herb Mueller indicated 331 deacons were serving “in some pastoral capacity” in the LCMS. [2] Four years ago, according to the 2019 CCPM convention report, there were, at the time

the report was written, 178 men “for whom 2016 Res. 13-02A somehow applied.” Of these men, the following are a few summary statistics for SMP colloquy (2016–2022):

- Applications received: 164
 - 140 during the 2016–2019 triennium
 - 24 during this triennium
- Interviewed: 133
 - 116 during the 2016–2019 triennium
 - 17 during this triennium
- Certified: 136
 - 109 during the 2016–2019 triennium
 - 27 during this triennium

It is evident from these statistics that most of the effort for SMP colloquy occurred during the 2016–2019 triennium, though there remained considerable work during this triennium to clarify and continue implementing the resolves agreed upon in Res. 13-02A. Of the 136 licensed lay deacons who have been certified, 105 were still serving in October 2022, according to LCMS Rosters and Statistics.

A second provision of 2016 Res. 13-02A is that congregations being served by qualified licensed lay deacons, who could not or did not attend seminary or apply for SMP colloquy, are permitted to apply annually for an exception to be served by said licensed lay deacon for the upcoming calendar year. Such applications must be approved both by the COP and the CCPM. This provision of Res. 13-02A continues, for the time being, with the COP and CCPM annually considering these applications each fall. The following are the numbers of such exceptions that have been approved for the last five calendar years:

- 51 for 2019
- 49 for 2020
- 23 for 2021
- 15 for 2022
- 11 for 2023

The decreasing numbers are due to the fact that no *new* licensed lay deacons can be licensed for Word and Sacrament ministry according to Res. 13-02A. In addition, each year, a few of the eligible deacons whose congregations have previously requested exceptions begin a seminary route to the ministry (such as SMP, Center for Hispanic Studies, or Ethnic Immigrant Institute of Theology), while others retire.

Colloquy in Comparison with Seminary Graduates

As of October 2022, during the last three academic years, 36 colloquy candidates were *placed* into first calls as general pastors, while 343 general pastors were placed (including the 36 colloquy candidates). This means that during the academic years beginning in the fall of 2019 and concluding in the summer of 2022, 10.5 percent of all general pastors who received initial placement came through colloquy.

Taking SMP colloquies during this same period (as well as “seminary SMP” placements) into account, the total number of colloquies—both general and SMP colloquy—accounted for 14 percent of all initial placements (64 out of a total of 458). However,

as was pointed out above, this does not portend a long-term trend because SMP colloquies were only a short-term “bubble” resulting from Res. 13-02A.

Colloquy for Those Whose First Language Is Not English

The following will first provide a brief history of colloquy for Korean pastors, then comment more broadly on conversations during this triennium regarding colloquy for those whose first language is not English and whose pastoral training, in most cases, occurred outside of the United States.

Beginning in 1986, CCPM minutes mention numerous discussions over the course of several years about starting a new program for colloquizing Korean-speaking pastors. Dr. Shang Ik Moon, then academic dean at Christ College in Irvine, California, was a key figure in this effort. Though at least one draft version of a proposed policy appears in CCPM minutes, unresolved questions about the plan remained. Due to this, the press of other business, and perhaps change in committee membership, the plan was never formally adopted or incorporated into colloquy bylaws or policy. Still, portions of the plan were implemented, and Korean-speaking pastors began being certified by the CCPM in 1990. For the first nine years, the program consisted of six one-week courses over the course of three years. Starting in 2010, two weeklong sets of three classes each were taught one year apart in Irvine, with a concluding colloquy examination conducted by the chairman of the CCPM, and others, after the second/final week of classes. From 1988, when the first applicant was admitted to the program, until January 2019, when the last examinations were conducted, some 74–79 men completed the program. [3] As the current triennium got underway, several situations and conversations led to a pause in the program in order to give opportunity to reevaluate.

Concurrently, at the beginning of this triennium, representatives of Chinese Lutherans in Mission Building (CLiMB) reached out to the CCPM chairman to continue conversations that had been ongoing with then-Vice-President Mueller toward a goal of developing a similar model for Chinese-speaking pastors. Lastly, though CCPM minutes since the mid-1980s indicate still other ethnic groups among whom there was special interest in colloquy during certain periods (e.g., Haitian, Amharic, Oromo), today it is the Ethiopian Evangelical Church, Mekane Yesus, that is the home church of the greatest number of applicants whose first language is not English.

For all of these reasons, the CCPM spent a great deal of time during this triennium considering how best to facilitate colloquy for applicants whose first language isn’t English while still discharging its duties faithfully and functioning with limited resources. After considering but then dismissing the idea of a new policy category for such colloquies, the committee made several policy decisions regarding this (see below), and most recently has been working with President Michael Gibson of the Pacific Southwest District on an application process specifically for applicants whose first language is not English. The hope is that such a process might foster strong district investment of time and effort in such colloquies while also setting forth a clear and workable pathway from the CCPM’s perspective, all while working within the current bylaws and colloquy policy.

Policy Revision

As conversations continued on this central question of colloquy for those whose primary language is not English, the committee

became convinced that certain other policy revisions and clarifications for *all* applicants would benefit the Synod as well. As of January 2023, the CCPM has selected a manageable number of these revisions to implement during the remainder of this triennium and is currently finalizing policy language. Some are new, while others are a continuation and clarification of existing policy. An outline of these revisions was presented to the COP in November 2022 as follows:

- There will be only one application in English maintained by the CCPM.
- Interviews will be conducted in English, in St. Louis, by the regular four-member CCPM. In situations where a translator would be beneficial, the CCPM will arrange that in consultation with the sponsoring district president.
- Applicants will take the Christian Doctrine entry-level competency exam (ELCE) that is used by both of our seminaries. The results will be used to gauge readiness for an interview and additional work that might be needed.
- Two sermons will be required as part of the application packet along with any essays that may continue to be required.

The CCPM policy manual is available at lcms.org/about/leadership/president/pastoral-colloquy.

Additional Colloquy Statistics

During this triennium, the Office of the First Vice-President compiled a spreadsheet of all general colloquy applications since 2006, when electronic records started to be maintained. As of this writing, there are 528 entries in the spreadsheet. [4] Though there are gaps in the information and much refining of data still to be done, the following are a few gleanings from those statistics.

Table 1: Church Body of Origin (U.S. only) for Successful General Colloquies Since 2006

#	CHURCH BODY
64	Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
21	Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod
15	Baptist
18	Nondenominational
14	Presbyterian
7	Independent Lutheran
7	North American Lutheran Church
6	Roman Catholic
5	Assemblies of God
4	Episcopal
4	Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ
4	Pentecostal
3	Conservative Lutheran Association
3	Association of Free Lutheran Congregations
3	Evangelical Lutheran Synod
2	Anglican, Church of the Lutheran Brethren; Church of God
1	Conservative Conference Bible Church; Lutheran Orthodox Church; National Association of Congregational Christian Churches; United Church of Christ; Methodist; Wesleyan

Table 2: Country of Origin for Successful General Colloquies Since 2006 (foreign only) Whose First Language Was Not English

#	Country
43	Korea
42	Ethiopia
6	Guyana
5	China
5	India
4	Liberia
3	Cuba
2	Australia, Mexico, Pakistan, Panama, Puerto Rico, Taiwan, Vietnam
1	Argentina, Columbia, Congo, Denmark, Egypt, El Salvador, Eritrea, Gambia, Germany, Ghana, Guatemala, Hong Kong, Japan, Kenya, Norway, Sierra Leone, Slovakia, Sweden, Syria, Venezuela

Table 3: LCMS Districts from Which General Colloquy Applications Came

#	District	#	District
67	Pacific Southwest	11	Southern
43	Northwest	8	SELC
36	Minnesota South	7	Kansas
35	Texas	7	North Wisconsin
35	Southeastern	6	Iowa East
28	Florida-Georgia	5	Minnesota North
28	English	5	Rocky Mountain
24	Atlantic	5	Oklahoma
22	Indiana	4	New Jersey
19	Michigan	3	Iowa West
19	Ohio	2	Central Illinois
19	South Wisconsin	2	Montana
15	Eastern	2	Nebraska
14	Northern Illinois	2	North Dakota
14	California-Nevada-Hawaii	2	South Dakota
12	Missouri	2	Southern Illinois
12	New England	0	Wyoming
11	Mid-South		

Number of General Pastor Colloquy Applications

2007–2010 Triennium: 98

2010–2013 Triennium: 96

2013–2016 Triennium: 102

2016–2019 Triennium: 93

2019–2023 Triennium: 66 (through February 2023) [5]

Number of Certifications for General Pastor Colloquy [6]

2007–2010 Triennium: 72

2010–2013 Triennium: 58

2013–2016 Triennium: 70

2016–2019 Triennium: 65

2019–2023 Triennium: 53 (through February 2023) [7]

Strengths, Weakness, Opportunities, Threats

Strengths

- Dedicated, faithful, and experienced committee members who regularly attend, invest much time in preparation, and have a consistent and long-term history of colloquy work against which to evaluate each applicant.
- A very good working relationship between the district presidents who guide applicants through the process and the chairman of the CCPM, who often consults with the district presidents.
- A very good working relationship with our seminaries,

who provide any supplemental coursework required by the CCPM and will begin facilitating the Christian Doctrine entry-level competency exam.

- Strong interest in and support of the work of the CCPM by the Synod President.
- Increasing conversation with the seminary presidents, the Executive Director of Pastoral Education, and the Chief Mission Officer about how colloquy intersects with the work of our seminaries.
- An excellent administrative assistant in the Office of First Vice-President, who provides a careful initial review of each application and works very well with the district presidents' administrative assistants.

Weaknesses and/or Challenges

- The loss of the intangible benefits that colloquy candidates formerly received as a result of the requirement to take coursework on an LCMS seminary campus as part of the colloquy process.
- The changed funding model for seminary education that now makes it more difficult for applicants to take supplemental seminary coursework in a long-term residential setting, rather than online, when such coursework is assigned by the CCPM.
- The absence of grants to assist applicants with supplemental seminary coursework that might be assigned by the CCPM.
- Providing supplemental seminary courses and a sufficiently broad number of theological texts for colloquy applicants whose first language is not English.
- The additional pressure that is put on the colloquy process when a pastor from another church body begins serving an LCMS congregation with Word and Sacrament ministry before applying for colloquy or being assigned a vicarage/internship by the CCPM (cf. Bylaw 2.5.2).

Opportunities

- Collaboration with the Synod's *Set Apart to Serve* initiative to explore responsible proactive strategies to encourage pastors from other church bodies who demonstrate great interest in the doctrine and practice of the LCMS to apply for colloquy.
- Collaboration with district presidents to improve the colloquy process for applicants whose first language is not English (see above).
- Collaboration with the Office of National Mission to improve utilization of the colloquy process for ethnic immigrant ministry and outreach.

Threats

- A recent decrease in the number of colloquy applications for reasons not yet understood.

Work Contemplated for the Next Triennium

During the next triennium, the CCPM hopes to:

- implement a tool for discerning an applicant's basic Bible knowledge;

- reconsider the essay requirement and topics in the context of other policy changes;
- reevaluate the current requirement that an applicant have 60 semester hours or 90 quarter hours in a program of study leading to ordination;
- consider ways to discern accreditation for foreign seminaries;
- explore better ways to obtain academic records (transcripts) for graduates of foreign seminaries;
- consider better ways to obtain a positive recommendation from previous ecclesiastical supervisors for applicants whose previous ministry has been outside the United States; and
- consider the increased use of follow-up Zoom interviews for candidates who have been assigned supplemental readings or seminary coursework.

The Colloquy Committee is honored to serve our Synod in this important work. We pray that the Lord of the harvest would richly bless our work for His mission—all so that many more pastors might be provided to the congregations of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and countless redeemed might be blessed to hear that “We Preach Christ Crucified.”

Peter K. Lange, *First Vice-President, Chairman*

Endnotes

1. See also Bylaws 2.7.2; 2.7.5; 2.8.1; 2.8.2; and 2.9.1.
2. 2013 Res. 4-06A Task Force Report.
3. These two numbers came from two different sources.
4. It is not certain that all who applied to the Korean colloquy program are included on this spreadsheet.
5. The lower number of applications received might be attributed to COVID-19 and the pause in the Korean colloquy program as it was formerly conducted.
6. Not all certifications are for the applications that came in during the corresponding triennium.
7. The lower number of certifications correlates with the lower number of applications received, both of which may be down for the reasons cited above.

R2.2

Colloquy Committee for Commissioned Ministry

Background

Commissioned ministry colloquy programs prepare men and women currently serving in ministry roles for membership in the Synod (Bylaw 3.10.3). In most cases, the nonrostered employees of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) schools, congregations, and agencies who apply for colloquy have been trained for their vocations in non-LCMS colleges and universities. Colloquy for teachers in LCMS schools dates to the first Constitution of the Synod, even as the term itself has been in use for pastors since the Synod's first Constitution and for teachers since the second (1854) Constitution.

Today nonrostered teachers comprise the vast majority of colloquy applicants (94 percent during this triennium), though colloquy

programs also exist for directors of Christian education, directors of Christian outreach, directors of family life ministry, directors of parish music, deaconesses, parish assistants, and directors of church ministries (Bylaw 2.6.1.1). The number of nonteacher colloquies during the three academic years from 2019–22 were DCE: 3; DCO: 0; DFLM: 0; DPM: 8; DCS: 0; PA: 0; and DCM: 1. The commissioned colloquy policy manual details aspects of the process that apply to *all* colloquy programs and also provides a dedicated section for each of the other categories of commissioned ministers listed in Bylaw 2.6.1.1. The manual can be accessed on the Synod website at lcms.org/colloquy-ministers-of-religion-commissioned.

The Synod's commissioned colloquy programs address the third objective of the LCMS—to “recruit and train pastors, teachers, and other professional church workers and provide opportunity for their continuing growth” (Constitution Art. III)—as well as the second and sixth of the Synod's seven mission priorities for this triennium—to “support and expand theological education” and to “enhance early childhood education, elementary and secondary education, and youth ministry.”

Since 1959, the Colloquy Committee for Commissioned Ministry (CCCM), under various names, has been charged by the Synod Bylaws with “direct[ing] the [Synod's] activity in matters of colloquies for [commissioned ministers]” and “establish[ing] and monitoring academic and theological standards for [each of the colloquy programs].” More recently, the CCCM is also charged with “oversee[ing] for each category of commissioned ministry at each college and university of the Synod the ... required courses of study” (Bylaw 3.10.3.2 [a]). Yet the Concordia University System (CUS) has “the overall responsibility to provide for the education of ... ministers of religion—commissioned” (Bylaw 3.6.6.1), including those in the colloquy program who can take colloquy classes either in person from a Concordia college or university or online via the Concordia University Education Network (CUEnet). Over the years, the division of labor and day-to-day work of colloquy has been shared by and ebbed and flowed in various proportions between the CCCM, the Synod's colleges and universities, and the district presidents and their staffs. In 1996, CUEnet was founded as a service organization of the CUS. Since 2001, when CUEnet began offering the Concordia Online Teacher Colloquy Program, it also has played a very significant role in commissioned colloquy, handling not only the online delivery of colloquy coursework but also much of the day-to-day administration.

Six core colloquy courses are required of all colloquy applicants, plus two program-specific courses that are required of teachers. The other colloquy programs have differing numbers of program-specific courses in addition to the six core courses. CUEnet offers all eight courses required for teacher colloquy at the current price of \$799 per course. However, due to the generous financial support of foundations and individuals (see **Report R14**), the total current cost for teacher colloquy through CUEnet—including tuition, books, fees, and *scholarships*—is \$3,693. Participants in colloquy programs for other categories of commissioned ministry who take the six core courses through CUEnet also benefit from these scholarships. In addition, many schools and congregations—plus several districts and other LCMS entities—also offer colloquy scholarships.

At the beginning of this triennium, an almost all-new colloquy committee was appointed by the Synod President and the president of the CUS according to Bylaw 3.10.3.1. There were only two carryovers from the previous triennium, one of whom left the commit-

tee during the triennium. The First Vice-President of the Synod, who is the ex officio chair of the committee, was also new at the beginning of this triennium. Because of several changes in called positions, there are currently two vacancies on the committee. We anticipate a full committee being appointed at the beginning of the next triennium. Current CCCM members are:

- the First Vice-President of the Synod as chairman (the undersigned);
- a representative of the Concordia University System (CUS) (Dr. Paul Philp);
- two college/university presidents (Dr. Russell Dawn; vacancy);
- two CUS faculty involved in colloquy (Dr. James Pingel; Dr. Lorinda Sankey); and
- one representative from CUEnet (vacancy).

In addition to the new committee composition at the beginning of the triennium, calls for a reexamination of the colloquy process after almost two decades of the current system also began to surface. Shortly thereafter, Concordia University, Portland closed, which, because of staffing connections with CUEnet, further added to the changing situation for commissioned colloquy. As a result, the president of the CUS, with the support and encouragement of the Synod President, asked Dr. Paul Philp to prepare a report on CUEnet for the CCCM. During the research phase for this report, CUEnet's senior director, Dr. Ray Halm, entered his eternal rest in the summer of 2020. Upon completion of the report in October 2020, the CCCM began quarterly meetings to discuss the report, examine the policy manual in detail, and undertake a thorough review of the colloquy process. In the summer of 2021, CUEnet's Chief Operations Officer and Director of Academic Programs, Dr. Heather Stueve, accepted a call to another field of labor, thus concluding her long tenure on the committee and at CUEnet. As if this weren't enough impetus for change, three new CUS university presidents were inaugurated, and a fourth interim president began service near the beginning of the triennium. As can be imagined, all of this contributed to a ripe opportunity for the CCCM to undertake an in-depth review of commissioned colloquy, which has, in turn, led to expanded and even new conversations with key colloquy stakeholders as detailed below.

Work Performed and Contemplated

Besides the occasional request to consider an exception related to application criteria, the primary work of the CCCM is to review policy and procedures for commissioned colloquy. Convention reports indicate that between 2010 and 2019, there were two such in-person meetings for this purpose, plus numerous phone calls and Zoom meetings. During the current triennium, the committee has held 10 all-day meetings as of January 2023, with an 11th and final meeting for the triennium in April 2023. Three of these have been in person. Through these discussions, including a significant presentation from LCMS Secretary Dr. John Sias, the committee has vastly improved its understanding of the commissioned colloquy process and generated more than 60 ideas for policy revision. During the remaining months of the triennium, the committee hopes to codify those suggestions, which would have little to no impact on other colloquy stakeholders, into a minor policy revision.

Beginning in the spring of 2022, once the CCCM felt comfortable with its own understanding of the colloquy process, it embarked on an intentional effort through its chairman to expand the

circle of communication with key stakeholders in the commissioned colloquy process. As of January 2023, this effort has resulted in

- three conversations with the leadership of CUS, including the college and university presidents;
- one conversation with the primary colloquy director for each CUS school;
- an extensive report to the Council of Presidents;
- several conversations with the director of LCMS School Ministry;
- an in-person visit with district education executives and CUS placement directors at their annual CONFEDEx meeting; and
- a report to the district president administrative assistants.

During the next triennium, the committee intends to build on these relationships and lines of communication. With input from others, the committee also hopes to complete a major revision of the policy manual and to consider what elements of colloquy policy might be better placed in the Synod Bylaws. The primary goals for the next policy revision are

- to work with, support, and encourage the CUS colleges and universities in reimagining the future pedagogical model and delivery mode for colloquy coursework;
- to clarify the bylaw authority of each major stakeholder in the colloquy process, as well as the boundaries that exist between the work of each;
- to review the number and content of colloquy coursework according to Bylaws 3.10.3.2 (a) and (b); and
- to address the weakness and concerns of the colloquy process (listed below) that are within the domain of the CCCM.

Strengths and Weaknesses

The following are some of the strengths of the colloquy process, the CCCM, and other stakeholders:

- a 175-year legacy of conscientious attention to commissioned colloquy;
- dedicated and knowledgeable servants of the church body leading, administering, and supporting the colloquy process;
- good relationships between the CCCM and key stakeholders;
- a good working relationship with CUENet staff;
- excellent course content, both via CUENet and on our CUS campuses, provided by numerous professors from our colleges and seminaries;
- professional and smoothly functioning administration of the colloquy process;
- generous financial support of CUENet from foundations and individuals, much of which is passed along in colloquy scholarships; and
- an excellent administrative assistant in the Office of First Vice-President, who assists with research, facilitates meetings, and provides a second set of eyes on colloquy applications.

Some of the weaknesses, or at least challenges, of the current colloquy process are

- understanding and implementing bylaw and policy authority and responsibilities relating to colloquy coursework, as that relates to the varying roles given to the CUS, the CUS schools, the CCCM, and CUENet;
- understanding and implementing bylaw and policy authority and responsibility relating to the colloquy application process between the CCCM and CUENet;
- the perception by some that CUENet's pedagogical model and mode of delivery for coursework need updating;
- the perception by some that the procedure for assessing theological competency needs to be improved;
- at least one current vacancy in senior CUENet staffing, which is being addressed as of February 2023;
- the fact that in some if not many cases, the district office, the certifying CUS school, and the CCCM are not aware of potential colloquy candidates who are taking coursework toward colloquy until much or even all of that coursework is completed;
- the desire to remove unnecessary policy impediments to colloquy while at the same time maintaining the integrity of the application process, especially as it relates to "demonstrat[ing] the spiritual and professional attributes that the Synod expects of its members" (Bylaw 3.10.3 [a]);
- determining how best to use—in the colloquy process for teachers from classical Lutheran schools—the "Standards for Roster Candidates from Classical Liberal Studies Programs" that were approved by the CUS Board of Directors in 2017 in response to 2016 Res. 7-05A;
- concerns about an insufficient number of ways that colloquy applicants—especially teachers in classical Lutheran schools—can give "evidence of professional commitment to the field of education" (Policy 5.1.1.3) in fulfillment of Bylaws 2.8.1 (c) and 3.10.3 (b); and
- the challenge of colloquizing faculty members of LCMS international schools who desire to join the LCMS while serving overseas because of LCMS Bylaw 2.11.1 and the absence of LCMS congregations in all international school locations other than Hong Kong.

Opportunities and Threats

As far as opportunities go, once again, the various situations and events that came together during this triennium have clearly led to a new opportunity for a fresh evaluation of the commissioned colloquy process. More than that, there appears to be a widely shared desire on the part of those who work together in colloquy to seize this opportunity while at the same time appreciating the strengths of the current system and ensuring the stability of the process as much as possible.

The primary threat that is garnering attention, especially among district presidents, their education executives, the LCMS School Ministry Office, and CUS placement officers, is the diminishing number of teacher candidates being certified by our CUS colleges and universities and placed in LCMS schools. Though the Synod's *Set Apart to Serve* initiative is addressing that in a very robust way—and there is much hope for its success—commissioned colloquy is seen as another very important potential source of well-equipped LCMS rostered teachers. During the three academic years from 2019–2022, 186 *teachers were placed* as com-

missioned ministers after receiving colloquy certification, for a recent average of 62 teacher colloquy *placements* per year. However, a considerable number of additional teachers in our LCMS schools complete colloquy coursework—and perhaps even the certification process—but then choose not to accept a divine call or be placed for various reasons, including financial. This recent annual average of 62 teacher colloquies compares with an annual average of 86 teacher placements (with a Lutheran Teacher Diploma) from our CUS schools each year. In other words, from 2019–2022, teacher *colloquy* accounted for 42 percent of all new rostered teachers each year.

As of January 2023, 39.4 percent of the 8,152 active teachers in LCMS elementary schools were rostered as ministers of religion—commissioned. Accounting for early childhood schools and high schools, that percentage was 27.5 percent of the 15,222 active teachers in all of our LCMS schools. Since the last major colloquy reforms that were adopted at the 2004 Synod convention, the percentage of LCMS rostered teachers has *decreased* by 6.4 percent.

Conclusion

The CCCM hopes it is clear from this report that the committee has listened much during this triennium and worked hard to understand the commissioned colloquy process and to lay the foundation for significant improvements. We sense the urgency! And yet we also understand that we are only one small part in the long history of commissioned colloquy that has been served by a great many dedicated and faithful servants. All of this, of course, is to better equip the thousands of schoolteachers and servants in several commissioned categories who proclaim Jesus Christ and Him crucified in thousands of schools, congregations, and agencies throughout our Synod. “We Preach Christ Crucified” so that many more may know Him and be blessed by the treasures He gives through His Holy Word.

Peter K. Lange, *First Vice-President, Chairman*

R3

Praesidium

The Praesidium of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod consists of the Synod President, the First Vice-President, and five regional vice-presidents, each of whom represents the geographical region in which he lives. The five regional vice-presidents serve in a part-time capacity and, together with the First Vice-President, are responsible to the President for the performance of their duties (Bylaw 3.3.2.3). The First Vice-President is a full-time executive of the Synod (see **Report R2**). Four members of the Praesidium are full-time parish pastors and two are assistant pastors. The vice-presidents advise the President and, upon his request, represent the President and assist him in discharging his responsibilities (Constitution Article XI C 1; Bylaw 3.3.2). They are ranked by vote of the Synod convention to determine the order in which they would assume the presidency should that office be vacated (Const. Art. XI C 2; Bylaw 3.3.2.1). At present, the Praesidium includes

- President Matthew C. Harrison, St. Louis, Mo.;
- First Vice-President Peter K. Lange, Valley Park, Mo.;
- Second Vice-President John C. Wohlrabe Jr., Milwaukee, Wis., representing the Great Lakes Region;

- Third Vice-President Scott R. Murray, Houston, Texas, representing the West-Southwest Region;
- Fourth Vice-President Nabil S. Nour, Sioux Falls, S.D., representing the Great Plains Region;
- Fifth Vice-President Christopher S. Esget, Alexandria, Va., representing the East-Southeast Region; and
- Sixth Vice-President Benjamin T. Ball, Hamel, Ill., representing the Central Region.

The Praesidium and the 35 district presidents comprise the Council of Presidents (COP) which, in recent years, has met four times per year for three and a half days each time to carry out the duties assigned in Bylaws 3.10.1.2–3.10.1.4. During this triennium, due to COVID-19, four consecutive, abbreviated meetings were held via Zoom between April 2020 and April 2021. In addition, beginning in March 2020, there were weekly Zoom “check-ins” of the COP, which decreased in frequency as the months passed.

In addition to serving on the COP, the vice-presidents assist the President by attending district conventions to report and advise in fulfillment of Const. Art. XI B 6 and Bylaw 3.3.1.3 (a). Generally, the regional vice-presidents attend the district conventions in their region, together with the President and/or the First Vice-President, as travel schedules allow. At these conventions, the President and/or vice-presidents preach at the primary worship service, report on the state of the Synod, observe convention sessions, visit with attendees, and install the district president (if not at a later date). During this triennium, President Harrison attended all or part of 26 district conventions, and the vice-presidents attended 34 district conventions. Of the 35 district conventions, 20 of them took place during June 2022.

Another duty of the vice-presidents is to assist the President with district visitations as part of the President’s responsibility of ecclesiastical supervision (Bylaw 1.2.1 [j] and 2013 Res. 7-01A). Normally this visitation is with each district’s board of directors, though occasionally it is in conjunction with a district pastors conference, circuit visitors conference, etc. During this triennium, over the course of all district visitations conducted, the vice-presidents were very active in assisting the President, appearing 45 times. In some cases, two vice-presidents participated in the same visitation. In the case of three district visitations, one vice-president, representing the President, conducted the visitation on his own under the direction and guidance of the President. In total, 10 of the visitations were conducted in person, and 20 by Zoom, with five still to go as of February 2023.

Appointed membership to the boards of various agencies of the Synod is another way in which vice-presidents may serve. One vice-president is designated by the President of the Synod for each seminary board of regents (Bylaw 3.10.5.2 [2]). This triennium, First Vice-President Lange served as a regent for Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, and Third Vice-President Murray served as a regent for Concordia Theological Seminary in Fort Wayne, which board he also chairs. In addition, Fifth Vice-President Esget was appointed by the Praesidium to serve as a regent for Concordia College—New York (Bylaw 3.10.6.2 [5]) and Second Vice-President Wohlrabe served as President of the Concordia Historical Institute Board of Governors and Editor in Chief of the *Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly*.

Besides these regular and ongoing types of service, there are numerous occasional ways in which vice-presidents represent the

President at his request. This triennium, the vice-presidents participated in

- 12 services of installation or inauguration for district presidents, seminary presidents, and university presidents;
- 8 Church Relations visits (four of them international);
- 4 visits to Concordia universities;
- 10 regional meetings of the COP; and
- 5 Marches for Life in Washington, D.C.

In addition, the vice-presidents gave numerous presentations outside of their own congregations and preached many times for congregational or circuit occasions, district conventions, COP meetings, seminary services, and chapel services at the International Center.

Lastly, the Praesidium strives to meet in conjunction with each meeting of the COP—ideally during a free evening—to help facilitate the vice-presidents' role as advisors to the President. When there are more urgent matters to discuss, the Praesidium also meets on an ad hoc basis by Zoom.

In all it does, both in pastoral ministry and in assisting the President, the Praesidium strives to serve the Lord and the LCMS in supporting our common effort of extolling the saving work of Christ to all who will hear it. “We Preach Christ Crucified!”

Rev. Peter K. Lange, *First Vice-President*

R4

Secretary

The Office of the Secretary is a constitutional office of the Synod (Constitution Article XI D) and, with the Department of Rosters, Statistics, and Research Services (reporting to the Secretary; see **Report R4.1**) 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, remains 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” (Const. 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 and all that they have created together as a Synod 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 and effective governance in service of the same, and we implore Christ’s continued help in what is an enormous and complicated task.

The office carries out “all the customary duties of a corporate secretary” for corporate Synod; serves on the Board of Directors (BOD) of the Synod; facilitates most of the official convention

nomination, election, registration, and business processes; administers dispute resolution and expulsion processes; supervises the maintenance of the Synod’s official rosters and statistical information; and retains documents on Synod’s agencies, while performing “other such work as pertains to his office” or “as the Synod in convention, the President, or the BOD may assign to him” (Bylaws 3.3.3–3.3.3.2). It is a demanding office, even at the “minimum” defined in the Constitution and Bylaws of the Synod. The office proper consists of the Secretary and one executive assistant. There is never a slow day. We live by grace and sometimes have to ask for patience.

Analysis and Technological Advance

The office has, in connection with Research Services and a few specialized labors, taken on, in addition to the above, a more forward-looking, analytical, and consultative role. In ongoing partnership with the Council of Presidents (COP), the office has developed a “parochial service report,” in which district presidents report quarterly on the full-time equivalents of pastoral service being provided in each of their parishes by ordained and installed, ordained uninstalled, and unordained (vicars, deacons, etc.) men, as well as on bi-vocational status of workers and outstanding call processes. This per-parish data is beginning to provide new insights on patterns of vacancy and pastoral service that will be of interest to the Synod as it evaluates the future need for pastors and strategies for serving small congregations, of which there are many. The office has also reached out to the synodwide corporate entities and seminaries to take initial steps toward an “enterprise data” approach that will combine our strengths, along with “big data” from census and other sources, to provide better evaluation of where we stand as a Synod and where and how it makes best sense to apply the “diversity of gifts for the common good.” This has been met with an enthusiastic response but is a significant addition to an already full workload for the office and for Research Services.

Submission of annual parochial statistics, while significantly improved, despite significant efforts from this office and enlisting district offices and circuit visitors, remains far below the “unanimous” expectation of Bylaw 1.3.4.3 at about 70–75 percent submission annually (responses less than three years old are available for 86 percent of congregations, representing 93 percent of the confirmed membership of the Synod). This poses continued challenges for analysis, especially in years such as that of the COVID-19 pandemic and aftermath, in which understanding changed patterns of attendance is of significant importance to the Synod. Production of data products of direct interest and usefulness to the congregations (including initial versions of historical and comparative statistical data now available on the locator) is a priority.

One significant aspect of the office’s statistical work is supporting districts and the Office of the President in forming appropriate visitation and electoral circuits, compliant with requirements of Bylaw 3.1.2 (a) or reasonable exceptions under (b). While visitation circuits still number 608, the number of electoral circuits has declined, principally due to the requirement of 1,500 confirmed members per, to 532 (a drop of 22 since 2019, following similar declines by 21 in 2019 and 29 in 2016). Representation is not the only objective, of course; maintenance of “critical mass” for the self-sharpening of the ministerium in winkels, as well as provision for work together by congregations and appropriate visitation, are also important. We hope to provide some data on various proposals for circuit realignment to the responsible floor committee.

Nominations and Elections

The office 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.

In the CCN process, a total of 459 individuals, including incumbents, were nominated for at least one of the 62 officer, board, or commission positions to be filled by the convention through the work of the CCN (excluding the seven Praesidium positions), compared to 347 last triennium. While this still reflects a very low rate of participation in the nominating process, given that any member of any Synod congregation can submit a nomination, and while the committee noted that in some positions it had a challenge identifying qualified candidates, it is a relatively rare *increase* in convention process participation. The nominating process for President and vice-presidents, conducted electronically for the first time through YesElections (formerly Election America, the contractor used by the Synod since 2013 to conduct the election of the President), will be reported on separately. Registration of presidential voters, also online for the first time, is underway at the time of this report's preparation. The accustomed, relatively low level of participation in these processes remains of concern for the Synod. Last triennium, this office provided a detailed report on participation in the online presidential election (*Today's Business*, 2B:40–45). While a few changes were made to related bylaws in 2019, the pre-convention election of the President continues to deserve the convention's careful review.

The office took a new approach to convention-related communications this triennium, retiring the many "It's Time" postcards and distributing a triennial poster laying out for a congregation all its opportunities to participate, by nomination, representation, and memorialization, at the circuit, district, and Synod levels. Districts were engaged to strongly encourage submission of congregational and congregational leader emails at *lc.lcms.org*, which have been used consistently and with timely information from online processes, to remind multiple leaders in each congregation of opportunities to participate. A similar strategy was used for the convention deferral vote in 2021 and proved effective. There remain a small number of generally smaller congregations without any means of email contact, and initial, "official" communications are still made on paper. Still, this is at a significant savings to the convention budget and seems to be operating at least as effectively, if not already more so. Timely communication by email and entry of data in secure online portals allows more timely correction of errors and more targeted and informative reminders.

Facilitation of Appointment Processes, Vacancy and Regular

The office facilitates appointment processes for positions elected by the convention that become vacant midterm and for positions appointed by the BOD and COP. Annual appointments include Concordia Plans/Plan Services Boards of Trustees/Members and the Lutheran Church Extension Fund Board of Members, triennial appointments, the Concordia University System Council of Members, LCMS Foundation, and Commissions on Constitutional Matters and Handbook. This triennium has witnessed a notable increase in the number of vacancy appointments under Bylaw 3.2.5, per-

haps compounded to some extent by its extra year. These included Synod BOD, 1; Board for International Mission, 6; Board for National Mission, 2; Commission on Constitutional Matters (CCM), 1; Concordia University System, 1; Lutheran Church Extension Fund Member-at-Large, 1; Concordia Plan Services, 2; Concordia Seminary, 1; Concordia Theological Seminary, 1; Concordia University Chicago, 3. 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. The nomination and appointment process, in general, cries out for attention, perhaps including consolidation in an "always-on" online framework.

Convention Deferral Vote

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and under the guidance of CCM Opinions 20-2938 and 20-2960, the office was asked to and did facilitate a vote of the Synod's congregations under Const. Art. XI B 8 as to whether the Synod should "add an additional year to the current 2019–22 triennium, allowing districts to hold their conventions in either 2021 or 2022, and moving the upcoming national Synod convention from 2022 to 2023." After submission of the matter to the congregations by presidential letter on Dec. 7, 2020, an electronic vote on the question was conducted between Jan. 1 and Feb. 15, 2021. The vote was conducted in the system presently being used for President voter registration and to be used for any future constitutional amendment ballots.

More than the required one-fourth (63.32 percent) of the Synod's member congregations registered a vote, and the majority (90.67 percent) of votes cast favored adoption. The stated extension of the 2019–2022 triennium by a year, allowing district conventions to take place in either 2021 or 2022 and deferring the national Synod convention from 2022 to 2023, was therefore adopted. The appendix below shows the result of the vote.

Dispute Resolution and Expulsion Processes

The office administers the Synod's processes of dispute resolution and expulsion, provides associated training, and has a key practical role, with the Commission on Constitutional Matters (CCM) and Council of Presidents (COP), in maintaining the processes' Standard Operating Procedure Manuals. The triennium now drawing to a close saw the conclusion of hearing panel proceedings as follows: four expulsion proceedings under Bylaw 2.14, three for ordained ministers and one for a commissioned minister—teacher; and one under Bylaw 2.17, for an ordained minister. Many suspensions of workers and congregations do not result in a panel, resolving instead in a removal by default or resignation. A hearing facilitator was provided to one university for a proceeding under the Bylaw 3.10.6.7.5 *Model Operating Procedure Manual*. Reconcilers on the Synod's roster function extensively in the districts, whether in informal or formal capacities; this activity is not regularly reported to the Office of the Secretary. Appeals from panel decisions were requested in three of four concluded expulsion proceedings, but no review hearings were granted by an appeal panel.

Given infrequent activation of reconcilers and hearing facilitators by blind draw for panel roles, the office, together with the CCM and COP, is engaged in review of the training apparatus and size of the pools. Ambassadors of Reconciliation, Synod's training partner, will be providing the January 2024 training online in an effort to increase accessibility and retention of material, as well as to shift cost from travel and lodging to the creation of "off-year"

continuing education for hearing facilitators and already-rostered reconcilers.

Other Roles Reported Elsewhere

The Secretary of the Synod serves ex officio on the BOD of the Synod and the Concordia Historical Institute Board of Governors, as Secretary of both the CCM and the Commission on Handbook. He regularly assists the COP and is involved in many task forces and other efforts (including particularly, this triennium, the 2019 Res. 7-03 work on university governance and the Res. 9-17 work on advisory delegates); as these are reported on elsewhere and by others, these activities are not reported here.

Conclusion

It has been a very challenging but also very rewarding four-year “triennium,” trying to “do what comes to hand and do it with vigor” (Eccl. 9:10). Much of the work is less tangible, the office attempting to serve as a nexus of communication to hold a sometimes fractured Synod together and to assure that necessary services are

provided reliably, objectively, and with uniform expectations to *all* the Synod’s districts and members. We are truly stronger together but maintaining “life together” in reality takes real and considerable administrative and personal work.

The office rejoiced with Mrs. Pam Weeke, who retired after thirteen years of tireless and faithful service to the Office of the Secretary and many more to the Synod in general. We welcomed Mrs. Amy Schaeffer, formerly in the Office of International Mission, to carry on in her stead.

In Fiscal Year 2023, including the commissions and dispute resolution and expulsion, the staff of Rosters, Statistics, and Research Services, and all overhead, the office cost each parish in the Synod about \$280, on which we earnestly attempt to deliver value, and to do so all the more effectively in years to come. We are grateful for the Synod’s investment in this work. We often find ourselves taxed beyond capacity but with no shortage of opportunities for new and improved work with significant promise. This is a source of perpetual challenge but also of eagerness and excitement. The

District	Yes	No	% Voted / Mbr. Congs.
Atlantic	57 (96.61%)	2 (3.39%)	60.20% / 98
California/Nevada/Hawaii	101 (100.00%)	0 (0.00%)	55.80% / 181
Central Illinois	99 (93.40%)	7 (6.60%)	70.20% / 151
Eastern	61 (92.42%)	5 (7.58%)	53.23% / 124
English	86 (93.48%)	6 (6.52%)	56.79% / 162
Florida-Georgia	127 (96.21%)	5 (3.79%)	71.35% / 185
Indiana	137 (91.95%)	12 (8.05%)	65.64% / 227
Iowa East	78 (96.30%)	3 (3.70%)	69.23% / 117
Iowa West	103 (90.35%)	11 (9.65%)	68.26% / 167
Kansas	103 (96.26%)	4 (3.74%)	66.88% / 160
Michigan	260 (98.48%)	4 (1.52%)	74.58% / 354
Mid-South	56 (75.68%)	18 (24.32%)	60.66% / 122
Minnesota North	134 (97.81%)	3 (2.19%)	69.90% / 196
Minnesota South	133 (81.10%)	31 (18.90%)	68.33% / 240
Missouri	156 (91.76%)	14 (8.24%)	58.62% / 290
Montana	44 (97.78%)	1 (2.22%)	66.18% / 68
Nebraska	149 (93.71%)	10 (6.29%)	66.81% / 238
New England	42 (97.67%)	1 (2.33%)	63.24% / 68
New Jersey	22 (91.67%)	2 (8.33%)	47.06% / 51
North Dakota	52 (86.67%)	8 (13.33%)	74.07% / 81
North Wisconsin	110 (79.14%)	29 (20.86%)	64.35% / 216
Northern Illinois	127 (94.78%)	7 (5.22%)	63.21% / 212
Northwest	178 (96.22%)	7 (3.78%)	72.27% / 256
Ohio	97 (95.10%)	5 (4.90%)	63.75% / 160
Oklahoma	57 (93.44%)	4 (6.56%)	77.22% / 79
Pacific Southwest	131 (97.04%)	4 (2.96%)	50.19% / 269
Rocky Mountain	84 (88.42%)	11 (11.58%)	54.91% / 173
SELC	34 (91.89%)	3 (8.11%)	71.15% / 52
South Dakota	42 (67.74%)	20 (32.26%)	58.49% / 106
South Wisconsin	71 (55.91%)	56 (44.09%)	62.25% / 204
Southeastern	139 (95.86%)	6 (4.14%)	67.76% / 214
Southern	80 (97.56%)	2 (2.44%)	54.30% / 151
Southern Illinois	59 (93.65%)	4 (6.35%)	67.74% / 93
Texas	128 (77.11%)	38 (22.89%)	47.84% / 347
Wyoming	34 (89.47%)	4 (10.53%)	63.33% / 60
SYNOD TOTAL	3371 (90.67%)	347 (9.33%)	63.32% / 5872

2022/23 Convention Deferral Vote Tabulation, February 16, 2021

Lord prosper the work of our hands, so that the investment of the “diversity of gifts” in us may truly be “for the common profit.”

John W. Sias, *Secretary*

Appendix: Official Notice of Convention Deferral

February 16, 2021

In a letter from December 7, 2020, under the provision of Article XI B 8 of the Synod Constitution, LCMS President Rev. Dr. Matthew C. Harrison submitted the following question to a vote of the Synod’s member congregations:

Shall the Synod add a year to the current 2019–2022 triennium, allowing districts to hold their conventions in either 2021 or 2022, and moving the upcoming national Synod convention from 2022 to 2023? [Thereafter, the triennium cycle will continue forward from 2023 in three-year increments, as before (i.e., with district conventions held in 2025, 2028, etc., and Synod conventions held in 2026, 2029, etc.).] Vote: Yes or No.

The Office of the Secretary, assisted by the LCMS Department of Rosters, Statistics and Research Services and the LCMS Technology Application Group, facilitated an electronic vote on this question, opening January 1, 2021, and closing at the end of the day on February 15 (11:59 p.m. Central Time).

More than the required one-fourth (63.32%) of the Synod’s member congregations registered a vote, and the majority (90.67%) of votes cast favored adoption. The stated extension of the 2019–2022 triennium by a year, allowing district conventions to take place in either 2021 or 2022 and deferring the national Synod convention from 2022 to 2023, is therefore adopted.

The President’s letter (lcms.org/delay-vote-letter) and FAQ (lcms.org/delay-vote-faqs) explain the consequences of this deferral. The national Synod office is working urgently to make arrangements for the next regular convention of the Synod to convene in the summer of 2023 and will keep the Synod apprised as plans are finalized.

Congregations are advised to watch closely for communications from their districts regarding their plans to meet, either in 2021 or 2022, and to pay attention to pre-convention schedules that may be in flux.

The member congregations of the Synod and all who facilitated their voting are to be thanked for their urgent and diligent attention to this question, on account of which it was able to be decided not only by a majority of the votes cast but by a majority of the member congregations. We pray that the additional year it allows will bear rich fruit in the churchly deliberative assemblies of the districts and the Synod.

John W. Sias
LCMS Secretary

R4.1

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 informa-

tion is published in *The Lutheran Annual* or to the Synod webpage; some is utilized by districts and others in the Synod for ministry, administrative, and research purposes. The preceding four years have continued to produce significant and much-needed changes for the department, including several personnel transitions, technology and process enhancements, and scope of work. Noteworthy accomplishments include

- the implementation of online portals for congregations and schools to update their records with the Synod, thereby eliminating the mailing and processing of over 26,000 paper forms each year;
- development and implementation of online voting for member congregations for official Synod referendums, and first used during the convention referendum to delay the 68th Regular Convention to 2023;
- development and implementation of an online presidential voter registration system for member congregations, eliminating delays that impacted bylaw-established deadlines and reducing associated labor by 75 percent;
- the addition of a data analytics specialist to provide expert data modeling and analysis in support of key ministry and business decisions. This position will increase the research capacity of the department and enable research that combines Synod-specific data with a wealth of information from other sources;
- ongoing development of several new applications to support district offices with the call process and general roster management of ordained ministers—the first stage of implementing a unified roster management system jointly used by the Synod’s districts and national office. This project aims to improve the efficiency of roster transactions and services of districts in support of workers, congregations, and schools (especially call processes), while retaining assurances of actions properly taken under the Synod Bylaws; and
- support to the Office of the Secretary in developing new processes and tools for convention nominations, including the online nominations (handled by the independent election firm historically used for the pre-convention election of the President) for Synod President and Vice-Presidents.

Research Services provides a full range of research and analysis services for the Synod and its agencies. Key reports delivered in the past four years include intensive studies of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on congregations, schools, and workers; analysis of two decades of church planting by the Synod; support for the *Set Apart to Serve: LCMS Church Worker Recruitment* initiative; and numerous other studies guiding the implementation of the Synod’s ministry efforts. 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, with the Council of Presidents, and with the Synod’s partner agencies (Concordia Plan Services, Lutheran Church Extension Fund, etc.) has 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 continue to grow in importance as core technologies and access to analyzable data continue to be enhanced.

Scott Kostencki, *Director*

R5

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. (Const. 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 is taking a deep look at how the main corporate entities are working together: to look at structures; to look with regard to everything we do at how the congregations are actually served or how they are “served on behalf of” and at their behest; and, with a coordinated data effort, to look at where all the pieces individually need to move in order that the whole Synod can move forward. The board has focused on two areas: budgets and coordinated strategies.

The first area is budgets. Declining undesignated or unrestricted revenue to corporate is one aspect of a synodwide issue, which is felt in districts and congregations and which requires continued emphasis on developing budgets supported by clear tactics/strategies. The board is working toward a strategic approach to budgeting. We have come a long way, and with the addition of Nathan Haak as the new Chief Financial Officer, we are refining budget processes to have increasingly clear reporting and management of funds being spent and for what purpose. We have successfully maintained a balanced budget over the last triennium. This has been a challenging task due to the continued downward trend of unrestricted/undesignated donations. Transparency in budgeting that matches strategic plans and needs synodwide is imperative, and we are dedicated to continuing to improve that process.

The second area is coordinated strategies. The board has established a special committee to take on this task. The committee has taken an initial step in taking the lead by holding strategy meetings with each of the main synodwide entities, namely the Lutheran Church Extension Fund, Concordia Plan Services, Concordia Publishing House, and the LCMS Foundation. The purpose of the meetings is to ensure that we are all engaging in a cohesive strategy and within the parameters as set forth in our Bylaws. These meetings were well received and will continue as we “walk together.” There is a variety of perspectives, to be sure, but having coordinated and cohesive strategies to support and engage the big discussions—which truly need to engage the whole Synod, all districts, down to all the congregations, and then across all the entities and agencies—will go a long way.

During the prior triennium, we have completed detail process reviews in six areas: Information Technology, Facility Manage-

ment, Accounting, Human Resources, Risk Management, and Purchasing. During this triennium, we are currently in the process of evaluating the Mission Advancement area, which is our fundraising group.

All of these processes have resulted in improved performance, increased efficiencies, and closer collaboration with the Synod’s entities. Sharing services between entities and utilizing third-party contractors have resulted in substantial savings to the Synod and the entities involved.

Other actions by the board were to appoint a new member to fill a vacancy caused by the resignation of one of the members. Mr. Rick Stathakis, Shelby Township, Michigan, was appointed to fill the vacancy. After almost a two-year vacancy, which was extended due the COVID-19 shutdowns, the board appointed Mr. Nathan Haak as the Chief Financial Officer. Finally, Mr. Frank Simek’s term as the Chief Administrative Officer was renewed.

Overtures Submitted by the Board of Directors

The board is submitting one overture to the 2023 Synod convention resulting from action from the 2019 convention. The 2019 convention, through Resolution 7-03, directed the Synod’s Board of Directors—with active involvement of the President of the Synod; the Concordia University System Board, Advisory Council, and President; the institutions’ boards of regents; and others as needed—to propose a new governance plan for consideration and adoption. The process dictated required the concurrence of the CUS Advisory Council and the CUS Board of Directors and a period of review and comment by the entire Synod. The following new governance plan is presented in a separate report in great detail in pursuit of a realistic, sustainable, and transparent framework, satisfying and acting upon the following objectives of the aforementioned resolutions, as summarized in 2019 Res. 7-03, 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;
- review the overall governance of the CUS and the boards of regents of CUS institutions; and
- review the financial models for the institutions.

Financial Condition of the Synod

The Chief Financial Officer has reported that during the triennium, support from congregations, passed to the Synod, through the 35 districts has continued a more than 25-year decline. This type of financial support for the Synod is used where needed most. Its continued decline reduces the Synod’s financial flexibility to respond quickly to events and activities that could not be reasonably foreseen, as it increases the Synod’s reliance on restricted revenue streams, which may or may not match the needs of the ministries carried on by the Synod. The Chief Financial Officer also reported that corporate Synod finished the 2020–21 fiscal year with an increase in unrestricted, undesignated net assets. The Chief Financial Officer reported that at the end of the 2020–21 fiscal year, the total assets of the Synod had increased. More detailed information is

provided in the report of the Chief Financial Officer of the Synod, below.

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 the 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 L. Kumm, *Chairman*

R5.1

Chief Administrative Officer

The preponderance of the business, legal, and administrative responsibilities of the Board of Directors (BOD) are carried out by the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO). During this past triennium, the BOD reappointed the CAO to a new three-year appointment that commenced in October 2020. In addition to the day-to-day business and management of other administrative responsibilities, the BOD identified two main areas of strategic importance for the CAO: (1) act as the interim Chief Financial Officer (CFO) following the pending retirement of the CFO effective January 2020 until the position is filled and (2) manage the day-to-day operations during the government-mandated COVID-19 shutdown along with the Chief Mission Officer.

Service as Interim Chief Financial Officer

The CFO’s retirement in January 2020 started the search process to find an individual to fill the position permanently. While I was not intimately familiar with the duties of the CFO, I relied on my master of business administration, public accounting experience (having passed the Certified Public Accountant exam), and over 30 years of business experience to fulfill the duties. A CFO Search Committee was established, consisting of the BOD Personnel Committee, chairman of the BOD, Unit Executive of Human Resources, and myself. The search for a permanent CFO got off to an exceptional start with a good pool of qualified candidates. Unfortunately, the government-mandated office shutdowns related to COVID-19 created too many obstacles, causing the search to be

suspended. Managing the Accounting Department while working remotely created a challenging work environment. We are fortunate to have an experienced accounting group who adapted to a remote work environment. We successfully distributed financial information on a timely basis, received an unqualified (without reservation) opinion from our external auditors, and prepared a budget. This was a huge success supported by a great group effort. Following the lifting of the COVID-19 government-mandated restrictions and my almost two years serving as the interim CFO, the CFO Search Committee resumed its efforts and successfully hired Nathan Haak as CFO. Haak has been here a little over a year and is a great addition.

Managing Operations during the Government-Mandated COVID-19 Shutdowns

The day-to-day operations at the International Center were not immune to the government-mandated COVID-19 shutdowns. With less than one week’s notice, everyone pulled together to enable all employees to work remotely. The first challenge was to ensure that all employees had the right hardware. Once situated, the next challenge was to increase communications to ensure all was completed promptly. This was done with numerous emails and by quickly becoming experts with Teams or Zoom virtual meetings. During the pandemic, the Operations Team (see below) conducted numerous surveys to gauge and monitor employees’ challenges, issues, mental well-being, and eagerness to return to a “normal” in-person work environment. Once the mandates were lifted, steps were taken to ensure a safe work environment that included extra cleaning, installing numerous hand-sanitizing dispensers, mask-wearing, etc. Gradually over time, we returned to a prepandemic work environment, but we are still conscious to maintain a high level of hygiene.

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 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 Directors of the Synod in carrying out their respective responsibilities for oversight supervision management, and coordination of the operations of the national office and acceding 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 CAO 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 CAO is responsible for several service units which are comprised of dedicated individuals whose service to the Synod is more often measured in decades than in years of service. These areas include human resources, operations and event planning. A brief overview of their responsibilities and activities follows.

Frank K. Simek, *Chief Administrative Officer*

R5.1.1

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 national and international events, including Synod conventions, Youth Gatherings, and a variety of organizational needs. Since the 2019 LCMS convention, this department has deftly renegotiated for hundreds of meetings and the cancellation and rescheduling of the 2022 Synod convention due to COVID-19 as well as planned and assisted with nearly 1,000 off-site events, accommodating an estimated 200,000 people.

Lynne C. Marvin, *Senior Director,
Event Planning and Procurement*

R5.1.2

Human Resources

The LCMS Department of Human Resources holds Galatians 5:13, “Through love serve one another,” as the pillar of its values. With that mindset, we are able to provide consummate Human Resources (HR) services to over 330 employees, both domestically and internationally deployed, so that all may succeed in furthering the Church’s mission to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ around the world. This is a wonderful opportunity and an immense challenge for which we are grateful to serve.

Like so many around the world, the normal operations of our work were turned upside down in March 2020 with the COVID-19 pandemic. At a moment’s notice, our department coordinated with senior leadership to ensure all employees could confidently and safely work in a remote environment. As the pandemic continued

to evolve, the department remained up to date on new and changing safety protocols and managed the process and communication when employees tested positive for COVID-19 positive or were exposed. In June 2021, we coordinated the safe return of employees to the International Center (IC). While we are thankful COVID-19 appears to be reaching its end stages as a pandemic, we continue to be mindful of its impact on our most valued resources, our employees.

The HR department was successful in carrying out a number of accomplishments this triennium, starting with the acquisition of a new human resources information system. This HR system allowed our department to better coordinate efforts and deliver comprehensive services amongst our cohort of entities at the IC while providing significant cost savings.

From a recruiting standpoint, we have seen a number of employees retire in the last couple of years, which has created opportunities for new talents and voices in the organization. I specifically call attention to the successful long-term recruiting efforts to select a new Chief Financial Officer in January 2021 and Executive Director of Communications in January 2023.

A restructuring of HR service delivery with IC entities has allowed the Synod HR department to redirect more targeted services to our missionaries around the world, with a specific focus on recruiting and talent development. This endeavor will continue to blossom over the coming years.

Lastly, I am proud of our team’s efforts to create a best-in-class onboarding program to ensure employees are properly enculturated into the organization, enhancing engagement and long-term retention.

The Department of Human Resources is well-positioned to execute the strategy for the next triennium. Our objectives include the following: create a learning culture with the specific goal of developing leaders; enhance engagement as long-tenured employees retire and new talent is hired; and provide support and education for employees that assists them in all stages of their vocational life cycle. Accomplishing these objectives will lead to enhanced service delivery to the boards, commissions, agencies, departments, and corporate entities we support so that they can focus on their mission.

Nathan D. Thomas, *Executive Director*

R5.1.3

Operations Support Services

The overall mission of Operations Support Services (OSS) is to provide core services that support the mission and ministry of the LCMS. The following service units make up OSS: Operations Service Coordination, Technology Application Group, Information Technology Desktop and Infrastructure Support Services, Mail and Print Services, Reception and Meeting Services, and Facilities Management Services. In addition, the LCMS Technology Steering Committee (TSC), which is chaired by the Executive Director of Operations Support Services, reviews projects to assess their benefit to the organization and helps prioritize them. The chair of the TSC will then present those recommendations as necessary to the Operations Team for final approval. Other functions of the TSC include advising on proposed policy changes or additions and fostering positive communications throughout the organization.

A. Operations Service Coordination (OSC)

Operations Service Coordination provides the communication and coordination link between the Operations Department and the departments of the LCMS. OSC also ensures that policies and procedures are in place so that operations services are delivered in a timely and efficient manner. Through regular communication, OSC ensures the needs of the departments are being met. Service coordinates work closely with Concordia Plan Services to manage the help desk team that supports both organizations.

B. Technology Application Group (TAG)

The Technology Application 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. TAG provides technical support to the major LCMS business applications: Banner Accounting, UltiPro Human Resources Information System, LCMS Information Support Network (formerly LRSS), Blackbaud Constituent Resource Management System, M365 toolset, and LCMS websites. TAG 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 prioritized by the TSC, with OSS providing technical expertise to approved projects.

C. IT Desktop and Infrastructure Support Services

Concordia Plan Services provides the network and infrastructure support for the LCMS. This includes outsourcing the help desk and many infrastructure support functions to Dalechek Technology Group, Oakwood Technology Group, and Tierpoint.

D. 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 provides the following special services: preparation of bulk mailings, address labeling, folding, envelope/mailler inserting, bulk paper delivery (for copiers/printers), and management of 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, large format printing, envelope printing, folding, cutting, GBC plastic comb binding, booklet-making, padding, three-hole punching, lamination, photocopying, and personal printing services for our employees. We are also expanding these services to local LCMS congregations and schools.

E. Reception and Meeting Services (RMS)

Reception and Meeting Services is responsible for coordinating meetings and events that take place at the International Center (IC). This includes assistance with room scheduling and set up and any event catering needs. RMS 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.

F. Facilities Management Services (FMS)

The LCMS is continuing its facility management partnership with Cushman and Wakefield at the IC. Cushman's expertise in

property management will help ensure the LCMS is adhering to industry best practices. The mission of FMS is to maintain a safe, healthy, and Christian work environment for employees at the IC.

G. Significant Accomplishments

- (1) During the COVID-19 lockdown, we were able to successfully provide the services necessary to support work from home and the hybrid work environment. This included preparing and deploying over 45 laptops and various peripheral devices and facilitating printing as well as mail pick-up and delivery.
- (2) The building's HVAC automation system was upgraded. This resulted in a \$75,000 incentive rebate from Ameren and should help reduce energy costs over time.
- (3) Using the functionality available with our Zoom subscription, we replaced the meeting room scheduling system, saving over \$15,000 annually in subscription costs.
- (4) Working with the LCMS OPS team and TSC, a records retention policy was finalized and approved. It is in the process of being implemented.
- (5) A comprehensive cyber awareness training program for all employees continues.
- (6) Post-COVID-19, the IC's full-service cafeteria was replaced with a self-serve emart. This resulted in significant savings in subsidies.
- (7) Multifactor Authentication and Advanced Threat Protection were implemented to better protect LCMS data and resources.
- (8) The TopDesk employee portal for IT trouble ticket tracking was implemented, which streamlined approval processes and eliminated paper forms.
- (9) Working with Rosters and Statistics, OSS continues to expand the LCMS Information Support Network (LISN) to meet the needs of the LCMS.

Joel Rivers, *Executive Director*

R5.2

Chief Financial Officer

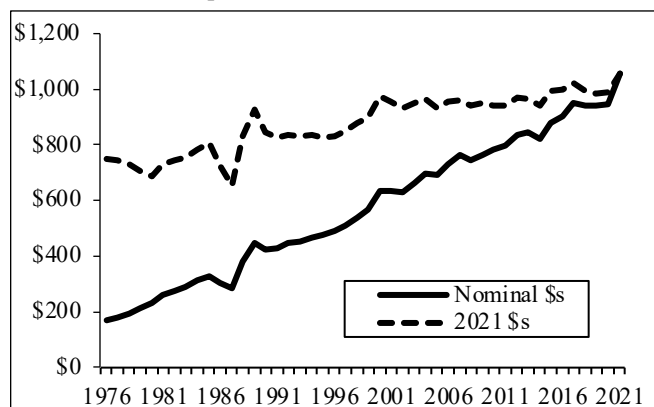
Greetings to you in the name of Jesus. I am humbled and privileged to have been selected to serve as the Chief Financial Officer of the LCMS. I pray that God would use me for the furtherance of His Church here on earth and ask for your prayers of support and encouragement in this endeavor.

"The Synod is in its best financial position in decades, maybe ever." This was President Harrison's bold statement during the 2022 district conventions, and it is true across much of the Synod, including at corporate Synod. The last few years evidenced God's ability to work through means that are not always clear to us.

I will not minimize the impact of COVID-19 on the social, physical, mental, and spiritual health of many. The full toll will never be known. Contrast this with the financial impact: global asset values soared, "stimulus" rained down from governments, and reported unemployment rates reached record lows. The members of the LCMS unselfishly used these benefits outside of themselves, supporting our Synod in a record way. In 2021, for the first time in the history of our Synod, funds given per confirmed member

(measured as dollars for both local congregation “Work at Home” and “Work at Large,” that is, work beyond the congregation, including districts and the Synod) surpassed \$1,000—wow!

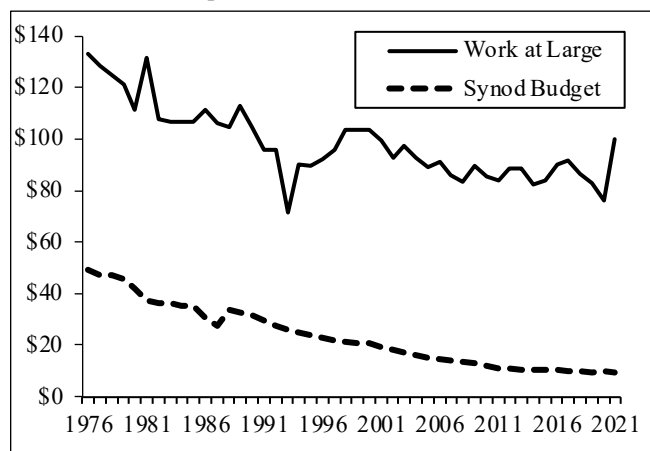
**Giving to Congregations (including Work at Large),
per Confirmed Member**



What a reflection of our role as stewards of the gifts our Lord graciously bestows upon us!

Contrast this with the following, showing the funds for Work at Large of the Synod, and the corporate Synod budget.

**Giving to Work at Large Causes and to Synod,
per Confirmed Member**



Even with the 2021 jump in giving, the share of funds available to corporate Synod remains at all-time lows, representing 0.89 percent of the 2021 total given. Historically, these dollars have represented the bulk of the funding for the synodwide ecclesiastical programs, convention-mandated activities, the support operations of corporate Synod, and significant Mission and Ministry programs. That these dollars flow voluntarily, not as an assessment on congregation or with restriction on their use, helps us “walk together” as the Synod. We are not funded via coercion but instead because of the value we collectively see in this walking together. The continued slide is reflective of the pressures and opportunities at every level of the Synod (allowing for less available to “pass on” to corporate Synod). I pray it is primarily this, and not a questioning of the value of walking together.

How then is “the Synod in its best financial position in decades”? Significant restructuring in 2018 and 2020, benefits from government stimulus programs, cash dividends from international schools, and other one-time proceeds have generated an unprec-

edented collection of windfalls. Reliance on one-time windfalls, many from undesired outcomes, is a poor way to fund our Synod, but these have pulled the Synod out of a decades-long hole. Such “unrestricted, undesignated” net assets, a mark of stability for a nonprofit institution, are positive for the first time in recent memory. Relative to where we’ve been, the footing is strong. In absolute terms, this surplus is a small share of the annual budget. We are not at risk of insolvency, nor have we bloated a balance sheet for the mirage of financial “security.”

The following shows revenues from all sources 2020–22, excluding the “windfall” items indicated above. The share of Synod’s revenues from the historical district source is 21 percent. The \$6 million surplus of Revenues over Expenses was mainly a result of permanent endowment gifts, from which only earnings may be spent.

<i>Revenue Source</i>	<i>\$ (millions)</i>	<i>% of total</i>
Districts	\$39	21%
Unrestricted Gift/Bequest	\$13	7%
Unrestr. Interest/Investment, Fees	\$10	5%
Restricted Gift/Bequest	\$123	65%
Restricted Interest/Investment	\$4	2%
Total Ongoing Revenues	\$189 M	100%

<i>Expense Type</i>	<i>\$ (millions)</i>	<i>% of total</i>
Mission and Ministry	\$123	67%
Ecclesiastical/Convention	\$20	11%
Management/General	\$22	12%
Mission Advancement	\$18	10%
Total Expenses	\$183 M	100%

We strive to remain good and faithful stewards of the gifts entrusted to us by the Lord through you, His Church. Corporate Synod consistently exceeds “best-practice” guidelines for spending in Program areas, and we are mindful of how every dollar spent supports the objectives of our Synod. Even so, the unrestricted dollars available to Mission and Ministry, and our ability to support the infrastructure for these programs, continues to diminish.

2019 Res. 8-03 commended the CFO and Synod Accounting for its current and continued transparency—a commendation for which I can take no credit. As I interviewed for the position of CFO, I was impressed by the transparency of financial information at the LCMS versus other church bodies.

Res. 8-03 also instructed that we “continue to develop reports that are clear, timely, and understandable.” There is little progress to report on this goal. The CFO role was vacant for 24 months, and Synod Accounting declined in both number and experience with 250+ years of collective experience lost. Still, we strive to make progress. There are fantastic tools available to us in this modern world; I plan for us to fund, learn, and implement some of these to meet the desires of this convention.

As CFO, I oversee the accounting, audit, and treasury functions of corporate Synod on a day-to-day basis. These provide the services you would expect: bookkeeping, controls on fulfilling donor restrictions, annual budget oversight, preparation of monthly financial statements, controllership, cash management, internal reporting, payroll, and assistance with the LCMS audit. With what

time remains, we provide additional services beyond the walls of International Center. The work is ever-increasing. I am daily humbled by and grateful for the servant-minded men and women of the LCMS finance departments. They make it all a reality, and it is a joy to lead them in this work.

God has truly blessed our Synod and His people within with an abundance of financial resources and infinitely more through the gift of His Son, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. We strive to daily spread the Good News as We Preach Christ Crucified. My fervent prayer is that He continues to use us as wise, faithful stewards of the gifts He provides through you, His people, so the Gospel message may flourish, and those in darkness would be called to the Light of the Son, our Savior, Jesus Christ.

Nathan M. Haak, *Chief Financial Officer*

R6

Board for National Mission

According to the *Handbook*, the Board for National Mission (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 [n]). 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 the past quadrennium continuing to work on the policies which give direction to the Office of National Mission (ONM) as it seeks to carry out its responsibility “for domestic ministries that especially serve congregations and schools through the districts of the Synod” (Bylaw 3.8.2.3). The Board has organized its policies under the seven mission priorities reaffirmed by the Synod in convention, 2019 Res. 4-03A (*Proceedings*, 134).

Beyond developing and determining policies to guide the ONM 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 oversight and monitoring responsibility, at its regularly scheduled board meetings the BNM receives reports from the various program directors and solicits suggestions from the directors for policy improvements. ONM programs are currently arranged under three primary ministry areas and include the following:

1. Human Care and Ministerial Support

Deaconess Ministry

Family Ministry

Grants

Health Ministry

Life Ministry

Specialized Pastoral Ministry

Stewardship

Worker Well-Being, including

Soldiers of the Cross

Veterans of the Cross

2. Congregations and Districts

Campus Ministry

Disaster Response

Disaster Response Training

Recognized Service Organizations

School Ministry

Youth Ministry

3. Church Planting, Renewal, and Support

All Nations Ministry, including

Black and African Immigrant Ministries

Hispanic Ministry

Other Ethnic-Immigrant Ministries

Church Planting

Research and Analytics

Revitalization

Rural and Small Town Mission

Urban and Inner City Mission

Witness and Outreach

The BNM also continues to set aside time at each scheduled meeting for theological presentations that the board believes are helpful in maintaining focus on the Church’s mission. Presentations received over the past quadrennium were presented by various LCMS leadership officers, seminary professors, and pastors over a wide variety of relevant topics.

In 2013, the Synod convention authorized the BNM to “serve as a calling agency for institutional and agency chaplains and other non-foreign specialized ministers” (Bylaw 3.8.2). The BNM issued two divine calls this past quadrennium to two specialized pastoral ministers.

The BNM lost two valued members this past quadrennium. Mr. Ernie Garbe resigned from his position on the board for personal reasons. Also, Ms. Martha Milas went off the board, in compliance with Synod Bylaws, due to her relocation to a different region within the Synod. Mr. Pat Kyler replaced Mr. Garbe, and the Rev. Sawyer Meyers replaced Ms. Milas.

Working with the Board for International Mission (BIM), the BNM established a joint mission board sub-committee in October 2020. This sub-committee was tasked with assisting both mission boards with the fulfillment of 2019 Bylaws 3.8.2.2 and 3.8.3.2. Also in the course of its work, it took up considerations pertaining to working relationships between the mission boards, the other Synod boards, and the Synod officers and staff. Ultimately this resulted in a series of structured interviews with representatives from all 35 districts and subsequent analysis, which formed the bulk of the sub-committee’s efforts over the past 18 months. The aforementioned structured interviews were conducted by teams, assigned to each of the various districts across the Synod, comprised of one representative each from BNM and BIM. Not only did these teams gather very helpful information concerning the work and ministry of the districts across the Synod but the mission boards believe that these meetings helped build better relationships between the district offices and the Synod’s national office. The mission boards hope for more such dialogue in the future and continued collegiality as we work with the districts to “coordinate and support” each other in our common goal to serve the saints in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

In September 2019, a Bible study on the Synod's seven mission priorities (2019 Res. 4-03A, *Proceedings*, 134) was written and sent out to the districts and congregations of the Synod.

Also during this past quadrennium, the BNM chair was asked by ONM staff to lead an ad hoc task force dealing with mental health and mental illness issues. The chair appointed a broad spectrum of members from around the Synod to serve on this task force—representatives from the Synod's seminaries and universities, Concordia Publishing House, Concordia Plan Services, and other stakeholders within the Synod with expertise in the field of mental illness and psychology. This task force has been engaged in the identification, development, and production of resources to be delivered to pastors, teachers, deaconesses, and the Synod's other professional church workers to educate them about mental illness, to assist in recognizing mental illness, and to provide a summary of resources to help deal with mental illness. An upcoming issue of *The Lutheran Witness* will be devoted to this crucial topic.

In conclusion, please permit the chair a personal note. This will be my last report on behalf of the BNM. I have served as chair of the BNM since its inception in 2010. I sincerely appreciate and value the people with whom I have been privileged to serve. The congregations of the LCMS face many challenges in the future as our society becomes increasingly hostile to our Christian faith and values. I am confident that under God's blessing the BNM will continue to be a valuable resource to the LCMS districts and congregations as they seek to make disciples for life by the pure preaching of the Gospel of Christ crucified for all sinners and by the proper administration of our Lord's precious Sacraments. *Soli Deo Gloria!*

Steven C. Briel, *Chairman*

R7

Board for International Mission

The Board for International Mission (BIM) is charged with developing and determining policies in support of mission and ministry in foreign countries for the Office of International Mission. These policies shall embrace and apply the mission and ministry emphases adopted by the national convention. BIM also serves as the only sending agency through which workers and funds are sent to foreign mission areas of the Synod including the calling of missionaries (ordained and commissioned) and other workers in foreign areas.

A. Calling of Missionaries

The BIM works closely with the Office of International Mission (OIM) in the selection and calling of missionaries. Currently the OIM has over 100 missionaries and over 300 missionary family members in foreign mission fields. A high priority of the BIM is to encourage the recruitment of new missionaries to expand our presence in foreign mission areas of the Synod and to provide missionaries to fill positions as current missionaries retire or accept calls to serve in other contexts. The BIM also works closely with the Office of Ministry to the Armed Forces (MAF) to call military chaplains. The recruitment, orientation, and deployment support efforts carried out by both the OIM and MAF are exemplary.

B. BIM Policy Development

The BIM established policies addressing multiple mission and ministry areas in its initial years of existence (2010–13) and has regularly updated these policies in support of programs carried out

by the OIM. In 2022, the BIM began a complete rewrite of its policies to focus on monitoring the strategic plan of the OIM and the supporting budget. The policies allow for the BIM to monitor the OIM strategic plan to ensure that OIM staffing and programs support Article II and III of the Synod Constitution and the mission and ministry emphasis established by the Synod in convention. The BIM anticipates that the revised policies will be submitted to the Commission on Constitutional Matters (CCM) prior to the current 2023 Synod convention.

C. International Schools

The LCMS schools in Hong Kong, Shanghai, and Hanoi continue to be exemplary academic college preparatory schools. These schools primarily serve K–12 children of expatriate families. Due to religious freedom restrictions in effect in China and Vietnam, the ability to maintain a Lutheran identity and to proclaim the pure Gospel is constrained. In order to address these concerns, the Synod Board of Directors and the BIM working with the Chief Mission Officer and the OIM have established an international schools task force that is researching options and developing plans for the Synod's international schools going forward.

D. Assessment of Mission and Ministry

The Boards for National Mission and International Mission under Bylaws 3.8.2.2 and 3.8.3.2 during each triennium between national conventions are to gather sufficient information from Synod members to facilitate the boards' assessment of the effectiveness of the Synod's mission and ministry. See separate report of the Joint Mission Assessment Committee. Based on this assessment, the boards jointly submitted two overtures for 2023 Synod convention consideration. The BIM is also proposing in its aforementioned revised policies to include new policies to improve communications with districts, Recognized Service Organizations, and congregations regarding international mission activities.

E. Recognition of Past Service

During the past quadrennium, the OIM and BIM have experienced some turnover in staff and board members. Most notably, in March 2022, Bernie Seter, our chair of the board since 2010, was called home to his Savior. Bernie's commitment to the church, his teaching skills, and his sense of humor are missed by the board.

John W. Edson, *Chairman*

R8

BNM/BIM Joint Report: Triennial Priority Guidance

During the course of each triennium between national conventions, the Board for International Mission (BIM) and the Board for National Mission (BNM) gather pertinent and sufficient information from the Synod's members that will facilitate the boards' assessment and evaluation of the effectiveness of the Synod's triennial mission and ministry emphasis. The boards develop accordingly a joint overture to the national convention.

A. Joint Mission Assessment Committee (JMAC)

During 2021, the BIM and BNM jointly formed a committee to carry out their duties under the Bylaws to gather information

and assess and evaluate the Synod's triennial mission and ministry emphasis. Two members from each board were appointed to the committee. The committee developed a methodology to interview all district presidents and, if the district president so chose, to include other district leaders in the interviews. These interviews were conducted in the fall of 2021 and winter of 2022. A member of the BNM and the BIM participated in each interview and summarized the information gathered. The JMAC collected all the information and summarized it for the two boards.

A.1. Mission and Ministry Emphasis

The current triennial mission and ministry emphasis *Making Disciples for Life*, established in 2019, has only just begun to serve our Synod, to give direction to districts and congregations, and to guide the policy-making work of mission and ministry through the BNM and BIM.

A.2. Mission Priorities

The Synod district presidents, along with members of their respective staffs, had mixed reactions to the Synod's current mission priorities. Many recognized them as a self-evident description of the Bible's theology and practice of mission and ministry. Others indicated that, while faithful to the Scriptures and the Confessions, the priorities did not play a significant role in giving direction to their work at the district. The Synod's current mission priorities are contemporary applications of the Synod's Article III objectives.

A.3. Reaffirmation

In support of the information gathered, the BNM and BIM jointly submitted two overtures asking the Synod in convention to reaffirm the Synod's current mission priorities and mission emphasis as they exemplify our fervor in being faithful to the Lord and loving our neighbor and to also encourage their use to affirm our Synod's unity as lived out by congregations, national servant leaders, district servant leaders, and circuit servant leaders.

Steven C. Briel, *BNM Chairman*
and John W. Edson, *BIM Chairman*

R9

Commission on Constitutional Matters

The first meeting of the commission was held via Zoom on Sep. 26, 2019, following the reappointment of Tom Deadrick and Larry Peters to the commission. The other members of the commission are Gerhard Bode Sr., George Gude, and Neely Owen. At the first meeting, the commission organized itself with George Gude elected chairman and Larry Peters vice-chairman. For health reasons, attorney Neely Owen needed to resign from the commission and was replaced by attorney Scott Killian. The Secretary of the Synod, John Sias, who is an ex officio member of the commission, serves as the secretary of the commission, and Tom Deadrick was elected as acting secretary. George Gude was appointed as the commission member to the Commission on Handbook. 2019 Res. 9-17 directed the commission "To Study Voting Privilege in the LCMS" along with commissioned ministers to be appointed by the Council of Presidents (COP) and district presidents to be selected by the COP. John Sias and George Gude were appointed as the commissions' members for this study. The report of this committee is published in the *Workbook* (Report R62).

Due to the issues arising from COVID-19 restrictions, as this re-

port is written the commission has met six times in person and nine times via Zoom. The COVID-19 restrictions along with difficulties in scheduling resulted in the commission being unable to hold the joint meetings with the COP as required by 2013 Res. 6-16A.

The responsibilities of the commission are delineated in the Bylaws of the Synod, Bylaws 3.9.2.2–3.9.2.2.3. These responsibilities fall into two main areas:

Opinions: The first area is that the commission is to interpret the Synod's Constitution, Bylaws, and resolutions. A member of the Synod (congregation or ordained or commissioned minister) and an official board, commission, or agency of the Synod may submit a written request for such an opinion. As this report is written, the commission has issued 16 opinions, most of which are included in this *Workbook* (Report R65). For those interested, the published minutes of all meetings of the commission are posted at lcms.org/ccm, and these minutes include all opinions.

Review of Governing Documents: A second area of the commission's charge is to ensure 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 districts can only change bylaws at 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.)

Experience has demonstrated that some agencies fail to submit proposed changes to their bylaws and articles to the commission, as required by Bylaw 3.9.2.2.3 (a). In these instances, 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 Services, and each synodwide corporate entity."

Bylaw 1.5.3.6 (and associated 2016 Res. 9-02A) requires all agencies to include certain specific language in their most fundamental governing documents or to seek an exception from the Board of Directors of the Synod. Not all agencies are yet in compliance. The commission welcomes those still not in compliance to complete the process of adopting compliant articles and bylaws or seeking the noted exception from the Board of Directors.

Dispute Resolution and Expulsion Processes: Finally, the commission together with the COP maintains the *Standard Operating Procedures Manuals* (SOPMs) for the dispute resolution process and expulsion processes of the Synod. As a result, following each convention, the commission with the concurrence of the COP, reviews these SOPMs and makes any changes necessitated by changes to the Bylaws approved by the convention.

George J. Gude, *Chairman*

R10

Commission on Doctrinal Review

Along with the undersigned, the Commission on Doctrinal Review consists of these members: the Rev. Eric T. Lange (Gresham,

Oregon), the Rev. Dr. Jason D. Lane (Concordia University Wisconsin), the Rev. Dr. David I. Lewis (Concordia Seminary, St. Louis), and the Rev. Dr. Andrew E. Steinmann (Concordia University Chicago). In this quadrennium (2019–2023), the commission has rendered two decisions regarding material already in print and one decision in response to an appeal from the author. 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.

Roland Ziegler, *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 *Workbook* Directory.

The primary responsibility of the Commission on Handbook is to provide for the ongoing maintenance and management of the *Handbook* (Constitution, Bylaws, and Articles of Incorporation of the Synod–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 2019 convention of the Synod and in consultation with the CCM, the commission incorporated all the revisions to the Bylaws that were adopted by the convention and to the Constitution that were adopted by the convention and subsequently ratified by a two-thirds majority of the votes cast by the voting congregations of the Synod (cf. Const. Art. XV 4). Electronic versions of the current November 2019 printed *Handbook* are available in both Adobe® PDF and Microsoft Word formats on the Synod’s website under the “About” menu, then the “Leadership” link, and then the “Commission on Handbook” tab lcms.org/coh.

Since the 2019 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 as the “Update Edition” on the Synod’s website (as noted above) and are in Adobe® PDF format.

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. 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, Synodwide Corporate Entities, Synod Membership Status and Limitations, Cross-Circuit and Cross-District Multi-Congregation Parishes, Clarification of Commission on Theology and Church Relations Bylaw Provisions, Circuit Visitor Election Procedures, Procedures for Election of District Presidents and District Vice-Presidents, Procedures for Electronic Registration of Voters for the President of Synod, and several Practical Bylaw Considerations. These subject areas are being submitted in the form of corresponding overtures for consideration by the 2023 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 (Const. Art. III) and bylaw purposes (Bylaw 1.1).

The commission will have met nine times between the 2019 and the 2023 conventions. Due to logistical considerations resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic and recognizing the importance of good stewardship of time and money, seven 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 lcms.org/coh.

Dale L. Sattgast, *Chairman*

R12

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” (2019 Bylaws 3.9.5.2–3.9.5.4). Further CTCR responsibilities include responding to expressions of dissent (Bylaw section 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 the Synod Bylaws.

The CTCR consists of sixteen voting members and four advisory members. Elected members include two parish pastors, one parish teacher, and two laypersons chosen by the Synod’s 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 reelected once. Members appointed by the President, seminaries, or the COP serve three-year terms and may be reappointed twice.

For the sake of efficiency, the commission operates with an executive committee and three working committees. The executive committee includes the CTCR officers, the chairs 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. CTCR officers during the past triennium were the Rev. Dr. Lawrence Rast, chairman; the Rev. Dr. Brian Saunders, vice-chairman; and the Rev. Dr. William Schumacher, secretary. Chairs of the respective committees were the Rev. Dr. Naomichi Masaki (Committee One), the Rev. Arlo Pullmann (Committee Two), and Dr. Andrea Pitkus (Committee Three).

The CTCR is currently served by three executive staff members, two full-time and one part-time. The Rev. Dr. Joel D. Lehenbauer, who has served on the executive staff of the CTCR since 1991, has been executive director since 2008. At its April 2018 meeting, the commission took action to renew Dr. Lehenbauer's term for a new five-year term (cf. Bylaw 3.9.5.3.1 [a][3][4]). Another review by the commission was scheduled to conclude at its April 2023 meeting. The Rev. Dr. Larry M. Vogel, who was previously associate executive director from 2009 until retirement in February 2020, now serves as assistant to the executive director. He was awarded an honorary doctorate by Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, in May 2020, and received his PhD from Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, in May 2023. The Rev. Dr. Richard J. Serina Jr. was called to succeed Dr. Vogel as associate executive director in May 2020. He began work in August 2020, and, after a lengthy delay due to the pandemic, was installed in September 2021. From 1991–2007, the CTCR was served by three full-time executive staff members. Since 2008, however, one of those executive staff positions had been continuously vacant, primarily due to budgetary limitations of the Synod. The current triennium featured the first full complement of executive staff members since that date, albeit with Dr. Vogel serving part-time and deployed. 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.

The current commission featured relatively unprecedented turnover in the extended 2019–2023 triennium, beginning with nine new members joining after the 2019 convention. It also filled a number of vacancies during this time. Dr. Serina was appointed to the commission by the COP in 2019 before accepting the call to serve on the executive staff in 2020. The COP appointed the Rev. Dr. Ely Prieto to replace him in time for the December 2020

meeting. The Rev. Dr. Dale Meyer retired from the presidency of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, in May 2020. The Rev. Dr. Thomas Egger was called to replace Dr. Meyer in February 2021 and began his service as advisory member on the commission upon accepting the call as president. The Rev. Dr. James Bushur, a faculty representative of Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, was scheduled to complete his term in 2022 before the extension of the triennium. He chose to relinquish his appointment at its original completion date in 2022, and the Rev. Dr. Roland Ziegler was elected by the faculty to replace him for the remainder of his term. The Rev. Dr. Jonathan Shaw, Director of Church Relations—Assistant to the President, regularly attends CTCR meetings and reports to the commission regarding matters of church relations that are under the purview of the President's Office. In addition to the turnover at the beginning and throughout the triennium, the pandemic necessitated five consecutive virtual meetings, and six out of eight meetings at one point. Despite these challenges, the commission diligently attended to its constitutional responsibilities to Synod, its congregations and workers, and the Synod President.

I. Theology

A. *Luther's Large Catechism with Annotations and Contemporary Applications* (2013 Resolution 3-13A; 2016 Res. 5-12)

This project developed from a series of requests from the Synod for more resources in the arena of theological instruction that would prove accessible to specialist and novice alike. The Synod's 2013 Res. 3-13A addressed the matter of catechesis, including a resolve that a "catechetical compendium for adults" be prepared "which would be more comprehensive and apologetic in scope." The 2016 LCMS Convention adopted Res. 5-12 on the use of Luther's Catechisms. The resolution gave the CTCR, in concurrence with the Synod President and seminaries, the task to "explore the creation of an annotated and expanded edition of the Large Catechism." A proposal was developed in collaboration with the Office of the President and approved by the commission in 2019. Its contents were reviewed by the commission from May 2020 through June 2021, approved by doctrinal review in December 2021, and submitted to Concordia Publishing House for publication in March 2022.

The originators and editors of the project are the Rev. Dr. John Pless, assistant professor of pastoral theology and missions at Concordia Theological Seminary, and the Rev. Dr. Larry M. Vogel, assistant to the executive director of the CTCR. The volume contains the text of the Large Catechism, with historical introductions and annotations provided by a variety of editors. It also includes over seventy excursuses, which comment on topics addressed in the Large Catechism and apply them to our contemporary setting. It is the hope of the commission that this text might connect and apply the Large Catechism's 16th-century confession of the faith to our 21st-century context in a way that encourages vigorous, well-informed, and effective mission outreach; addresses current challenges to confessional Lutheran theology; and provides an extended Scriptural explanation and defense of the faith. In February 2023, the commission adopted a statement explaining this project for those who had questions about or objections to its content. That statement is included in the *Workbook* appendix.

B. Completed Reports

Reports of the CTCR are ordinarily convention-requested

documents that set forth what the commission regards as a soundly biblical and Lutheran exposition of a particular issue of importance to the church. In certain cases (see I.B.2 below), these may involve requested opinions that necessitate more explanation than a customary opinion and/or may be of broader relevance to the Synod than to the single individual or entity requesting said opinion.

1. *A Snapshot of Trending Tools: Christians and Social Media* (2016 Ov. 5-08)

Omnibus Res. A of 2016 assigned numerous overtures from the convention to various entities of the Synod, 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 and 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. Though this report was approved during the 2016–2019 triennium, it was not printed in the 2019 *Workbook*, so it is included in this triennium’s report and the 2023 *Workbook* appendix.

2. *Marriage between Church and State: A Report on Clergy Serving as “Agents of State”* (2016 Res. 14-04)

2016 Res. 14-04 asked the CTCR to consult with the seminaries and other relevant entities 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.” The commission had initially planned to include guidance on this matter in its forthcoming report on human sexuality, but, due to the timely nature of the topic and to renewed requests for advice from various quarters of the Synod, chose to issue this section of its report independently at an earlier date. It was approved unanimously at the June 2021 meeting of the commission. The report maintains that marriage is firstly rooted in natural law rather than civil law or church custom, and thus has always featured a delicate balance between civil regulation and church practice. Despite the substantial changes that have occurred legally and socially in the last decade, nothing would currently prohibit clergy from performing civil marriages or laity from entering civil marriages in accordance with their biblically informed consciences. It also maintains that clergy are not acting as agents of state properly but only incidentally when signing civil marriage licenses. Consequently, it urges laity to seek civil licensure and clergy to sign such marriage licenses until such a time as the government actively prohibits them from doing so in good conscience. The report is included in the *Workbook* appendix.

3. *Order of Creation: Theology, History, Definition* (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 asked the CTCR “to address additional questions and issues,” including the foundational issue of the “order of creation.” In 2016, Res. 5-14 reiterated the need for further study of the order of creation, particularly its biblical, historical, and theological foundations, as well as its pertinent practical applications. After much internal discussion, the commission unanimously adopted a report entitled *Order of Creation: Theology, History, Definition* at its October 2022 meeting. The report first surveys the biblical sources, historical development, and Lutheran interpretation of the concept. It then details its incorporation by the Missouri Synod in 1956 and its interpretation and application within circles in the subsequent decades. It also seeks to clarify the definition of the order of creation in light of ambiguities and disagreements within the Synod’s interpretation. The report argues that the order of creation is a theological concept derived from Scripture, supported by the Lutheran tradition, and affirmed by the Synod, which sheds important light on relationships in the Christian home and church, especially between men and women, but that it also requires more theological precision. Ultimately, it concludes that the Synod has come to relative agreement on the important applications of the order of creation for church worship and leadership, yet greater theological clarity can help the Synod more vigorously bear witness to God as our creator, the goodness of His creation, and the intentionality and design of man and woman, sexuality, marriage, and family. The report is included in the *Workbook* appendix.

4. *A Chaste and Decent Life: An Update to Human Sexuality* (1981) (2016 Res. 14-03; 2019 Res. 11-01A)

In 1981, the CTCR issued a comprehensive report on the theological understanding of sexuality, entitled *Human Sexuality*. In light of cultural changes on the question of marriage and sexuality in the intervening decades, the 2016 LCMS convention directed the commission to update its 1981 report. While in the process of drafting that new report, the commission was urged by the 2019 convention to include special attention to chastity, the vocation of singleness, the nature and significance of Christian marriage, the theology of procreation, and the challenge of infertility. At its December 2022 meeting, the commission reviewed and unanimously adopted a new report entitled *A Chaste and Decent Life: An Update to Human Sexuality* (1981). After thorough study and reflection, the CTCR decided that this report need not replace *Human Sexuality* (1981), which still serves as a helpful summary statement of the Christian theology of marriage and sexuality. To that end, the new report begins with a review of the important affirmations made at the end of *Human Sexuality* (1981), then details how these affirmations have come under attack due to changes in cultural attitudes and practices. Rather than simply responding to those cultural attacks, however, it lays out a creedal, trinitarian basis for Christian sexual ethics. Finally, it explores the theme of “a chaste and decent life” (from Luther’s Small Catechism) as a practical guide to sexual purity for the married and single alike. The report is included in the *Workbook* appendix.

5. *Christian Decision-Making and the End of Life: An Update and Supplement to 1993's Christian Care at Life's End (1977 Res 03-26)*

In compliance with the standing assignment to provide direction in matters of bioethics, the commission reviewed its 1993 report *Christian Care at Life's End* and concluded that an update to that document was needed. The 1993 report had attempted to provide more practical case studies that built on the CTCR's 1979 *Report on Euthanasia with Guiding Principles*, which was appended to *Christian Care at Life's End*. In the intervening years, medical and legal developments, particularly physician-assisted suicide, have changed the landscape dramatically. After outside consultation and internal discussion, a new report was drafted to address those developments from several vantage points: theological foundations for the sanctity of human life, medical-ethical considerations related to end-of-life care and decision-making, and the distinctively Lutheran approach to pastoral care and personal reflection at life's end. It also includes extensive chronological and bibliographical resources as appendices. The commission hopes to approve this report at its April 2023 meeting.

C. Completed Studies and Responses

In addition to its formal reports in response to convention mandates, the CTCR produces other studies and responses, which include (but are not limited to) study documents intended to elicit response and input for future consideration, Bible studies to accompany a report or to serve as a stand-alone document, discussion guides intended for congregational study of a report, responses to ecumenical statements or to publications of other church bodies, among other possibilities implied by the Synod Bylaw 3.9.5.2.1 (a).

1. Responses to Overtures

Omnibus Res. A of the 2019 convention included twelve overtures for referral to the CTCR (and in some cases also to other entities; see 2019 *Proceedings*, 229–30). At its December 2019 meeting, the commission approved responses to those who had submitted these overtures, indicating various ways that their concerns were being or would be addressed.

2. *On the Historical, Biblical, and Confessional Basis of Article VI of the Constitution of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (2010 Res. 8-30B)*

2010 Res. 8-30B “To Study Article VI of Synod’s Constitution” 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.” After conversation with the various other named entities, the commission produced a draft under its own direction. At its April 2019 meeting, the commission approved the study, entitled *On the Historical, Biblical, and Confessional Basis of Article VI of the Constitution of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod*. It was subsequently sent to the Synod President to use and disseminate at his discretion. This study is included in the *Workbook* appendix.

3. ReconcilingWorks Responses

In early 2020, the commission received inquiries and concerns related to materials published in 2019 by an organization called *ReconcilingWorks: Lutherans for Full Participation*, which advo-

cated for LGBT causes in the church through reinterpretations of Scripture and Lutheran theology. The CTCR asked three LCMS seminary professors—the Rev. Dr. Joel Biermann, the Rev. Dr. Thomas Egger, and the Rev. Dr. Timothy Saleska—to write evaluations of these materials on the basis of the theological perspective of the Synod. Two of these responses examine a document titled *Reconciling Scripture for Lutherans*; the other responds to a briefer document titled *Lutheran Introduction to Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, and Gender Expression*. At its March 2021 meeting, the commission approved these responses as “individual opinions recommended for study and consideration” to be published under the auspices of the CTCR, yet with the individual authors’ names.

4. *Lutheran World Federation: An Introduction and Evaluation from the Theological Perspective of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (2019 Res. 5-07A)*

The 2019 convention (Res. 5-07, “To Clarify the Relationship between LCMS Partner Churches and the Lutheran World Federation”) urged the President of the Synod “to engage in fraternal dialogue with partner churches regarding this concern and compile accurate information from them on their existing relationship” to the Lutheran World Federation (LWF). As the entity tasked with assisting the President in his relationship with other church bodies, the CTCR produced an evaluation of the LWF intended for the President’s use in advising partner churches about the LWF, inquiring about the nature of their relationship with the LWF, and urging them to reconsider that relationship. This brief evaluation provides an introduction to the history, organization, values, and publications of the LWF. It also offers criticisms of their confessional basis, understanding of fellowship, support for the ordination of women as pastors, and advocacy for LGBT issues amongst their church bodies. It finally proposes the International Lutheran Council as a biblically and confessionally faithful alternative for church association, support, and resources. The commission unanimously approved this evaluation at its April 2022 meeting. This evaluation is included in the *Workbook* appendix.

D. Standing Assignments and Work in Progress

The CTCR has a number of standing assignments on its agenda stemming from convention resolutions that did not specify a particular response but urged the commission to consider a response as circumstances dictate or to monitor future developments. Additionally, there are other assignments given the commission by convention action that are underway but were not completed in time for the submission of materials to the Secretary of Synod for publication in the convention *Workbook*.

1. Guidelines for Inter-Christian Relationships (1981 Res. 3-03A)

Since 1981, the CTCR has completed a number of documents relating to the subject of inter-church relationships, some in specific response to 1981 Res. 3-03A and subsequent resolutions related to it. These include: *Inter-Christian Relationships: An Instrument for Study* (1992), *The Lutheran Understanding of Church Fellowship: Study Materials* (2000), *The Lutheran Understanding of Church Fellowship: Report on Synodical Discussions* (2001), *Church Relations in the 21st Century* (2009), *Principles for “Cooperation in Externals” with Theological Integrity* (2010), *Theological Dialogue with Other Christian Church Bodies* (2011), and *Policy for The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod Declaring Altar and Pulpit Fellowship with Another Church Body* (2009, rev. 2014, rev. 2021;

see below, II.A.1). The materials are all available on the CTCR's website at lcms.org/ctcr.

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 (e.g., I.C.2, discussed above).

2. Unity in Doctrine and Uniformity and Variety in Practice (2019 Res. 5-11)

2019 Res. 5-11 tasked the CTCR with preparing a report on the relationship between unity in doctrine and uniformity and variety in practice, the language for which is stipulated in Article III.7 of the current LCMS Constitution. After discussing the constitutional history of this issue, the committee is taking a current draft under consideration and intends to produce this report, along with a possible discussion guide or Bible study, in the next triennium.

3. Biblical Six-Day Creation (2019 Res. 5-09A)

2019 Res. 5-09A encouraged pastors to study and discuss various CTCR reports related to biblical six-day creation, including *Creation in Biblical Perspective* (1970), *Together with All Creatures* (2010), and *All Things Hold Together in Christ* (2015). It did not request any direct action from the CTCR, but the commission continues to review its current resources and consider new ones. It also commends its recently approved report on the order of creation as a contribution to this discussion.

4. Beginning of Life Issues (2019 Res. 11-01A)

2016 Task Force 3-04 reviewed all previous CTCR resources related to relevant beginning of life issues and prepared an overture for convention consideration. 2019 Res. 11-01A then asked the CTCR to "review and revisit" all pertinent documents in its corpus "to determine whether and/or where updates to these documents are needed, particularly regarding in vitro fertilization and recent developments in genetic testing, and how such potential updates might best and most effectively be communicated to the Synod." The commission and its staff have reviewed and continue to review these reports with an eye toward if, where, and how updates might be undertaken.

5. To Affirm the Common Humanity of All Peoples and Ethnicities (2019 Res. 11-04A)

The 2019 convention passed Res. 11-04A, which encouraged the use of the CTCR's 1994 report *Racism and the Church*. In the wake of various societal conflicts over race, many members of the Synod, including the President of Synod, commended this report and also asked the commission to further explore various aspects of racism. While the commission found no need to update the 1994 report, it has continued working with the President to address concerns as they arise and to review questions regarding this issue.

6. Provide Assistance regarding Bioethics (1977 Res. 03-26)

The 1977 convention encouraged the CTCR to address the moral implications of developments in bioethics and biomedical technology in order to provide guidance to clergy, workers in those fields, and the entire Synod. The commission uses this standing assignment to address pertinent matters as they arise, such as the new

report on end-of-life decision-making (see I.B.4 above). Under this rubric, it also assisted the Office of the President, in collaboration with the Office of National Mission's Life Ministries, in drafting a statement concerning the Synod's position on vaccines and fetal cell lines.

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 the 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 current (2019–2023) extended triennium, the CTCR received no requests for a bylaw-mandated opinion, but did receive multiple requests from the President of Synod (see I.E.1–2, below). The resulting opinions are printed in the Appendix. Additionally, the CTCR also completed an earlier 2015 request from the South Wisconsin District president (see I.E.3 below).

1. Communion and Covid-19

Following the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic, President Harrison requested that the CTCR staff draft an opinion addressing the propriety of online Communion. On March 20, 2020, the CTCR unanimously approved the staff-drafted opinion, which was then distributed by President Harrison to all district presidents and, subsequently, to all members of the Synod. The opinion appeals to a 2006 opinion regarding DVD consecration as precedent. *Communion and Covid-19* specifically applied three points from the 2006 opinion to the current question: (1) The Words of Institution spoken at consecration should not be separated by time, distance, or means from the distribution and reception of the Sacrament; (2) the pastorally spoken Words of Institution are not an incantation that consecrate the Sacrament through their sound or recording; and (3) no idiosyncrasy or technique for celebrating the Sacrament should distract from or give doubt concerning God's promise given through the Sacrament. In the estimation of the commission, online Communion would raise "doubts or uncertainty about the Sacrament" by departing from its New Testament pattern and practice, and so it refused to endorse either the online consecration of the elements by a pastor while communicants received the elements in their home or the pastor consecrating elements for elders to distribute in homes. This opinion is included in the *Workbook* appendix.

2. "One Little Word Can Fell Him: Addendum to Communion and Covid-19"

In response to the CTCR's *Communion and Covid-19* opinion, an anonymous critique was published, entitled "Communion in Home During Times of Crisis: Scriptural and Confessional Principles" (or CIH). At the request of the President of Synod, CTCR staff drafted a 10-point critique of CIH, which also served as an elaboration of the arguments made in *Communion and Covid-19*.

The commission also included an executive summary of the 10 points. This opinion reaffirmed the earlier positions of *Communion and Covid-19* while urging that LCMS churches refrain from online Communion. This opinion is included in the *Workbook* appendix.

3. Shut-In Communion

In the 2013–2016 triennium, the CTCR received a request for an opinion from the president of the South Wisconsin District on questions related to the administration of the Lord's Supper to shut-ins by a commissioned minister. After due deliberation, at its December 2022 meeting, the commission unanimously approved a response and subsequently communicated it to the South Wisconsin District. This opinion is included in the *Workbook* appendix.

4. Guidelines for Laymen Conducting Public Worship Services

In November 2022, the CTCR received a request from the President of Synod to provide a rationale and recommend guidelines for laymen who must publicly read sermons or conduct worship services in the absence of a pastor, whether in an emergency situation or for an extended period of time. The commission assigned staff to produce a response, which it intends to complete in advance of the Synod convention.

F. Expressions of Dissent

Bylaw section 1.8 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” (Bylaw 1.8.2).

In the 2019–2023 extended triennium, the CTCR received correspondence regarding a potential dissent to the status of C.F.W. Walther's theses on church and ministry. Out of concern for unity and in order to provide further fraternal discussion, the commission and its staff engaged in prolonged correspondence with the prospective dissenter. In 2022, faculty members from both seminaries met independently with the individual in question to discuss his concerns. Both the commission, in several written responses, and the respective faculty representatives, advised the individual that his concerns were unclear and his position not at odds with Walther's theses. Ultimately, the individual chose to reject the commission's opinion on the legitimacy of his dissent and indicated his intention to proceed with an overture to the convention.

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. 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. What follows includes four parts: (A) matters of policy and procedure undertaken to clarify the process leading to recognition of church fellowship; (B) formal requests for fellowship that have been recognized by the commission or are anticipated to be recognized prior to the convention; (C) relationships with church bodies that may eventuate in a formal act of dissolution by the convention; and (D) official

theological conversations with various church bodies that the commission does not believe will eventuate in formal recognition of church fellowship.

A. Policies and Procedural Matters

1. Theological Considerations and Procedural Guidelines regarding Altar and Pulpit Fellowship

At the request of the Synod president in 2003, the CTCR adopted a formal policy for declaring altar and pulpit fellowship, which it subsequently revised in 2014 to reflect convention actions and bylaw changes in the intervening years. Since the 2019 convention amended Bylaw 3.9.5.2.2 concerning the procedure for recognizing altar and pulpit fellowship, the commission again reviewed its policy in order to bring it into conformity with the Synod Bylaws. In addition to a number of changes made for the sake of clarity, the commission inserted a new section (III.E) detailing a “procedure for contemplating and/or recommending the termination of recognition of altar and pulpit fellowship with another church body.” A full text of the policy is included in the *Workbook* appendix.

2. Proposed Bylaw Revisions (Bylaw 3.9.5.2.2)

Following consultation with the Office of the President's director of church relations and the Secretary of Synod, the commission considered revisions to Bylaw 3.9.5.2.2, which pertains to the CTCR's function in the recognition of church fellowship. At its April 2022 meeting, the commission approved the revisions and forwarded them to the Secretary of Synod for consultation with the Commission on Handbook and the Commission on Constitutional Matters. It proposed the elimination of 3.9.5.2.2 (e), which had been added at the 2019 convention, while also clarifying and condensing 3.9.5.2.2 (b–d).

B. Requests for Church Fellowship Approved by the CTCR

In addition to the requests below approved by the CTCR, many existing and new requests for fellowship remain under consideration. In collaboration with the Church Relations staff of the President's Office and the Office of International Mission, the CTCR continues to monitor developments among church bodies requesting fellowship, maintain conversation and correspondence with them, and discuss those requests at meetings of the commission. Due to the sheer volume of such requests, it is inadvisable to include all such relationships in this report until such a time as a request for fellowship is approved by the commission.

1. Evangelical Lutheran Mission Diocese in Finland (ELMDF)

Representatives of the LCMS and ELMDF began formal correspondence and discussions concerning the possibility of fellowship between our two church bodies in 2017. In 2018, the ELMDF was accepted into the International Lutheran Council as a full member. At the same time, the ELMDF formally requested a recognition of fellowship with the LCMS. The ELMDF is in fellowship with several LCMS partner church bodies, including the Lutheran Church–Canada. After further CTCR consideration, the ELMDF, represented by then-bishop Risto Soramies, met with the commission in February 2020. At that meeting, the CTCR voted unanimously to recommend the formal recognition of altar and pulpit fellowship with the ELMDF pursuant to Bylaw 3.9.5.2.2 (c), forwarding its recommendation to the Office of the President for declaration and subsequent endorsement by the Synod in convention. President

Harrison accordingly declared recognition of fellowship with the ELMDF in October 2020. The CTCR has submitted an overture to the 2023 convention urging formal endorsement by the Synod in convention.

2. Evangelical Lutheran Church in South Sudan/Sudan (ELCSS/S)

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in South Sudan and Sudan (ELCSS/S) was established in 1993 and initially submitted a request for fellowship in 1999, which was subsequently renewed in 2005 and 2013 due to various tensions within the church body and changes to its administration. Following discussion by the CTCR in 2013 and meetings between LCMS officials and ELCSS/S representatives in 2015, new bishop Peter Anibati Abia renewed the request for fellowship in 2018. After further deliberations by the CTCR and a meeting between CTCR representatives and Bishop Abia in April 2021, the CTCR invited Bishop Abia to join the full commission at its September 2021 meeting for formal discussions toward church fellowship. At its subsequent meeting in December 2021, the CTCR voted unanimously to recommend the formal recognition of altar and pulpit fellowship with the ELCSS/S pursuant to Bylaw 3.9.5.2.2 (c), forwarding its recommendation to the Office of the President for declaration and subsequent endorsement by the Synod in convention. President Harrison accordingly declared recognition of fellowship with the ELCSS/S in August 2022, and the fellowship between our churches was publicly announced in a joint worship service held on Sept. 18, 2022, in Kisumu, Kenya. The CTCR has submitted an overture to the 2023 convention urging formal endorsement by the Synod in convention.

3. Lutheran Church of Uganda (LCU)

The Lutheran Church of Uganda (LCU) began as a mission effort of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Ghana (ELCG) in 1993, with the support and cooperation of the LCMS, including service by the Synod's missionaries. In 2015, the LCU officially became a self-governing church body independent of the ELCG and subsequently, in 2016, submitted a request for altar and pulpit fellowship. The commission took the request into consideration during the 2016–2019 triennium and continued discussion into the present extended triennium, before finally inviting Bishop Charles Bameka and other representatives of the LCU for discussion at its October 2022 meeting. At that October 2022 meeting, the commission voted unanimously to recommend the recognition of altar and pulpit fellowship under Bylaw 3.9.5.2.2 (b) and has submitted an overture urging this action for consideration by the Synod at the 2023 convention.

4. Evangelical Lutheran Church of Ukraine (ELCU)

Lutheranism came to Ukraine near the end of the 18th century with the migration of German farmers and craftsmen invited by the Russian czar to work in and help develop Ukraine. The ELCU has its roots in the German Evangelical Lutheran Church of Ukraine (GELCU), which was established in 1992. The Rev. Serge Maschewski was elected as Bishop of GELCU in 2013 and took office in 2014. At its Feb. 16–18, 2023, meeting, the CTCR met face-to-face with Bishop Maschewski to consider a 2019 request by the ELCU to enter into church fellowship with the LCMS. Following extensive discussion and thorough examination of documents setting forth the ELCU's doctrine, practice, and polity, the commission voted unanimously to recommend recognition of altar and pulpit fellowship under Bylaw 3.9.5.2.2 (b) and has submitted an

overture urging this action for consideration by the Synod at the 2023 convention.

5. Ceylon Evangelical Lutheran Church in Sri Lanka (CELC)

The Ceylon Evangelical Lutheran Church in Sri Lanka (CELC) traces its origins to the efforts of LCMS missionaries. It was formerly known as the Lanka Lutheran Church and enjoyed altar and pulpit fellowship with the LCMS for a number of years until it ceased to exist in 2007. The Synod continued work in Sri Lanka, and the former Lanka Lutheran Church was reconstituted as the CELC in 2017. At its Feb. 16–18, 2023, meeting, the CTCR considered and ultimately approved (unanimously) a recommendation from the Synod's Board for International Mission (per Bylaw 3.9.5.2.2 [d]) to memorialize the Synod to recognize the CELC as a self-governing partner church with which the LCMS is in altar and pulpit fellowship. The BIM has submitted an overture urging this action for consideration by the Synod at the 2023 convention.

C. Dissolution of Church Fellowship

Japan Lutheran Church (JLC)

The Japan Lutheran Church (JLC) began with LCMS mission work in 1948, eventually forming its own autonomous church body in 1968 and entering altar and pulpit fellowship with the LCMS in 1971. In recent decades, however, advocacy for women's ordination within the JLC has led to serious concerns from the perspective of the Synod. After nearly three decades of internal debate, at its 2008 convention, the JLC proposed an alteration of its bylaws to allow for the ordination of women. As a result, then LCMS President Gerald Kieschnick raised strong concerns with the JLC and initiated conversations between LCMS representatives and leaders of the JLC, who met four times between February 2009 and August 2010. President Matthew Harrison resumed those conversations through his Office of Church Relations between August 2017 and June 2019.

Though JLC did not act upon its 2008 proposal, which was attempted again in 2011, they had already permitted one female deacon to be ordained and subsequently ordained another in 2021. On April 20, 2021, the JLC officially changed its position and amended its bylaws to allow for the ordination of women. Upon notification, President Harrison advised the JLC, with much sadness and regret, that its actions had severed the theological basis for altar and pulpit fellowship (that is, complete agreement in doctrine and practice) that it had shared with the LCMS and that he intended to bring this matter before the Synod convention for consideration.

As part of its newly revised policy regarding theological and procedural guidelines for church fellowship, the commission inserted a specific process detailing the procedure for recognizing the cessation of church fellowship with a partner church (see II.A.1 above). It concludes with the following step (III.E.7):

If as a result of these discussions the concerns leading to the initiation of this process are not able to be resolved, the president of the Synod, speaking the truth in love, shall convey this decision clearly to the head of the church body in question, indicating the need to bring this serious matter to the attention of the Synod in convention. The president may then advise the CTCR to prepare an overture regarding this matter for consideration by the next Synod convention. He shall also determine the best and most appropriate way(s) to inform the members of the Synod and the Synod's partner

churches of this regrettable situation and the need to place this matter before the Synod in convention.

After consultation with the President and his Office of Church Relations, the CTCR has adjudged that such a dissolution is warranted. At its February 2023 meeting, the commission approved an overture for submission to the 2023 convention recommending recognition of dissolution of fellowship with the JLC.

D. Meetings and Discussions with Other Churches and Groups

Since the inception of the CTCR in 1962, when it absorbed the responsibilities of the church relations-focused Committee on Doctrinal Unity (1962 Res. 6-03), the commission has regularly represented the President of Synod in official contacts with other church bodies. At the President's request, the CTCR has been involved in many official and unofficial theological conversations with a variety of Christian denominations and organizations over the years. For an explanation of the role and benefits of such conversations, even where full altar and pulpit fellowship may not be immediately foreseen, the commission commends its 2011 report *Theological Dialogue with Other Christian Bodies*. In the last decade, the CTCR has participated in three such discussions: the Anglican Church in North America (in collaboration with the Lutheran Church–Canada), the North American Lutheran Church (in collaboration with the Lutheran Church–Canada), and jointly with the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod and Evangelical Lutheran Synod.

1. Anglican Church in North America

Four 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, the Rev. Dr. Jonathan Shaw and the Rev. Michael Frese of the Office of the President; the Rev. Dr. Lehenbauer, the Rev. Dr. Serina, and the Rev. Dr. Vogel of the CTCR; the Rev. Dr. Lawrence Rast, president of Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne; and the Rev. Dr. Frederick Baue. Because the ACNA has a number of congregations in Canada, representatives from the Lutheran Church–Canada (LCC), including the Rev. Dr. John Stephenson, LCC President the Rev. Timothy Teuscher, former LCC President the Rev. Dr. Robert Bugbee, and the Rev. Joel Kuhl, chair of the LCC's Commission on Theology and Church Relations, 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. Meetings were limited during the pandemic, but discussions continued to address questions of ordination, women in ministry, and increasing cultural challenges to moral issues. The agenda

for the next triennium is to include discussion of a theologically faithful approach to ecumenical dialogue, the office and role of the diaconate in the respective theological traditions, and possible collaborations in public advocacy for First Article matters, such as biblical marriage, biblical sexuality, and pro-life positions.

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 during the last triennium included the Rev. Dr. Jonathan Shaw and the Rev. Michael Frese of the Office of the President; the Rev. Dr. John Pless of Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne; and the Rev. Dr. Lehenbauer, the Rev. Dr. Serina, and the Rev. Dr. Vogel of the CTCR. The NALC was represented by Bp. Dan Selbo, the Rev. Dr. David Wendel, the Rev. Dr. James Nestingen, the Rev. Mark Chavez, the Rev. Dr. Eric Riesen, and the Rev. Dr. Maurice Lee. The Rev. Dr. Bugbee and the Rev. Michael Keith represented the LCC. Due to the pandemic and much turnover among delegations, much of the triennium was spent revisiting prior discussions, including its 2016 joint statement on biblical authority, titled "God's Word Forever Shall Abide." In the coming triennium, the dialogue will address the background to the various Lutheran synods in America and the relations among them, the nature of the relationship among our synods at the present time and going forward, and the Lutheran view of Scripture and the Confessions in contrast with Protestant fundamentalism and evangelicalism.

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 been held on an annual basis, with the most recent discussions in December 2022. 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 recent triennium were the office of the pastoral ministry, church fellowship, the role of women, the interpretation of the Lutheran Confessions, and the current hymnals published by each church body. 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 Bylaw 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 web site designated "Evaluations" (see lcms.org/ctcr). Evaluations fall into two general categories: Lodge Organizations and 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. New topics addressed include Alpha Course, Fellowship of Christian Athletes, Gideons International, Joel Osteen, Joyce Meyer Ministries, Moralistic Therapeutic Deism, Newer Atheists, Red Letter Christians, Secularism, Shriner's International, and Universalism. 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:

Alpha Course

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)

Churchless Christianity

Cults—An Overview (also available in Spanish)

Cursillo Movement (also available in Spanish)

Emergent Church

Enneagram

Fellowship of Christian Athletes

Gideons International

Gnosticism

God's Learning Channel

Hinduism

Human Potential Movement

Islam (also available in Spanish)

Jehovah's Witnesses (also available in Spanish)

Joel Osteen

Joyce Meyer Ministries

Judaism

Kabbalah

Latter Day Saints (also available in Spanish)

Moralistic Therapeutic Deism

Near Death Experiences (also available in Spanish)

New Age Movement

New Atheism

Newer Atheists

Rastafarians

Red Letter Christians

Reiki

Restorationism

Salvation Army

Satanism

Secular Humanism (also available in Spanish)

Secularism

Seventh-day Adventism (also available in Spanish)

Shriner's International

Swedenborgianism (New Church)

The International Churches of Christ (also available in Spanish)

The Occult (also available in Spanish)

Theophotic Prayer Ministry

Transhumanism

Unification Church (also available in Spanish)

Unitarian-Universalist Association (UUA)

United Pentecostal Church International

Unity School of Christianity

Universalism

Vineyard Ministries

Wicca

Word-Faith Movement

Yoga

Lawrence Rast, *Chairman*

Joel D. Lehenbauer, *Executive Director*

(Approved by the CTCR, February 17, 2023)

R13

Pastoral Formation Committee

The Synod's Pastoral Formation Committee (PFC), comprised of the Chief Mission Officer (chair, voting), the presidents of the seminaries (voting), and the Executive Director of the Office of Pastoral Education (nonvoting advisory), is tasked with the following regular assignments under 2019 Bylaw 3.10.4ff.:

- Ensure that the Synod's objective of training pastors is filled consistently.
- Recommend any new routes leading to ordination for approval by resolution of the Synod (following consultation with the seminaries' boards of regents in their annual joint meeting).
- Review, assess, coordinate, support, and make suggestions for improvement of all existing noncolloquy routes leading to ordination in the Synod.
- Monitor and receive reports from all directors and committees charged with oversight of all routes to ordination and

foster coordination and collaboration between such directors and committees.

- Consider the long-term strategic direction of the Synod's pastoral formation and facilitate discussion of the same with the seminaries' boards of regents in their annual joint meeting.

Over the 2019–2023 quadrennium, the PFC convened consistently as deemed needed and beneficial (and far more frequently than the minimum once-per-year requirement per 2019 Bylaw 3.10.4.7), via face-to-face and Zoom meetings, in order to carry out its above-listed duties, including consultations and facilitation of discussions with the seminaries' boards of regents in their annual joint meetings and fostering of coordination and collaboration with various directors and committees involved in the Synod's programs of pastoral formation. The PFC is recommending no new routes to ordination for approval by resolution of the Synod at the current 2023 convention.

Beyond such regular PFC duties, most notable over the quadrennium was the PFC's ongoing work to fulfill assignments given to it under three resolutions adopted by the Synod at the 2019 convention:

1. Resolution 6-02, "To Promote Residential Seminary Education as the Preferred Option for the Preparation of Men for Pastoral Ministry"
2. Resolution 6-03A, "To Enhance the Specific Ministry Pastor (SMP) Program"
3. Resolution 6-04, "To Support, Encourage, and Expect Continuing Education for all Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod Pastors"

A separate PFC document, **Report R60** in this convention workbook, presents the PFC's response to these above-listed convention resolution assignments. The PFC has also submitted a separate overture to the current 2023 convention (also in this convention workbook) with proposed actions emerging from its observations, conclusions, and recommendations as set forth in **Report R60**.

Kevin D. Robson, *Chief Mission Officer*

R13.1

Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri

The mission of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis (CSL) flows from the Gospel of Jesus Christ. God has sent His own Son into the world to redeem sinners by His death and resurrection. The Good News of repentance, forgiveness, and eternal life in His name is being preached to the ends of the earth. Concordia Seminary is a part of Christ's beautiful, life-giving mission. We are grateful heirs of the Reformation as we teach, preach, and confess in accord with the scriptural, Christ-centered witness of the Lutheran Confessions. We serve church and world by providing theological education and leadership centered in the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ for the formation of pastors, missionaries, deaconesses, scholars, and leaders in the name of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. Thanks be to God that, since our founding in 1839, more than 13,000 workers have gone forth from Concordia Seminary to bring to all nations the life and hope found only in Jesus.

Concordia Seminary prepares and forms pastors through two residential programs (Master of Divinity and Residential Alternate

Route) and a number of distance programs tailored to those serving specific ministry contexts. We prepare deaconesses in both residential and distance programs. Concordia Seminary also trains scholars and leaders for the church through our Advanced Studies programs.

As we carry out this mission, student recruitment is a key priority. We know that the Synod is looking to us to provide future pastors, deaconesses, and missionaries. While our overall enrollment remains strong, with about 600 full- and part-time students across all our programs, we recognize the need to encourage more people to offer themselves for full-time Gospel service. Toward that end, we have assembled an outstanding Enrollment team and are pursuing a number of new recruitment initiatives. The Lord of the harvest is answering our prayers and blessing our efforts: the applications for our Master of Divinity pastoral formation program for 2023–24 are up 40 percent over last year.

The effort to identify and encourage prospective church workers must be a churchwide effort, and many throughout the church are joining hands toward this end. The Synod's *Set Apart to Serve* initiative is leading the charge in developing practical resources for congregations, pastors, and parents to encourage church work vocations, both among young people and among second-career members. Concordia Seminary has been directly involved with and is enthusiastically supportive of and grateful for the *Set Apart to Serve* program. We are grateful to the LCMS districts for their strong appeal for future pastors and deaconesses at district conventions and for district-level recruitment initiatives. We are also partnering with our sister seminary in Fort Wayne in joint marketing and recruitment efforts to sound forth the call throughout the church that a life of ministry in Christ's name is a beautiful, joyful, challenging, fulfilling calling. In 2021, Concordia Seminary and Concordia Theological Seminary received a \$1 million grant from Lilly Endowment Inc. to collaborate and establish our "Partnership for Pastoral Formation: Setting Our Course for Future Church Leadership," coordinating our efforts to recruit future pastors and deaconesses.

Significant milestones for Concordia Seminary since the last Synod convention include completion of a highly successful fundraising campaign, a transition in leadership, re-engagement with our worldwide partners, accreditation visits and the development of a new five-year strategic plan. Begun in 2012 and concluding in 2020, our *Generations* and *Generations 20/20* campaigns raised \$285 million for Concordia Seminary—\$39 million more than the original goal. Such generosity on the part of the church funded Seminary endowments, annual expenses, the complete renovation of the Kristine Kay Hasse Memorial Library, renovation of on-campus faculty houses (on what is now designated as McCall Terrace), and student scholarships. The most recent years have seen record annual gift support as the LCMS continues to value and fund the preparation of future church workers at her seminaries. Thank you!

In February 2021, Dr. Thomas Egger was elected as the 11th president of Concordia Seminary and accepted the call to succeed Dr. Dale Meyer. Egger is a Concordia Seminary graduate and, after serving as a parish pastor in Storm Lake, Iowa, for five years, has served on the faculty since 2005. In March 2022, Dr. Ronald Mudge was called to serve as provost to carry on the able work of Dr. Douglas Rutt, who was retiring from that role. Mudge is also a Concordia Seminary alumnus and, after serving as a missionary and theological educator in French-speaking Africa for 10 years,

had served as professor of theology and pre-seminary director at Concordia University Wisconsin since 2007.

Like all schools, Concordia Seminary carried out its mission with numerous modifications and restrictions during the COVID-19 pandemic. One of the great joys of our return to normal, along with a renewed sense of campus community, has been a vigorous re-engagement with our worldwide partnerships and involvements. Confessional Lutheran churches and seminaries from around the world—seemingly from everywhere—are looking to our LCMS seminaries to provide graduate-level theological study on our campuses for their future professors and leaders and to provide faculty expertise and short-term courses for groups of pastors and deaconesses in their countries. During the pandemic, most of these partnerships had to be halted. With the resumption of world travel, existing partnerships have resumed and new partnerships have been initiated, including involvements in Taiwan, the Dominican Republic, Brazil, Ethiopia, Norway, Finland, Latvia, and Europe and Africa more generally.

Concordia Seminary is hosting visits this year from our two accrediting agencies, the Higher Learning Commission and the Association of Theological Schools. In preparation for these every-10-year reviews, we document our work and demonstrate our academic, institutional, and financial integrity to external accreditors. The self-analysis and the external critique involved in the process lead to ongoing improvements in our seminary's work. Accreditation confirms the confidence placed in Concordia Seminary not only by higher education peers but also by the people of the LCMS and, importantly, by worldwide partner churches and partner seminaries.

In 2022, the Board of Regents adopted the *Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Strategic Plan 2022–26*. The plan was developed with input from a broad cross-section of our seminary's constituencies within the LCMS. It lists nine guiding objectives that undergird the plan:

1. Keep God's written Word at the center of ministerial formation.
2. Continue to add quality faculty. It is the faculty who execute our mission and determine our impact.
3. Creatively strengthen our short-term and long-term efforts in student recruitment.
4. Instill in our students a fervent *both-and* commitment to Lutheran teaching and outreach to the lost.
5. Make the case to the broader church for the distinct value of residential theological formation in community, even as we seek to be realistic and responsive to the church's varied situations and needs.
6. Cultivate shared forms of piety and form a praying ministerium through the centrality of daily chapel in our Seminary life.
7. Cultivate a *community* of learning, hospitality, and mutual service.
8. Maintain strong collaborative and respectful relationships within the LCMS at all levels.
9. Resource international Lutheranism with clear biblical and confessional Lutheran teaching.

The plan contains 42 specific initiatives supporting the following key priorities:

Priority #1: Faithful and Full-Person Formation

Priority #2: Commitment to Community and Collaboration

Priority #3: Strong Recruitment and Enrollment

Priority #4: Lutheran Resources and Worldwide Impact

A copy of the plan is available at: csl.edu/about.

We carry out our vocation at Concordia Seminary under our Lord's mercy and in full confidence of His help and of the fruitfulness of His Word. God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son. He loves the world still, and so we know that our work to share Christ's Gospel pleases Him and will be blessed by Him. We gather each morning in our chapel to hear the voice of our Shepherd and receive His gifts and, in turn, to call upon Him in prayer and joyfully sing His praises. The chapel is the center of our life and work because Christ is the center of our life and work. His mercy. His forgiveness. His Word. His hope. From this crucial center, our life and work flow out to our classrooms, to our campus life together, to the broader church, and to the ends of the earth.

On behalf of the students, faculty, and staff of Concordia Seminary, thank you to the people of the LCMS for the privilege of serving with you. Thank you for your enthusiastic financial support. Thank you for entrusting future church workers to us for instruction and formation. Thank you for your prayers, for your witness, and for your work in Jesus' name.

Thomas J. Egger, *President*

R13.2

Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Indiana

Concordia Theological Seminary (CTSFW) 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. Listed below are several among the many blessings your seminary has experienced over the past four years:

Planning for the Future

- We experience strong leadership with Dr. Lawrence R. Rast Jr., who was unanimously reappointed for his third term as president of CTSFW.
- A key component to that leadership is guiding CTSFW in the development and implementation of the seminary's strategic plan. The 2021–24 plan has focused on improving campus operations and preparing the seminary for the future. This has included moving multiple data silos to a single Salesforce organization to enable collaboration between departments based on real-time shared data and reorganizing the administrative structure as part of succession planning and leadership development. Strategically focusing our time and efforts frees CTSFW to embrace new opportunities and challenges and to build on what it means to be distinctively Lutheran, community-oriented, and committed to excellence.
- In order to think creatively yet in a disciplined manner about the future, CTSFW has engaged in a scenario planning process. This process has enabled the seminary to challenge the

status quo and to imagine and rehearse plausible alternative future scenarios.

Faithful Stewardship

- CTSFW paid off all institutional debt at the end of the 2022 fiscal year! CTSFW is committed to faithful and transparent stewardship of all its resources and in all its business practices.
- One hundred percent tuition assistance is guaranteed for all pastoral and diaconal residential students. Ongoing support from districts, congregations, and individual donors is critical to fulfilling this for your future pastors and deaconesses.
- Creation of new scholarships (Regents', President's, Provost's, and the Dr. Rosa J. Young scholarship) for expenses beyond tuition provide support in addition to the 100 percent tuition-assistance guarantee. This is only made possible by our Lord's gracious provision and the incredible outpouring of support received from His people.
- CTSFW successfully completed CTSFW's first comprehensive campaign under the theme "Make Known His Deeds!" Exceeding the goal for the campaign, CTSFW raised just over \$82 million to support vital day-to-day operations and provide 100 percent tuition assistance to relieve students and their families of the burden of incurring debt.
- The Dean O. Wenthe Chair in Old Testament Theology was established, and Dr. Jeffrey Pulse was appointed as the first holder of this chair.
- CTSFW received full accreditation for all academic programs from the Association of Theological Schools (ATS) and the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools. The accreditors noted that CTSFW's "mission and [Lutheran] identity permeate, animate, and guide the school and are supported by a strong sense of community." They also complimented the seminary for "exceptional financial stewardship and generosity of the seminary's constituency (both local and global) that make it possible for students to graduate with manageable debt." The next accreditation visit will be in 2030.

Students to Serve Christ and His Church

- Faithful, caring, mission-minded students from all areas of the United States and around the world 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. Nevertheless, as our Lord states in Matthew 9:37–38, "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."
- CTSFW continues 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.

- CTSFW continues to offer the largest deaconess formation program in the LCMS through our MA in Deaconess Studies program offered both residually and in a distance mode (consisting of online and intensive on-campus courses).
- CTSFW expanded our graduate programs beyond the PhD in Missiology to also offer a PhD in Theological Studies with emphases in Old Testament, New Testament, Doctrine, and Lutheran Confessions. Our first students in the PhD–TS program are now in the dissertation stage and will be important theological educators in the future for our seminaries and universities and in mission contexts.

Global Impact

- CTSFW has partnered with *Seminario Luterano El Reformador* in the Dominican Republic and the LCMS Office of International Mission to provide pastoral and diaconal formation in Spanish for the countries of Latin America.
- Four cohorts of students graduated from CTSFW's Master of Sacred Theology (STM) extension site operated jointly with the Lutheran School of Theology in Gothenburg, Sweden. This extension site provides the opportunity for advanced theological study for students largely from Scandinavia and eastern Europe.
- CTSFW launched the Lutheran Leadership Development Program (LLDP) in collaboration with the International Lutheran Council, Concordia Publishing House, and the LCMS to provide Lutheran church bodies around the world an opportunity to develop leaders who are competent in both solid confessional Lutheran theology as well as practical skills in leadership and resource management. The LLDP held its first commencement exercises in November 2022, awarding the Certificate in Theology in Lutheran Leadership to four graduates from Ghana, Ethiopia, South Africa, and Tanzania.

Resourcing the Church

- Our outstanding faculty has rich pastoral ministry experience as well as the highest academic credentials from such outstanding universities as Vanderbilt, Michigan, Notre Dame, Wisconsin, Marquette, Harvard, Yale, Durham, and Basel.
- *Concordia Theological Quarterly* is praised internationally as a very significant journal for fostering confessional Lutheranism.
- CTSFW's magazine, *For the Life of the World*, is read by over 25,000 people domestically and internationally.
- Nearly 1,000 people from around the world view CTSFW's chapel services daily via livestream on social media and the website.
- Between 400 and 600 pastors, church workers, and laity participate in an average of 35 continuing education courses each year. Roughly 750 more participate in CTSFW's annual on-campus conferences and workshops.
- The successful Christ Academy offerings were expanded with the 2023 launch of the Christ Academy: Family Institute (CAFI), focused on assisting parents, caregivers, pastors, and youth-focused church workers. The goals of CAFI are to help participants raise godly and faithful families and

resource them for this task, while also strengthening marriages and families.

CTSFW has served the Synod faithfully by making the blessings of the church available to a world in need of Christ's salvation. Our seminary's seal bears the inscription "Preach the Word." For over 177 years, CTSFW has formed servants who proclaim Christ and Him crucified. Maybe our Lord is calling you to be one of those who will teach the faithful, reach the lost, and care for all. Or maybe you know someone who you think would serve well but you're not sure how to encourage them. Get in touch with us. We would love to start that conversation with you.

We invite you to get to know CTSFW. Visit our website at 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 in bringing the saving Gospel into all the world.

Lawrence R. Rast Jr., *President*

R14

Concordia University System

The reason for being (*raison d'être*) of the Concordia University System (CUS) is the incarnation, life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ. It is in Him that all knowledge can be rightly ordered and understood: "He is before all things and in Him all things hold together" (Col. 1:17). This truth flows forth from the confession of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) that grace alone, faith alone, Scripture alone, and Christ alone are the pillars of the Christian faith as articulated in The Lutheran Confessions and the Book of Concord.

The formal incorporation of the CUS in 1992 combined the historic ministry of Synod's colleges and universities into a collaborative unit for the benefit and enrichment of all the schools. Each of the schools, from their founding, was "owned and operated" by the LCMS.

The years since the 2019 Synod convention have been especially challenging for institutions of higher learning across North America. Societal and cultural forces that have created challenges include a demographic decline in the historic pool of prospective students, an increase in often intrusive accrediting and government regulations, the complex impact of distance education on all institutions, increasing economic challenges for students, and the competitive presence of junior colleges and cognate institutions. One overview suggests that between 2004 and 2020, some 826 colleges and universities closed. Thirty-five institutions were shuttered in 2021.

The CUS was also impacted by these realities. Concordia University, Portland (2020) and Concordia College—New York (2021) were closed by their respective boards of regents due to legal insolvency (cf. Bylaw 3.10.6.4 [i][7]) despite generous efforts by the LCMS, the CUS, and the Lutheran Church Extension Fund to continue their ministries. Recruitment and financial challenges were simply too great.

The CUS gives thanks for the long and distinguished histories of both of these institutions. It is impossible adequately to thank and recall the generations of dedicated administrators, professors, parents, and students who made up these communities of worship,

learning, music, sports, and camaraderie with the Christian and Lutheran faith at their center. Even as we mourn their closures, we rejoice over their many achievements and the manner in which impacted students were invited to transfer to sister Concordia universities.

Another cause for thanksgiving is the superlative manner in which the Concordia universities navigated the crisis of the COVID-19 pandemic. While many institutions suffered immense setbacks, the Concordia university presidents, with very different contextual challenges, deftly deployed both in-person and online instruction to serve their students and minimize losses.

The ongoing health and vibrancy of our remaining institutions can be largely credited to capable and gifted new presidents who were installed in the last quadrennium: Dr. Eric Ankerberg at Concordia University Wisconsin and Ann Arbor; Dr. Bernard Bull at Concordia University, Nebraska; Dr. Russell Dawn at Concordia University Chicago; and Dr. Michael Thomas at Concordia University, Irvine. Thanks are also in order for the Rev. Dr. Brian Friedrich's splendid leadership of Concordia University, St. Paul, after his move from the presidency of Concordia University, Nebraska. While many schools of higher learning were established with explicitly Christian convictions but over time have lost any vestige of the Christian faith, these presidents promote and value the Christian and Lutheran faith by placing it at the center of campus life and learning.

As evidence that the institutions of the CUS remain defined by and embedded in the witness of the church, the presidents and their boards of regents have expressed their solidarity with the church's mission in an identity statement. This identity statement and supporting protocols will continue to define the universities in the 2023–2026 triennium. The church can rightly rejoice and give thanks for the following:

Lutheran Identity Standards for Concordia University Institutions

As educational institutions of the LCMS, the colleges and universities of the CUS 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 CUS affirm and promise to uphold these identity standards:

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.

Governing Board—All of the institution's regents are active members in good standing of LCMS congregations (Bylaws 3.10.6.2–3).

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.

Faculty—Each tenure track or continuing-level faculty search is given optimal exposure among members of congregations of the LCMS to identify 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 3.10.6.7.2).

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 Synod 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).

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 3.10.6.7.2).

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.

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.

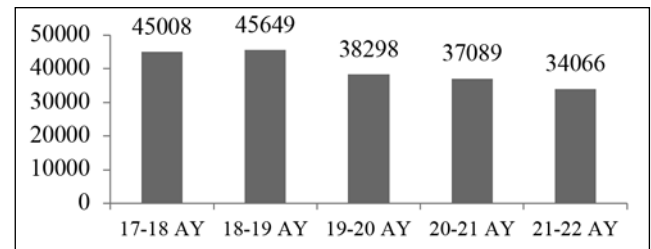
Preparation of Church Workers—The institution provides resources to recruit, form, nurture, and place students preparing for professional church work in the LCMS (e.g., pre-seminary, pre-deaconess, deaconess, Lutheran teachers, DCEs, DCOs, DPMs, etc.). Specific programs may vary by campus.

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.

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.

CUS Institution Enrollment & Financial Data

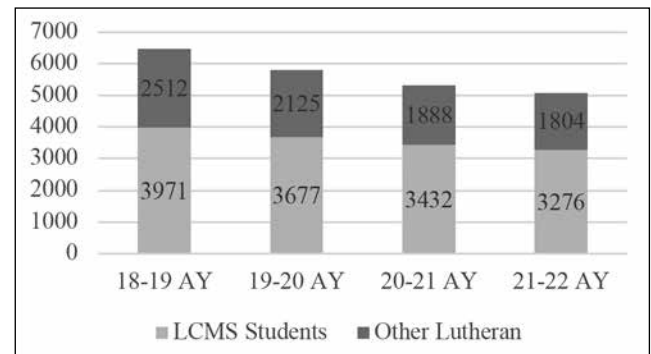
Academic Year Headcount Enrollment



* Data collection by CUS changed to prior-year full-year data collection with the reports.

** CUP last reported in AY 18–19 data and CCNY last reported in AY 20–21 data.

Lutheran Students (Self-Reported)*

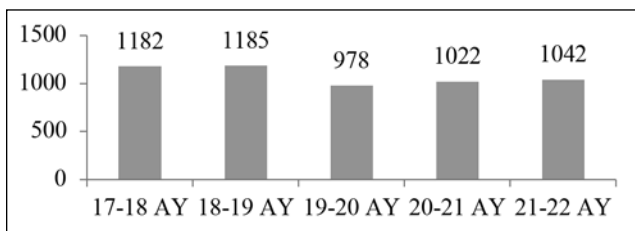


Operating Budgets 2018–2022

Institution	FY2018	FY2019	FY2020	FY2021	FY2022
Ann Arbor	<i>included in Mequon</i>				
Austin	\$39,814,561	\$42,755,502	\$46,927,963	\$51,235,900	NA
Bronxville	\$34,888,824	\$29,373,352	NA	NA	NA
Irvine	\$70,221,333	\$71,701,964	\$70,197,606	\$68,107,463	\$76,236,284
Mequon	\$119,511,984	\$120,032,892	\$115,857,079	\$117,524,016	\$125,054,525
Portland	\$89,403,323	\$95,327,367	NA	NA	NA
River Forest	\$73,982,627	\$75,816,295	\$76,859,464	\$78,162,248	\$72,888,531
St. Paul	\$56,143,547	\$56,785,621	\$65,212,196	\$79,515,690	\$83,066,145
Seward	\$38,779,623	\$38,792,880	\$35,915,125	\$43,469,765	\$40,052,540
TOTAL	\$522,745,822	\$530,585,873	\$410,969,433	\$438,015,082	\$397,298,025

NOTE: At the time of the filing deadline for the Convention Workbook the data for FY2022 for Concordia Texas was not available. Concordia Portland and Concordia New York data reported is last available due to closures.

* Includes graduate and undergraduate students.

Church-Vocations Students*

* Includes graduate students seeking certification and rostered workers pursuing graduate degrees.

Placement of Ministers of Religion—Commissioned 2019–2022*

Category	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022
Teacher	138	165	143
DCE	23	23	24
Lay Minister / Director of Church Ministries**	5	4	4
DCO	2	2	1
Deaconess (incl. Seminaries)	10	16	17
Parish Music	7	9	6
Family Life	4	7	2
Totals	189	226	197

* Includes colloquy placements.

** Reflects program/category name change at Concordia University Wisconsin.

Scholarships and Financial Aid by Institutions for Four Years Ending June 30, 2022

	FY2019	FY2020	FY2021	FY2022
Austin	\$19,073,490	\$19,424,400	\$18,900,400	NA
Bronxville	\$9,410,808	NA	NA	NA
Irvine	\$25,524,934	\$26,311,274	\$28,377,720	\$27,887,884
Mequon	\$43,674,337	\$49,894,988	\$53,102,419	\$49,990,319
Portland	NA	NA	NA	NA
River Forest	\$22,291,026	\$22,768,560	\$20,581,728	\$20,482,579
St. Paul	\$20,073,248	\$21,767,077	\$26,030,776	\$29,772,265
Seward	\$24,344,718	\$24,853,584	\$26,666,271	\$25,373,149
Totals	\$164,392,561	\$165,019,883	\$173,659,314	\$153,506,196

Church Worker Financial Aid by Institution Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 2022

	FY2022 Total	FY2022 # of CW	FY2022 Avg. Aid	FY2021 Total
Austin	650,184	29	22,420	785,880
Bronxville	NA	NA	NA	NA
Irvine	2,211,174	87	25,416	1,929,508
Mequon	Not Reported	Not Reported	NA	Not Reported
Portland	NA	NA	NA	NA
River Forest	1,995,613	81	24,637	1,082,291
St. Paul	708,938	47	15,084	640,460
Seward	5,040,954	221	22,810	5,445,489
Totals	10,606,863	465	22,810	9,883,628

CUENet Update

The Concordia University Education Network (CUENet), a cooperative operation of the Concordia University institutions to provide online colloquy education for teachers continues its work under the umbrella of the CUS. Since the 2019 convention, many staff changes have taken place. Long-time Senior Director, the Rev. Dr. Ray Halm, was called to glory. Dr. Heather Stueve accepted a call, and two additional staff members have departed.

The presidents of the CUS institutions are currently evaluating the operation of CUENet and working to enhance the programs being offered. This is being done in light of a comprehensive review of CUENet that also transpired during the triennium.

Following is data related to CUENet's students, placements, and operations.

Total Enrolled Teacher Colloquy Students

	2019***	2020	2021	2022
Enrolled*	80	68	104	51
Completed	76	66	56	32**

*Not including non-teacher colloquy applicants in enrollment.

**I have sent 21 files to the universities for interviews, but I have not received interview assessments back yet.

*** 2019 numbers are for the whole year.

Total Operational Expense and Total Income

	FY22	FY21	FY20
Operational Expenses	\$417,227	\$487,530	\$517,707
Total Income	\$645,432	\$622,602	\$695,727
Tuition and Fees	\$395,498	\$230,242	\$286,404
Gifts and Grants	\$287,500	\$378,550	\$388,974
Interest	\$12,434	\$13,810	\$20,349

Goals for the Concordia University System in the Triennium—2023–2026

Completely dependent on the grace and mercy of the Triune God, the CUS seeks to achieve these goals in the coming triennium of the LCMS:

1. Ensure and defend the freedom of CUS 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, 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 non-rostered 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 underscoring 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.

A Special and Urgent Matter: Concordia University Texas

The CUS board regrets to inform the delegates to the 2023 Synod convention of an unprecedented action that was taken by the board majority of Concordia University Texas (CTX) though a significant minority voted against such an action on or about Nov. 8, 2022. Without the approval of the CUS board, the board majority purportedly adopted a governance model in an attempt to transform its governance into a self-governing and self-perpetuating board completely independent of the CUS and the LCMS and delivered its newly adopted governance documents to the Texas Secretary of State.

Previously, on Nov. 4, 2022, the CUS board considered CTX governance documents and was preparing a complete analysis and response to send to the Board of Regents of CTX, only to learn that the Board of Regents had acted on Nov. 8 without our approval or input. The Board of Regents proposed and purportedly approved a governing model, namely a self-perpetuating, autonomous, and completely independent board separate from the CUS and the LCMS.

In response, and acting in accord with the protocols of Matt. 18:15–17, the CUS Board of Directors' representatives orally made a presentation to the Board of Regents of CTX on Jan. 12, 2023, seeking repentance and a reversal of the actions taken by the Board of Regents. The CUS Board subsequently communicated with the Board of Regents with the sincere hope and prayer that they would reconsider and reverse their action for the sake of the church and for the sake of CTX, her faculty, staff, and students.

As of the writing of this report, the Board of Regents has not yet reversed its action.

As Synod Bylaw 1.10.1.4 reminds, “Christian conflict resolution seeks to *resolve issues in a manner pleasing to God*. Those in conflict are urged to proceed prayerfully in good faith and trust. Disputes are more likely to be resolved harmoniously if those involved in the conflict *recognize one another as redeemed children of God*,” that is, when we truly love one another as described in 1 John 4:9, 11 (KJV), “In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, so that we might live through Him. . . . Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.”

Bylaws 1.10.1.5 and 1.10.1.6 get to the very heart of the matter, providing *wise counsel for Christians in dispute*:

Christians involved in conflict must always stand ready to ask for or extend forgiveness in accordance with Scripture. As the church endeavors to help bring about peace, truth, justice, and reconciliation, it always seeks to do so with a proper distinction between Law and Gospel, that is, *in the context of God’s judgment and mercy*. We are ever to be mindful that it is God who judges the hearts of sinful men and grants His gracious word of forgiveness to us all.

When there is repentance and reconciliation, the body of Christ rejoices in its oneness with Christ and with one another.

It is this love for each other, founded upon the love of God that is ours in Christ, that brought CUS to Austin to meet with the CTX regents and leadership. CUS’s stated goal for the meeting was *to seek repentance* and, thereby, reconciliation.

Here are some of the reasons for this call to repentance.

- CTX’s governance document changes are *not an “alignment with the Synod.”* CTX has been aligned with our Synod for nearly 100 years. Instead, the governance document revisions move CTX toward *becoming separate from and unaligned* with the Synod. Along with this, the governance documents provide *subscriptions to Holy Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions that are not whole* in CUS’s view, much like that of so many other so-called Lutheran church bodies and educational institutions whose good intentions have ultimately lacked the depth of conviction to be able to withstand over time the pressures and even persecutions of an increasingly godless society.
- An attempt to distance the university from our Synod occurs throughout certain documents shared with the CUS Board. In particular, they omit all references to the doctrine and practice of our Synod, creating distance from the Synod. The university retains sole power for *it* to do all that is necessary or desirable to carry out *its* goals and purposes, this contrary to one of *an LCMS university’s primary duties* clearly stated in Synod Bylaw 3.10.6.1, that is, “*the defining and fulfilling of the mission of the institution within the broad assignment of the Synod.*”
- The documentation provided to the CUS Board further appears to *direct the university’s focus away from the Synod* toward: (a) LCMS entities such as congregations, schools, and organizations; (b) the Texas District; (c) the greater Austin Christian community (as a partner in the work of the church’s mission across the region); and (d) national/interna-

tional opportunities outside its local context, that seek it out for Kingdom work.

- A failure to emphasize compliance with the doctrine and practice of the LCMS is a departure from what we as a church body believe, teach, confess, and do. This increases the likelihood of mere shallow compliance with Article II of the Synod’s Constitution. If there is any phrase that captures the depth and entirety of the Synod’s confessional position, its heart and soul, it is the phrase “the Synod’s doctrine and practice,” which *includes the entire Synod Handbook and also its official doctrinal resolutions and statements*, a phrase referred to no less than 16 times throughout the *Handbook* (Articles of Incorporation II c; Const. Art. XI B 2–3; Bylaws 2.14.5 [d]; 2.14.7.8 [f]; 2.15.7.8 [f]; 2.16.7.6 [f]; 2.17.5 [d]; 3.6.6.4 [e]; 3.6.6.5 [e]; 3.10.6.4 [e]; 3.6.6.5 [e]; 3.10.6.4 [i] [9]; 4.1.5; 4.8.1 [b]; 6.2.1; 6.2.2.2 [c][1]; and 6.1.3 [f]).
- The Board of Regents is to act as an “agent of the Synod” and as “custodian of the Synod’s property” (Bylaws 1.2.1 [a] and [r]; 3.10.6.4 [i]; 3.10.6.4 [i][1]; and 3.10.6.5). And as with all officers and agencies of the Synod, they “shall be accountable to the Synod for all their actions, and any concerns regarding the decisions of such officers and agencies may be brought to the attention of the Synod in convention for appropriate action” (Bylaw 1.4.1).
- Finally, the Board of Regents acted less than two months after finally providing CUS with CTX’s completed proposal, thereby bypassing Bylaw 3.6.6.4 (i), and on Nov. 8, 2022, voted to separate from the Synod through the purported adoption of revisions to its governance documents.

For the last three Synod conventions (2013, 2016, 2019), the Synod has received overtures and resolutions that have requested that CUS schools draw closer to the Synod in doctrine and practice. All of these resolutions were adopted by more than 90 percent of the delegates at those conventions. While most CUS schools have already moved in that direction, *the purported changes in CTX’s governance documents move CTX in precisely the opposite direction through the removal of LCMS theological oversight*. While offering to “align” with the Texas District, CTX’s proposed governance documents describe an independent, self-perpetuating board with an expanded presidential authority, leaving the LCMS with little if any means to assure theological integrity.

CTX was founded in 1926 by members of the Lutheran, Texas, Wendish, immigrant community. One of their number, John Killian, was also the founder of the first Texas Lutheran Church that was a member of the LCMS. *For 96 years, Missouri Synod Lutherans have sent their children and their gifts* to constitute and result in the present campus and university operations. Those generations of Lutherans assumed that their support would further the higher educational mission of the LCMS and nurture students in the doctrine and practice of the Church. *The church is indebted to these saints and has a sacred obligation to preserve and enhance their investment.*

Beyond this ecclesial solidarity with previous generations of confessing Lutherans, CTX occupies a strategic location for the present and future witness of the LCMS. The city of Austin is at the epicenter of economic and demographic growth in the United States. CTX is the *only campus that the LCMS has in the southern portion of the United States* and provides an *irreplaceable platform for proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ and sharing the full*

counsel of God in Sacred Scripture. Historically, the LCMS gave birth to CTX; presently, CTX is called to be faithful to her mother, to the church's confession, and to the church's practice.

The preceding analyses should demonstrate that any suggestion of separation from the LCMS is without fiduciary clarity and theological merit. We sincerely hope and pray that the CTX Board of Regents will even now willingly reverse its stated course and remain an important member of the CUS.

Dean O. Wenthe, *President*

R14.1

Concordia University Chicago

Steadfast in Jesus Christ as revealed in the Holy Scriptures, Concordia University Chicago (CUC) promotes academic rigor in its liberal arts and professional programs; grounds students in objective truth, integrity, and excellence; and practices faithfulness to the Confessional teachings of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, as it forms students for vocations in church, family, and the world.

- In 2019, in addition to the mission statement above, the university adopted a new vision statement: "Concordia University Chicago is a Christ-centered Lutheran university where truth, freedom, and vocation form students for lives of influence and service for the common good."
- Dr. Russell P. Dawn was inaugurated as Concordia University Chicago's 12th president in October 2019.
- Concordia Chicago responded to and weathered the storm brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic thanks to the grace of God and the resilience of our community. The university remained faithful to its mission and to delivering a high-quality education for all students.
- A comprehensive academic reorganization culminated during the summer of 2021, establishing two new colleges at the university: the College of Theology, Arts & Humanities and the College of Health, Science & Technology. Along with the existing Colleges of Business and Education, the two new colleges replaced and absorbed programs from the former Colleges of Arts and Sciences, Graduate Studies, and Innovation and Professional Programs.
- CUC's strategic plan, *Focusing Our Future 2025*, is being lived out every day at the university. The plan's four themes are: Formative Student Experience, Fiscal Agility and Strength, Partnerships for Mission and Excellence, and Vibrant Unified Community. This plan is an exciting and important step in CUC's pursuit of its vision and positions the university for a thriving future.
- Lutheran teacher education, director of Christian education, director of parish music, the pre-seminary program, and the deaconess program form the foundation for the university's long-standing church professional programs.
- The university president, directors of the church professional programs, and other members of the CUC community have been actively involved in supporting the Synod's *Set Apart to Serve* church worker recruitment initiative.
- In 2020, CUC celebrated the 40th anniversary of the deaconess program, the only undergraduate deaconess studies program in the Synod.
- In 2022, CUC was blessed with a strong class of new pre-seminary students—one of the highest enrollments in years.
- CUC is proud to regularly host synodical, district, Recognized Service Organization, and other affiliated conferences such as: Theology Professor's Conference, Northern Illinois District (NID) Convention, NID Joint Pastors Conference, NID Educators Conference, NID Educational Administrators Conference, NID Circuit Gatherings, Issues Etc. *Making the Case* Conference, Higher Things, and Lutheran Sports Association.
- In February 2023, the university hosted the Board for the International Lutheran Council, a worldwide association of established confessional Lutheran church bodies 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.
- Rev. Dr. Chad Kendall was named Associate Provost for Mission & Identity in late 2022. He will play a key role in ensuring that the university continues to live out its mission faithfully. His responsibilities include recruiting qualified, mission-minded faculty and administrators, as well as leading employee development in regard to the intersection of faith and the academic enterprise.
- In 2022, Concordia Chicago launched its Mission & Identity Program for faculty development in Lutheran distinctives and their importance in higher education.
- Campus Ministry continues to provide opportunities for students to receive God's gifts and be a part of a rich community of faith, including:
 - Every new CUC student attends the "Faith Matters" orientation session with the university pastor, who presents the Gospel and offers an opportunity for Christian growth for all students.
 - Every CUC freshman is required to read portions of *Callings for Life* (CPH, 2020) which outlines Luther's theology of vocation while also presenting the Gospel.
 - Daily chapel continues to embrace the long, rich history of Lutheran preaching and liturgy, maintaining excellence in sacred music with our numerous musicians and ensembles.
 - CUC's Spiritual Life student organization remains the most active group on campus, living the Word of God, loving all people in Christ's name, and serving their neighbors on campus, in Chicago, and to the ends of the earth.
 - CUC 4 Life, the university's life ministry organization within Spiritual Life, promotes life ministry from conception to natural death, continually engaging the university community with opportunities for service and education.
- The Division of Theology hosted its first workshop for local preachers in June 2022.
- The Division of Theology hosted a Confessionalism Seminar in June 2023.

- The Ferguson Art Gallery has hosted a number of exhibits, including, in 2021, “Photography and Fiber Reveal God’s Beauty” featuring works by Anastasiya Camp and Sara Nordling.
- Professor Andy Pederson served as head writer for the LCMS Youth Gathering’s mass events.
- The College of Business serves as the academic home for CUC’s Free Enterprise Center, (FEC) which has been directed since 2021 by Dr. Rachel Ferguson. The vision of the FEC is to cultivate virtuous leaders who embrace the role of free enterprise in developing healthy communities.
- Under the auspices of the Free Enterprise Center, the College of Business relaunched the Business Leaders Breakfast (BLB) in 2022. The BLB is a gathering of local community leaders dedicated to engaging in the work of creating healthy communities in the surrounding area.
- The administrative offices of the LCMS Northern Illinois District moved to Concordia University Chicago’s campus in 2022. The two organizations are bound together in Christ as they continue to feed the faithful, bring the Gospel to a world in need, and educate students of all ages.
- The historic campus in River Forest, Illinois, has undergone major facilities changes including:
 - The decommissioning of Gross Hall, a residence hall that was built in 1969 and had \$12 million in deferred maintenance. The building was carefully dismantled so that its materials could be salvaged for reuse elsewhere, and more than one hundred pieces of its dorm furniture were donated to Humble Design, an organization that helps individuals emerging from homelessness.
 - Crossroads Dining Hall was completely renovated with focuses on student convenience, up-to-date aesthetics, and more efficient processes for reducing food waste.
 - The Academic Center for Excellence was moved to the newly redesigned CULearn commons in the Christopher Center, an attractive and functional one-stop shop for students seeking academic support.
 - The former McCormick Recital Hall was upgraded—by modernizing HVAC, improving acoustics, refurbishing the recital organ and more—and renamed the Gieschen Recital Hall in honor of the university’s first full-time choral conductor, Dr. Thomas Gieschen.
- The university continues to expand its degree programs, including the addition of a Bachelor of Science in Nursing program for students answering God’s call to help others. Work has been completed on the brand-new Health Science Simulation and Instruction Learning Lab, a bright and airy 4,000-square-foot learning space in the Christopher Center. The fully revamped program will begin welcoming new students during the Fall of 2023.
- Concordia Chicago was ranked as a 2023 Best Regional University—Midwest and a Top Performer on Social Mobility by US News & World Report.
- The university was among those recognized for Campus Ethnic Diversity by U.S. News & 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 established the Dr. Rosa J. Young Opportunity Scholarship, to provide financial relief for African-American students pursuing church-related professions at the university.
- The university has been designated a College of Distinction for the 12th 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 is ranked among the Best Online Bachelor’s Degree programs in the nation by U.S. News & World Report for 2023 and achieved recognition among the Best Online MBA Programs, Best Online Graduate Education Programs, and Best Online Bachelor’s Programs for Veterans as well.
- During 2023, the university is honoring a century of concert choral music. While choral music has been an integral component of the Concordia Chicago experience since its founding in 1864, organized, faculty-led, concert-level singing formally began 100 years ago as the College Chorus. A century later, today’s Kapelle honors and advances sacred musical traditions.
- The Lectureship in Humanities, Christianity and Public Life, founded by Dr. and Mrs. C. Ross Betts in 2021, is an on-campus biannual lecture series committed to the biblical teaching that by and through Christ all things were created, and “in Him all things hold together” (Col. 1:16–17).
- The Center for Urban Education Ministries (CUEM) moved from Concordia Wisconsin’s campus to CUC’s campus in 2023. Led by Dr. Steven Gerner, the CUEM is an independent entity, but will partner with the university on many initiatives. Dr. Gerner also joined CUC’s faculty to establish the new Center for Christian Education with Dr. Maja Misakovic, Dean of the College of Education.
- CUC is one of only a few colleges in the country to operate in the black every year for 19 straight years.
- In the 2020–21 academic year, a record number of CUC students, mostly graduate, successfully completed their degrees.
- Non-traditional undergraduate Accelerated Degree Program enrollment nearly doubled between Fall 2018 and Fall 2022.
- CUC is preparing for on-site visits from both the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) and the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) in 2024.
- Athletics programs have expanded since 2019 to include STUNT, a competitive cheer-based sport, and eSports, a popular form of video game competition that many universities across the country have added to their athletics departments.
- Track and field athletes Kayla Armstrong and Simone Wilson were the first Cougars ever to attend USA Championships, the country’s most prestigious track meet.
- A team of undergraduate students were awarded first place in the Chicago IEEEExtreme 24-Hour Programming Competition, for the seventh time in eight years. Their performance in the annual Institute of Electrical and Electronics

Engineers (IEEE) contest placed them sixth in the United States and 314th in the world—in the top five percent—out of 6,373 teams.

- The Golden Apple Award for Excellence in Teaching has been awarded to 22 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—more than 30 CUC students and alumni have been named as scholars.
- Founded in 1864 with earlier roots traced to 1857, CUC was the first Concordia and remains faithful to its mission as it looks forward to its 160th anniversary in 2024. The institution is dedicated to serving the Synod in its mission of education and, through that mission, our Lord's Great Commission. At the center is Jesus Christ, the Savior of all the world. Here, His blessings abound.

Russell P. Dawn, *President*

R14.2

Concordia University, Irvine

Mission Statement: Concordia University, Irvine, a comprehensive Lutheran Christian university guided by Christ's Great Commission, develops wise, honorable, and cultivated citizens to serve society and the church.

Core Convictions & Values: Concordia University, Irvine, serves our students, colleagues, and community by being:

- **Gospel-Centered:** The faculty and staff, guided by God's Word and the Lutheran Confessions, welcome all students who are both willing and able to engage with its mission and proclaim God's grace in Christ to each person.
- **Faithfully Relevant:** Concordia offers exceptional, rigorous, holistic, and sought-after programs in the liberal arts and professional studies, rooted in the Lutheran intellectual tradition, that prepare servant leaders who proactively address the contemporary needs of the church and the world.
- **Sustainably Excellent:** Concordia invests its finite resources of time, talent, and treasure in wise and sustainable ways by empowering each faculty, staff, and student to live out their vocations and to support the ongoing excellence and fulfillment of the university's mission.
- **Courageously Loving:** At Concordia, all are called to love one another, forming a community that faithfully cultivates humility and responsibility, fosters honest and charitable conversations, and offers a path to personal growth that equips students for lives of service in a diverse world.
- **Relentlessly Hopeful:** Concordia is ever hopeful as it carries out its mission in the face of the world's challenges. Our hope is rooted in the confidence that God in Christ has reconciled the world to Himself and that Christ is the Lord of all creation.

University Updates: Concordia University, Irvine, as a faithful and thriving university of the LCMS, is grateful to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ for innumerable blessings and are excited to report the following updates:

- Concordia, as a comprehensive university offering bach-

elor's, master's, and doctoral degrees, educates 5,000 students annually to serve society and the church.

- Lutheran identity is enshrined in our hiring practices, as every faculty and staff member is a professing, practicing Christian. Each full-time hire is interviewed for fidelity by the Chief Mission Officer, the Rev. Dr. Steven Mueller, who also oversees Human Resources. 65 percent of our full-time faculty are members of LCMS congregations; 39 percent of full-time faculty are called church workers of the LCMS.
- All full-time faculty complete Vision-Mission-Vocation (VMV), a Lutheran higher education orientation program. VMV has proven so important to enshrining our Lutheran identity and culture that Concordia is now building a VMV training program for all staff.
- Concordia has recently launched new BS degrees in Engineering and Computer Science, a PhD in Counselor Education and Supervision, and established the Servant Leadership Institute to provide Lutheran Christian character and leadership formation for education leaders from public and private schools.
- Concordia recently completed a brand discovery process that undergirds a new marketing and communication strategy to communicate our Lutheran Christian identity more boldly, clearly, and widely. This brand research also informed our new 8-year strategic plan: Developing "wise, honorable, and cultivated citizens": 2023–2030. This quote, included in our mission statement, comes from Luther's letter written in 1527: "To the Councilmen of All Cities in Germany That They Establish and Maintain Christian Schools."
- In 2020, Concordia celebrated the completion of a 7-year comprehensive campaign: "Forward in Faith," with 3 goals: (1) grow the permanent endowment, (2) enhance student aid and scholarships, and (3) build a building dedicated to Theology and Music. The goal of \$85 million was shattered. Thanks be to God! \$100 million total!
- The opening of the 38,500 square foot Borland-Manske Center in 2019 enables us produce exceptional music. This has led to a partnership with PBS-SoCal and national PBS syndicates to produce "A Concordia Christmas." Since 2021, Concordia has created three, award-winning broadcasts, sharing the gospel through music and spoken word, which have reached audiences in the millions throughout the U.S. Thanks be to God for this partnership!
- Concordia is embarking on the construction of Phase II of our campus master plan. This plan calls for the construction and renovation of four projects: Renovating the CU Center for Worship and the Performing Arts (adding 300 seats, for a total of 800) and the Nelson Amphitheatre; and building the Golden Eagle Athletics Complex and a new softball stadium. These projects are estimated to cost between \$32–\$36 million, yet Concordia has already raised \$28 million in gifts and pledges!
- Concordia remains financially very strong. Our current asset to debt ratio is less than 0.25. In 2022, our financial strength was reviewed independently. We received an investor-grade bond credit rating of BBB+ from Standard and Poor's. Goldman-Sachs Wealth Management's non-profit team now manages our ever-growing permanent & quasi endowments, valued at more than \$55 million.

- In the spring of 2023, with the approval of both the CUS board and the Synod Board of Directors, Concordia began the process of purchasing a furnished, 115,000-square-foot building with a parking structure and lots for 700+ vehicles on 6.6 acres of land just 3 miles from the current campus. This represents an increase in classrooms, offices, and meeting spaces of 40 percent to our current campus. This building will house our School of Health and Human Sciences. At the time of this report, the purchase negotiations are ongoing, but very favorable! We hope and pray to celebrate this news at the 2023 LCMS Convention!

Michael A. Thomas, *President*

R14.3

Concordia University, Nebraska

Greetings from Concordia University, Nebraska, where we strive to faithfully equip men and women for lives of learning, service, and leadership in the church and world. During the past triennium, Concordia has launched its new Salt and Light strategic plan. The vision driving the current strategic plan is to “cultivate a community of academic excellence grounded in the Word of God and the Lutheran Confessions to be SALT and LIGHT in the home, church, and world.”

Concordia’s new strategic plan includes five priorities:

- **Enrollment** – Establish a clear and compelling picture and plan for undergraduate and graduate enrollment that enables us to achieve a predictable and manageable overall enrollment.
- **Philosophy of Christian Higher Education** – Distinguish a shared educational philosophy that explains and clarifies what is distinct and shared about a Concordia education and that clearly communicates what prospective and current students can expect.
- **Outreach** – Communicate a clear and compelling picture and plan for living out our mission while reaching, serving, and blessing audiences beyond the campus community with the knowledge, wisdom, and gifts of the Concordia community.
- **Lifelong Faith Formation and Flourishing** – Demonstrate a clear and compelling picture and plan for ongoing, community-wide faith formation, workplace culture and climate, and professional development that equips us to strengthen our impact and ability to boldly, faithfully, and effectively live out our mission.
- **Financial Strength** – Devise and implement a financial model that creates greater strength and stability from which to live out the university mission while removing financial barriers for students to attend and graduate without debt that would hinder their life and callings post-graduation.

Within priority one, **Enrollment**, is a focus upon strengthening and building on our commitment to Christ-centered academic excellence, establishing distinct, inspiring, and holistic academic communities in areas such as music, church work, our honor’s program—the Luke Scholars Program, the classical liberal arts, and a forthcoming Timothy Scholars Program focused upon preparation of faithful service and excellence in healthcare professions, agriculture scholars, and business scholars. Other priority areas will

emerge as the plan moves forward and funding is secured to launch new efforts.

A second aspect of priority one of the strategic plan is refocusing our graduate and online programs with the primary audiences of Lutherans serving in Lutheran organizations, Christians serving in Christian organizations, and Christians serving elsewhere who want a truly and distinctly Christian graduate education. As such, one objective under priority one of the plan is to offer meaningful, academically rigorous, and Christ-centered graduate programs that address the needs of Christians in the church and world and regularly serve at least 825 or more graduate students annually by 2027 with a term-to-term retention rate of 90 percent and a graduation rate of 65 percent. The first new program launch with this renewed focus, based upon in-depth feedback from leaders in Lutheran schools, is a new Graduate Certificate in Advancement for Christian Schools, providing guidance on fundraising, recruitment, Lutheran mission and identity, and the distinctions of marketing and communication a Christian school.

The second priority of the plan, **Philosophy of Christian Higher Education**, is an intentional effort to clarify the shared convictions and commitments of faculty regarding why, how, and what we teach. The goal is to come to an agreement on shared “signature practices” that embody this shared philosophy and enable us to make the stated vision a reality.

The third priority, **Outreach**, involves the creation of new outreach arms of the university in the form of institutes. This includes strengthening and expanding the impact of existing institutes while adding new ones as well. Each institute is expected to align with the university mission, have an audience beyond the campus that it seeks to serve and support, engage current undergraduate students in the work of the institute, and operate with a self-sustaining financial model. Current institutes include the Institute on Aging and the Family, the Institute on Rural and Small Town Ministry, the Institute on Religious Education, the Center for Liturgical Arts, the Institute for Ethical Leadership, the Institute for Innovation and Entrepreneurship, and Trinity Academy—a new, intentionally small Lutheran high school in the classical liberal arts tradition, scheduled to launch in the fall of 2023. Additional centers may launch in the near future, but that is dependent upon securing funding.

The fourth priority, **Lifelong Faith Formation and Flourishing**, focuses on ensuring that faculty and staff are well-supported and provided with opportunities for ongoing professional development and Lutheran catechesis that assists each person in joyfully, confidently, and faithfully living out their callings as they support the mission and strategic plan of the university. This has already included the launch of a one-year Mission, Vision, Values, and Promises program, a course required of all new faculty and those serving in other leadership roles. Lessons will be learned from the first-year pilot and used to refine subsequent offerings. We anticipate expanding to a robust and wide array of learning opportunities for faculty and staff. All of this is inspired by the conviction that we must continually learn and grow in order to fully and faithfully equip students for lives of conviction, character, courage, and compassion as they embrace callings to be a blessing in their families, churches, communities, workplaces, and world.

The fifth priority, **Financial Strength**, focuses on ensuring a financial model that adds strength and stability to the university and helps remove financial barriers for students. Concordia has been blessed by generous donors for many years, as evidenced by the completion of our most recent fundraising campaign that exceeded

\$90 million (over \$25 million beyond the campaign goal). We have been immensely blessed with generous partners in the Gospel. At the same time, the current net tuition for an undergraduate student at Concordia is between \$12,000 and \$13,000, which is several thousand dollars per student less than what it actually costs to educate students. This means that fundraising and building and expanding our endowment, as a means of removing financial barriers for students while being financially viable, is a high priority as we begin plans for the next fundraising campaign.

As part of this priority, we are in the early stages of developing a new program for select students that has potential to completely remove major financial barriers for attendance. We look forward to being able to provide more information on that program in the near future, but granted success with the endeavor, it may prove to be a first of its kind program in American higher education, offering inspiration and examples for other schools as well. This is a bold endeavor that will take the generous support, prayers, and collaboration of many people to be successful.

These five priorities summarize the key initiatives for the university through 2028, building upon our legacy and strengths while responding to risks and challenges of the current social and educational landscape. In it all, Concordia University Nebraska remains firmly committed to supporting the mission of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod as a higher education institution that is dedicated to equipping students for lives of learning, service, and leadership in the church and world.

Our prayers are with the delegates during their convention deliberations. May God bless richly the 68th Synod convention as we work together to proclaim the good news of God's love in Jesus Christ throughout the world.

Together in His service,
Bernard D. Bull, *President*

R14.4

Concordia University, St. Paul

Greetings from Concordia University, St. Paul, where we proclaim God's love for the world in Christ Jesus as we live, learn, and serve together as a university of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

As I returned to my alma mater and began my tenure as president of Concordia University, St. Paul (CSP), in January 2020, I could not have envisioned the opportunities and challenges of the past three-plus years. However, I've experienced much joy in serving at this Christ-centered Lutheran university and working alongside talented faculty, staff, regents, and constituents to serve our dynamic and diverse student population.

A. Introduction

Established in 1893 to prepare young men for the pastoral ministry, Concordia University, St. Paul, is today a comprehensive master's university that currently serves more than 5,500 students and offers more than 100 academic programs from the associate's through the doctoral levels. As we have over the past 130 years, CSP is committed to raising up workers for the LCMS and offers the following church work tracks and certifications: pre-seminary, pre-deaconess, Director of Christian Education, Director of Christian Outreach, Director of Parish Music, and Lutheran Classroom Teacher.

B. Goals

Concordia University, St. Paul, is guided by a comprehensive strategic plan titled *Vision 2024*. This plan contains the following elements:

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 a Christ-centered, nationally prominent Lutheran university known for excellence and innovation that fosters success for all students.

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.

Strategic Goals:

1. Grow enrollment
2. Increase persistence to graduation
3. Maintain quality, relevant curriculum to strengthen transition to job or graduate school
4. Grow net assets
5. Accent our Christ-centered purpose as a Lutheran university

C. Performance Analysis

Our performance around the five goals of our strategic plan follows. It highlights areas of note for the congregations and members of the LCMS.

C.1. Grow enrollment

Over the last triennium, Concordia University, St. Paul, has seen continued success in growing our enrollment. As many of our peer institutions struggle with changing demographics, the economy, the COVID-19 pandemic, and other challenges, we have seen a tremendous response to our efforts to provide a Lutheran, Christ-centered, high-quality, and career-focused higher education.

- Fall semester enrollment increased from 5,139 in 2019 to 5,502 in 2022, driven primarily by growth in the number of master's and doctoral degree students.
- International student enrollment increased from 199 in 2019 to 577 in 2022.
- Church work enrollment increased from 56 students in 2019 to 67 students in 2022, an increase of nearly 20 percent.
- After the closure of Concordia University Portland, in the spring of 2020, CSP incorporated its accelerated bachelor of science in nursing (ABSN) program. That program served 389 students in 2022 and is the second-largest provider of nurses within the state of Oregon.
- CSP launched CSP Global in January 2023 as a new division that houses online and hybrid undergraduate and graduate programs and allows for further growth in emerging markets.

C.2. Increase persistence to graduation

Concordia University, St. Paul, staff and faculty work diligently to ensure students can continue their studies until they complete their chosen degrees. We celebrate that we've seen an increase in the total number of graduates from 1,510 in the 2018–19 academic year to 1,831 in the 2021–22 academic year. We recognize that we need to continue working hard to remove barriers to increase the rate of retention for new freshmen and transfer students. Our retention of LCMS new freshmen and transfer students remains strong.

C.3. Maintain quality, relevant curriculum to strengthen transition to job or graduate school

Concordia University, St. Paul, continues to add new academic programming that aligns with what learners desire and employers are looking for. Examples of new programs added in the past four years include the following:

- AAS in Sonography
- ABSN (in St. Paul and Portland)
- BA in Digital Marketing
- MS in Data Analytics
- MA in Trauma and Resiliency
- EdD and PhD in Kinesiology

As we continue to track the data on the success of our graduates, we celebrate their successes in launching the next phase of their careers or education. Our most recent data is from the class of 2020–21, where nearly 95 percent of CSP undergraduate students and nearly 97 percent of master's and doctoral students report successful transitions to career or graduate school. We also see similar success with our church work population, where we have a 100 percent placement rate for geographically mobile graduates as well as a growing number of students matriculating to seminary following graduation.

C.4. Grow net assets

Over the past four fiscal years (2019–2022), total net assets grew by 31 percent, from \$107 million at the end of 2018 to \$140 million at the end of 2022. Growth was achieved through positive operating results, reduction of long-term debt, and increased value of invested assets and property.

C.5. Accent our Christ-centered purpose as a Lutheran university

Our newest strategic goal, adopted in 2020 by our Board of Regents, is a continuation of the work the university has done to remain a faithful Lutheran university and adds some measurable outcomes and additional accountability to that work. Accomplishments during the triennium in this area include the following:

- Cultivating an understanding of Christian vocation and mission amongst CSP students through the CUS-wide Beautiful Feet Mission Conference and a CSP-specific winter vocation retreat
- Calling the Rev. Dr. Reed Lessing and the Rev. Dr. Joshua Hollmann to serve on our theology faculty, Mr. Michael Thom (Commissioned Lutheran Classroom Teacher) to serve as Chief Diversity Officer, and Dr. Norman Piatti (DCO) to chair our sociology department
- Establishing the Center for Biblical Studies—under the di-

rection of Dr. Lessing—to provide ongoing training and resources for clergy, commissioned workers, and laypeople; the Center has served nearly 400 people from 33 LCMS districts as well as other confessional Lutheran church bodies

- Instituting the Church Work Tuition Guarantee, which caps tuition for all church work students at a maximum \$6,000 per academic year (before congregational, district, or other outside financial aid); pre-seminary and pre-deaconess students pay \$0 tuition per year
- Appointing the Rev. Dr. Mark Koschmann as Associate Vice President of Faith and Ministry to lead our goal five initiatives; Dr. Koschmann works closely with the LCMS and the Rev. Dr. James Baneck on the *Set Apart to Serve* initiative
- Hosting weekly lunches for church work students with CSP faculty and staff for conversations on Christian vocation, service, and ministry; 40–50 students attend each week
- Sponsoring participant Bibles for the 2022 LCMS Youth Gathering
- Visiting LCMS congregations for Concordia Sundays, where one of our theology faculty or I preach and lead a Bible study
- Piloting a deeper integration of theology coursework into the nontraditional undergraduate curriculum as part of CSP Global
- Reshaping our Lutheran Identity Seminar into the Lutheran Higher Education Seminar, which allows new faculty and staff to explore the richness of Lutheran theology and how it shapes their vocations at CSP
- Engaging the Rev. Dr. Phil Brandt to serve part-time as a pastor to students in Portland
- Hosting an event on campus called “Confessio: A Retreat on the Lutheran Confessions” to celebrate the 500th anniversary of Luther’s Baptismal Booklet as well as the confessional Lutheran doctrine of Baptism in relation to the life of the church
- Attending numerous district conventions and pastors conferences throughout the eight-district region that surrounds CSP
- Partnering with CUS presidents and interacting with the 7-03 Task Force to provide insight and leadership in the decision-making processes

D. Conclusion

As you can see, God has richly blessed Concordia University, St. Paul, throughout the past four years as we continue to “prepare students ... in the context of the Christian Gospel.” While we celebrate our successes, we also take note of the challenges that lay before us. Below is a SWOT analysis that summarizes where we are in 2023 as we look forward to our next 130 years under God’s grace.

D.1. Strengths

- Lutheran identity
- Enrollment growth
- Fiscal strength
- Decade of successes
- Global reach

- Talented and faithful faculty and staff
- Strong board of regents and executive leadership team

D.2. Weaknesses

- Student persistence to graduation
- Reliant primarily on tuition revenue
- Historic lack of philanthropic support
- Landlocked campus in St. Paul

D.3. Opportunities

- Demand for workers in healthcare, business, and technology
- Expansion of Pell Grants and state of Minnesota financial aid programs
- Preparation of a new generation of church work students in the urban context
- Dynamic location of physical campus and real-world opportunities for students

D.4. Threats

- Cultural headwinds
- Public policy and legislation
- Student demographic challenges
- Economic conditions
- Increased higher education competition

As we look forward to our goals for the coming triennium, we continue our work to fulfill each of our five strategic goals. In addition, our executive leadership team is in the process of developing our next strategic plan with our Board of Regents to commence following the completion of *Vision 2024*.

Concordia University, St. Paul, thanks and praises God for all those who support through their prayers, philanthropic gifts, time, and referral of students. As we walk together in our common mission and confession, may we continue to point to Jesus Christ, crucified and risen to bring forgiveness, life, and salvation to all who believe.

Respectfully submitted,
Brian L. Friedrich, *President*

R14.5

Concordia University Wisconsin and Ann Arbor

A. Introduction

As of the Fall 2022 census, Concordia University Wisconsin and Ann Arbor (CUWAA) serves 6,184 students at its two campuses and online. The university's six schools offer 102 undergraduate majors and programs, 48 graduate/master's degrees and programs, 9 doctoral/professional programs, and 4 associate degrees. The university's largest programs include business, education, computer science, nursing, and rehabilitation science programs. CUWAA is strongly committed to preparing professional church workers and currently serves 279 students across its professional church work programs.

B. Church Work

As the numbers above indicate, CUWAA continues to promote and prioritize its church work programs. In order to support the students enrolled in those programs, the university is continually evaluating and enhancing its commitment to our church work scholarship program and seeking new ways to partner with the church broadly.

C. Health Professions

Overall, our various healthcare studies programs remain a strength of the university. Since 2019, we have added graduate healthcare programs to our offerings on the CUAA campus to attract highly qualified students and strengthen their academic reputation and financial position. We have acquired the North Building, approximately 1.5 miles from the main campus, to house our healthcare education programs, including Nursing, Athletic Training, Physician Assistant Studies, Occupational Therapy, and Physical Therapy. In Fall 2022, the CUW campus opened a new pro bono on-campus clinic that allows hands-on learning opportunities for students and provides treatment services to members of the local community at no cost.

D. Plaster Building

Since 2019, the Mequon campus has made good use of the new Plaster Building, which houses the Batterman School of Business. The Plaster Building also houses the university's Free Enterprise Center and the CU Ventures program, two efforts to encourage CUWAA students and others to explore and gain experience with innovation opportunities.

E. Pedagogical Innovation

CUWAA has continued to provide students with a variety of high-quality choices in the delivery of academic material. We have expanded our virtual, online, and blended course offerings, while continuing to provide innovative instruction in our face-to-face traditional undergraduate programs and graduate programs. The university has also made the decision to move away from a "center" approach to serving post-traditional students. As a result, the remaining Concordia centers closed in late 2022. Students formerly served at those centers are now engaged in online and virtual learning.

F. Mission and Identity

CUWAA is in the process of hiring a new Vice President for Mission and Identity. This executive position will be responsible for developing and implementing a program for forming faculty and staff in the Christian faith and helping colleagues align their work with the university's missional commitments.

G. Strategic Planning

The university is undertaking a new strategic planning process that will guide its work for the next three to four years. The planning process will include the development of a new campus master plan for both campuses that will guide the development of several proposed and planned building projects.

H. Celebrations

CUWAA is a thriving educational community that the Lord has richly blessed, and the university has many reasons to celebrate this year. We are currently recognizing the 10th anniversary of the merger of the Mequon and Ann Arbor campuses. We are also

remembering the 40th anniversary of the move from downtown Milwaukee to the Mequon campus. Finally, we are commemorating the 60th anniversary of the Ann Arbor campus. We praise God for His goodness and faithfulness as we reflect on these special events.

I. New President

Finally, 2023 has brought a new president to CUWAA. Dr. Ankerberg began this role in January of this year, and he is currently undertaking a university-wide presidential transition process, in which he is conducting a series of almost 30 listening sessions with various university constituents.

J. Conclusion

While CUWAA faces the same challenges as any other university in the nation, the university is financially healthy, strong in its missional commitments, and, most importantly, faithful to the truths of Holy Scripture. What will never change is that we, as a Lutheran university community, prioritize the Christian tradition, foster a culture of innovation, and nurture our students in thought, in word, and in action to make them—and the world—whole.

Erik P. Ankerberg, *President*

R15

Concordia Historical Institute

The Department of Archives and History
of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

concordiahistoricalinstitute.org

Our crucified, resurrected, and ascended Lord has been gracious to Concordia Historical Institute (CHI) over these past four 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, encouraging words, and generous financial support of LCMS districts, congregations, and individuals as we continue to serve the advancement of the history of the LCMS.

1. CHI has been charged with actively managing historical and archival materials and services

The beginnings of CHI go back 175 years to the founding of the LCMS, when the Secretary of Synod was charged with chronicling the denomination's history and collecting and preserving 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 Synod's department of archives, CHI is charged with managing what has become the largest Lutheran archival collection in North America—a collection that includes a rich variety of documents, publications, rare books, photographs, audio/visual media, artifacts, and fine art. Our immediate scope is all that directly touches on the history of the LCMS. Our secondary scope is historical material that frames and informs the history of the LCMS.

As the official department of archives and history of the LCMS (Bylaw 3.6.2), 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 document the history of a 175-year-old church body that, under the mercy and grace of Christ and His Word, has not only survived crises but grown and flourished even through difficult and unsettling times.

CHI actively manages the following:

- Over 15,500 linear feet (3 miles) of archival material in temperature- and humidity-controlled rooms
- An increasingly large archival collection of historical photographs, motion-picture film, audio and video tapes, artifacts from the mission field, and fine art connected with the Reformation and the Lutheran Church in North America
- Professional archival and research services that organize, catalog, and provide access to the millions of archived items in the CHI collection
- 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, now in its 96th year of publication)
- A recently redesigned smartphone-friendly website: concordiahistoricalinstitute.org
- An annual awards program, now in its 48th year, that recognizes excellence in published books and articles on the history of Lutheranism in North America
- An annual Walther Roundtable, now in its 34th year, featuring presentations on current research into the history of the LCMS during the life of C.F.W. Walther
- Hill of Peace Lutheran Memorial in Friedenberg, Missouri, a historic site spotlighting the life and faith of the first Lutheran settlers in Perry County, Missouri, where church services are conducted three times a year

2. CHI has developed resources to commemorate the following Synod-related anniversaries

Despite the restraints imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, over the last three years, CHI has doubled its efforts to “move Lutheran history forward.” We have developed and published resources that commemorate major anniversaries related to the LCMS.

For example, *Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly* has published special issues on the following events:

- 175th anniversary of the LCMS
- 175th anniversary of Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne
- 150th anniversary of Concordia Publishing House
- 150th anniversary of the Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America
- 125th anniversary of LCMS mission work in Southern India
- 125th anniversary of LCMS Deaf Ministry
- 125th anniversary of Concordia University, Nebraska

- 100th anniversary of LCMS Campus Ministry
- 50th anniversary of the 50th Regular Convention of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod in New Orleans

We will observe the following anniversaries during the next triennium:

- 100th anniversary of the first broadcast of *The Lutheran Hour*
- 100th anniversary of the dedication of the Concordia Seminary Clayton campus
- 75th anniversary of the Florida-Georgia District
- 50th anniversary of the Walkout at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis
- 50th anniversary of Concordia University Irvine (Christ College Irvine)
- 50th anniversary of Concordia Theological Seminary's move from Springfield, Illinois, to Fort Wayne
- 30th anniversary of the International Lutheran Council
- 25th anniversary of Concordia International School Shanghai

3. Online resources have been made available to commemorate the 175th anniversary of the LCMS

CHI also created online resources to commemorate the 175th anniversary of the LCMS. “Sketches of Faith and Life in the 175-Year History of the LCMS” encompasses 52 different bulletin inserts on many of the people who made a significant impact on the LCMS throughout its history (resources.lcms.org/history/sketches-of-faith-and-life/). These are available for download and use in church bulletins and newsletters, adult studies, and youth and confirmation classes.

4. Well-attended museum exhibits opened the door to help us rediscover our shared Lutheran history

CHI also presented to church and community historic treasures entrusted to its care through engaging museum exhibits. These were paired with online resources for those unable to visit St. Louis and see the exhibits in person. “The Mercy of Christ Freely Given: The First Twenty-Seven Years of Missouri Synod Mission Work in South India” (Aug. 2019–Feb. 2021) was followed by “Martin, Katharina, Philipp, und Friedrich: Historic Images of the Reformers in Fine Art” (Nov. 2021–Feb. 2023). The most recent exhibit saw the highest number of visitors ever for a CHI exhibit: over 800 people during the 16 months it was open. This was in spite of the COVID-19 pandemic. (Printed exhibit catalogs for both of these exhibits are available.) Future exhibits in the making include “The Kimono-Clothed Gospel: The Mingei Prints of Sadao Watanabe (April–Nov. 2023) and “The Walther League: Connecting Young Lutherans with Local and International Ministry” (2024).

5. CHI plans to begin projects to digitize and make available photographs of LCMS mission work

CHI is dedicated to continuing its service to the LCMS in the next triennium as we make our expanding collection of historical materials discoverable both in person and online. Tens of thousands

of mission-related photographs have been digitized with detailed descriptions and placed in our CHI online photo gallery. CHI continues to act on requests by other confessional Lutheran church bodies around the world to better preserve and proclaim their history, providing resources to establish and manage archival material under the threat of being lost or forgotten. Specialized projects include research on the Walther League and LCMS mission work in India, Brazil, Japan, and Korea.

6. Helpful reference booklets on archives and records management are available

CHI has recently updated and published volumes outlining guidelines on managing the documentary history of the LCMS: *District Archivist Handbook* (2023); *Record and Archive Management Program (RAMP) Handbook* (2023); and *Establishing and Managing Archive and Museum Scope* (2023). All of these resources are available from CHI for district and congregational use.

7. The new Monograph Series significantly increases awareness and appreciation of our shared Lutheran history

CHI has also launched a new Monograph Series of published volumes to advance the study of the history of the LCMS: *Seminex in Print: A Comprehensive Bibliography of Published Material and Selected Archival Resources for Historical Research*, compiled by David O. Berger (2021); J. F. Koester's *The Emigration of the Saxon Lutherans in the Year 1838 and Their Settlement in Perry County, Missouri* (2022); and *What Was Believed, Taught, and Confessed: Theological Issues Surrounding the 1974 Concordia Seminary Walkout*, edited by Ken Schurb (2023).

8. CHI has advanced the mission of Saxon Lutheran Memorial through local control

CHI is committed to local partnership and local involvement in preserving local Lutheran history. To that end, CHI announced in Jan. 2022 that it was transferring ownership of Saxon Lutheran Memorial to a local nonprofit organization in order to better enhance this historical site connected to the history and culture of the Saxon immigrants who settled in Perry County, Missouri, in 1839.

9. CHI has begun processing and cataloging the Selma, Portland, and Bronxville archival material

Archival material received from the campus of Concordia College Alabama (Selma) has now been processed and cataloged. CHI has also begun processing and cataloging over 100 boxes of material from the Concordia University Portland campus. We are also making arrangements to receive the archival material from Concordia College New York (Bronxville). The goal is to have all three collections appropriately cataloged, discoverable, and available for historical research before the next triennium.

10. CHI seeks historical material that can be preserved and proclaimed as part of the CHI collection

In this anniversary year, CHI asks that individuals, congregations, districts, and LCMS entities diligently search out historical materials related to the history of the LCMS that are at risk. Please contact CHI if you have historically significant documents,

photographs, audio/visual material, or fine art that needs to be cared for in a stable environment and is available to be “treasured and trumpeted” for generations to come.

11. Your prayers and generous support are vital in moving Lutheran history forward

With our emphasis on preserving and proclaiming the redeeming work of our crucified and risen Lord, CHI continues to serve the historical interests of the LCMS so that generations to come might not only better understand the fascinating history of our Synod but more clearly understand the saving work of Christ in the life of the LCMS. To that end, we ask for your continued prayers and financial support in moving Lutheran history forward together. Please consider becoming a member of CHI’s Director’s Circle today (concordiahistoricalinstitute.org/membership/directors-circle).

Daniel M. Harmelink, *Executive Director*

R16

Concordia Publishing House

“And we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.” 2 Peter 1:19 (ESV)

Concordia Publishing House (CPH) continues to serve as the publishing arm of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, equipping congregations, schools, pastors, teachers, and all Christians with tools to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

In the past four years, CPH has experienced significant leadership changes, with the death of Executive Director of Editorial Rev. Paul McCain in 2020 and the retirement of President and CEO Bruce Kintz in May 2021. At that time, the CPH Board of Directors appointed Jonathan D. Schultz, CPH’s then Vice President and Corporate Counsel, as Interim President and CEO. Mr. Schultz was elected CPH’s ninth President and CEO and was installed on March 11, 2022.

Like every ministry in the LCMS, CPH was deeply impacted by the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. But by God’s grace, we maintained our staff and have continued producing resources to equip the Synod. During the pandemic, CPH offered free subscriptions to Lutheran Service Builder to the congregations of the Synod to help them minister to their members through online services.

Through all these changes, we have continued to provide resources to support biblical literacy efforts in congregations, encouraging people to read the Bible and prioritize time in the Word. *The Tree of Life: God’s Promise of Salvation Church Resource Kit* provides a complete package of resources for a congregation to dig into the Scriptures together (from the oldest to the youngest).

CPH has been honored to enter publishing agreements with partner organizations throughout the Synod. We have an ongoing partnership with Concordia Historical Institute on the Concordia Historical Monograph Series (with three volumes in print and more in development). Additionally, partnering with the Lutheran Leadership Development Program has allowed us to publish specific textbooks for those enrolled in the program. We have also worked with the Center for Church Music to produce two books and with a mission foundation to produce a translation of a Swedish theologian.

In partnership with the LCMS Office of Youth Ministry, we help publish resources for leaders influencing the next generation. Since the last convention, we have released one youth ministry book, *Connected for Life: Essential Guide to Youth Ministry*, with another one in development.

In partnership with the LCMS Office of the President, we have released significant collections of essays on the theology of the two kingdoms and Law and Gospel proclamation. These resources help pastors and seminary students focus their sermon preparation and delivery and help keep Bible classes centered on God’s gift of salvation through Jesus Christ.

We have also published a number of resources to meet the challenges posed by our culture. These products reach all ages on a range of vital moral issues that challenge the church to respond in loving and faithful ways to our neighbors. Examples include faith during the pandemic, support for caregivers, grief, vocation, gender and sexuality, addiction, divorce, anxiety, suicide, abortion, cults and other religions, and dealing with stress.

Our scholarly publications remain a priority. We continue making progress on our Concordia Commentary series. In the past four years, we have published eight volumes: *Mark 8:27–16:20* (James W. Voelz and Christopher W. Mitchell), *Psalms 1–50* (Timothy E. Saleska), *Micah* (Jason R. Soenksen), *Zechariah* (R. Reed Lessing), *James* (Curtis P. Giese), *Deuteronomy* (Adolph L. Harstad), *John 7:2–12:50* (William C. Weinrich), and *Joel* (Thomas P. Nass). This brings our total of published volumes to forty-four, with thirty-three volumes remaining to complete the series.

Also important to us are historical documents that we continue to translate and publish. Since 2019, we have released three new volumes of *Luther’s Works*. Of note is the first of two volumes of Luther’s academic disputations, which includes for the first time in English all the Antinomian theses and disputations. In addition to other stand-alone writings, volume 61 includes *Against King Henry* and *Report to a Good Friend concerning Both Kinds in the Sacrament*. Finally, volume 63 provides the first new Old Testament exegetical material in the new series: Luther’s sermons on Exodus.

An additional four volumes of Gerhard’s *Theological Commonplaces* are now available. Most notably, as we wrap up work on this series, we have released Gerhard’s commonplaces on the “Last Things”: resurrection, the last judgment, the end of the world, hell, and eternal life. Forthcoming are the final two volumes, which address the commonplace “Death” in two parts.

We remain committed to providing resources faithful to our Lutheran Confessions and have released several products for all ages and interest levels to make these important confessions approachable at every stage of life, even for readers normally intimidated by the Book of Concord. These publications include *My First Catechism*; *Luther’s Small Catechism for Kids*; *Lutheranism 101*, third edition; *Concordia: The Lutheran Confessions* audiobook; *What Are the Lutheran Confessions?*; *The Formula of Concord: Epitome*; and *The Augsburg Confession and the Apology*.

New resources for pastors include our Advent and Lent series, which offer resources for worship and family devotions each year. Concordia Seminary professor Dr. David J. Peter has written an important book called *Organizing for Ministry and Mission: Options for Church Structure*. Dr. Peter helps pastors and congregations improve their organizational design and administrative practices to maximize their ministry. Another book, *Navigating Ministry Challenges*, offers advice to pastors and covers a variety of top-

ics including working with lay leadership, congregational relations, serving multipoint parishes, leading church schools, financial leadership, and utilizing digital tools for ministry.

In the past four years, we have completed a religion curriculum called Enduring Faith® Religion Curriculum for Lutheran school grades Pre-K through eighth grade.

Our resources for families cover all ages. Our children's books include *Arch Books Treasury: Life of Jesus*. Family resources include *Jesse Tree: Family Activity Kit* and *Wise Men Seek the Savior: Family Advent Activity Kit*. Resources for youth include *Courage That Defies Death: A Bible Study for Youth* and *Words of Strength and Promise: Devotions for Youth*.

We also have developed a number of mental health resources in the past four years, including *Equipped: The Armor of God for Everyday Struggles*; *Emotions and the Gospel: Created for Connection*; and *Getting Through Grief* and *Getting Through Grief for Youth*.

We continue to offer a wide range of materials for worship and the church's musicians. In the past four years, we have published *Lutheran Service Book: Companion to the Hymns* and *Lutheran Service Book: Companion to the Services*, thereby officially marking the completion of the *Lutheran Service Book* resources that we promised the Synod in 2004. Based on customer inquiry, we also published *Lutheran Service Book: Large Print Edition*. We also published a new children's hymnal, *One and All Rejoice*, for kindergarten through eighth-grade students.

In the fall of 2019, we launched a digital music subscription service, which now has several thousand instrumental, choral, liturgical, organ, piano, and handbook titles available. With an annual subscription, musicians have unlimited access to download and print as many copies as needed for congregations.

At CPH, we thank God for enabling us to strengthen and aid member congregations in their proclamation of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ with products that are faithful to the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions. All to the Glory of God.

Jonathan D. Schultz, *President and CEO*

R17

Lutheran Church Extension Fund

"We Preach Christ Crucified"

Organization Mission Statement

To support The Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod by ensuring that financial resources and related services are available now and in the future.

Our vision of growing ministry opportunities lives through our core values: be faithful; pursue excellence and innovation; inspire belief through partnerships; endure balancing resources and risk; and learn continually.

Despite the pandemic and economic challenges, Lutheran Church Extension Fund (LCEF) remains in a strong financial position and has joyfully fulfilled its commitment to provide the financial resources necessary to support the church in her work. Below is an overview. More details can be found in the Offering Circular and Ministry and Business Plan, published annually.

Investments

The laddered fixed income portfolio as of Dec. 31, 2022, totaled \$437.4 million, with an interest yield of 2.11 percent compared to a yield of 1.70 percent a year ago. The long-term reserve portfolio (consisting of fixed income, equities, and other noncorrelated investments) totaled \$96.1 million.

Net market value losses for the period ending Dec. 31, 2022, totaled \$10.4 million, with laddered fixed income losses of \$11.4 million offset by long-term portfolio gains of \$1 million. Inclusive of the investment income as of Dec. 31, 2022, the total return for the laddered portfolio was 0.39 percent. Within the long-term portfolio, the equity, alternative, and limited liquidity portfolios earned a total return gain (losses) of 4.37 percent, 3.62 percent, and 0.69 percent, respectively. The total return on the long-term portfolio was a gain of 3.27 percent.

(in 000's)	FYE 2019	FYE 2020	FYE 2021	FYE 2022
Investment Portfolio	\$290.4M	\$368.2M	\$573.4M	\$649.7M
Net Gain (Loss)	\$7,329M	\$2,417M	\$15,515M	(\$59,826M)

Loyal investors continued to provide funds to enable LCMS ministries' financial resources, which support their efforts to expand God's kingdom.

(in 000's)	FYE 2019	FYE 2020	FYE 2021	FYE 2022
Notes & Support Dollars Payable	\$1,643,915B	\$1,767,063B	\$1,855,057B	\$1,836,641B

LCEF was pleased to share earnings distribution with member districts and Synod. While there was no distribution in 2020 due to net losses, LCEF was able to significantly support its impaired borrowers during the pandemic and provide a \$1 million grant to support church workers through the Soldiers of the Cross–Amplified program. In 2021, due to strong net income, LCEF provided the normal distribution and included an enhanced distribution, which allowed member districts and Synod to receive a double portion for specific mission extension work.

FYE 2019	FYE 2020	FYE 2021	FYE 2022
\$2,217,481M	\$0	\$4,744,918M	\$2,583,165M

Financial Trends

Total assets as of Dec. 31, 2022, amounted to \$2.014 billion, a decrease of \$54.5 million from June 30, 2022. The decrease was due primarily to seasonal withdrawals on institutional StewardAccount products.

(in 000's)	FYE 2019	FYE 2020	FYE 2021	FYE 2022
Total Assets	\$1,888,458B	\$2,014,189B	\$2,126,350B	\$2,068,056B

LCEF continues its commitment to a strong capital and liquidity position. Liquidity on Dec. 31, 2022, amounted to 31.8 percent of notes and support dollars payable. Notes and support dollars totaled \$1.765 billion and have decreased \$71.4 million since June 30.

	FYE 2019	FYE 2020	FYE 2021	FYE 2022
Liquidity	17.7%	20.8%	30.9%	35.4%
Notes & Support Dollars Payable	\$1,643,915B	\$1,767,063B	\$1,855,057B	\$1,836,641B

LCEF achieved operating income totaling \$2.1 million for the period ending Dec. 31, 2022, a decrease from \$3.5 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 the cost of funds. The operating income goal for the end of the year is \$5.4 million. Net loss for the period ended Dec. 31, 2022, totaled \$8.7 million compared to net income of \$7.5 million the prior year. The decline is the result of unrealized losses on the investment portfolio. The net income goal for the end of the year is \$9.5 million. LCEF's capital ratio as of Dec. 31, 2022, was 10.51 percent compared to 12.62 percent a year ago. The capital-to-asset goal for the end of the year is 10.91 percent.

	FYE 2019	FYE 2020	FYE 2021	FYE 2022
Net Interest Income	\$35,976M	\$33,843M	\$34,439M	\$37,929M
Operating Income	\$7,692M	\$1,813M	\$5,442M	\$6,900M
Net Gain (Loss) on Investments	\$7,329M	\$2,417M	\$15,515M	(\$59,826M)
Other Income/Expense	\$1,773M	(611)	\$5,364M	\$12,904M
Net Income (Loss)	\$16,794M	\$3,619M	\$26,321M	(\$40,022M)
Capital to Asset Ratio	12.48%	11.88%	12.27%	10.65%

Loans

LCEF supported ministry expansion by closing over \$1.4 billion of loans over the past four years. LCEF continues to track loans in three categories: congregation lending, national lending (institutions, agencies, and RSOs), and rostered church worker lending. It should be noted that congregation lending, which is still strong, continues to decline as an overall percentage of the portfolio.

For fiscal 2022, congregation lending totaled \$896.1 million, or 64 percent, of the total loan portfolio. Ten years ago, congregation lending accounted for 76 percent of the total loan portfolio. During the same period, national lending went from 14 percent of the portfolio to over 25 percent, with over \$352 million in total loans at the end of 2022. Likewise, rostered church worker lending has continued to balloon from 4 percent of the portfolio a decade ago to now over 12 percent of the portfolio and over \$174 million in total loans.

After enjoying years of loan growth (2017–20), the pandemic brought tightening and a slowdown of lending for fiscal years 2021–22, as repayments significantly outpaced new lending. LCEF is happy to report that that trend is quickly reversing as the church is getting back to work expanding its footprint around the globe.

(in 000s)	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022
Total Loans Closed	\$366,866M	\$377,306M	\$361,378M	\$308,975M

COVID Response and Support

Lessons learned following the 2008–09 financial crisis compelled LCEF to respond to the economic threats of the pandemic quickly and proactively. The initial remedies made available to LCEF borrowers included modification of existing loans to provide partial or total deferral of monthly payments, freeing up cash resources for the borrower's use to meet other obligations. In other cases, LCEF made lines of credit or term notes available with expedited underwriting.

The remedies included the following:

- A total of 258 loans with an outstanding principal balance of \$400.3 million were approved for some form of relief
- A total of \$8.5 million in foregone principal and/or principal and interest payments (P&I) due from the borrowers
- 30 COVID-19 lines of credit totaling \$3.5 million
- 11 COVID-19 term loans totaling \$695,000

As of June 30, 2021, all loans that requested and received partial or total payment deferral have reached the expiration of the initial period for which the relief was granted. The total outstanding balance of those loans was \$400.3 million, with the following results:

- A total of 186 loans totaling \$244.3 million in outstanding balances agreed to return to regular P&I payments.
- A total of 72 loans totaling \$156 million in outstanding balances requested extended relief for an additional 90 days.

Of the loans approved for extended relief beyond the initial 90-day period, 47 loans totaling \$91.5 million in outstanding balances agreed to return to regular P&I payments, and 25 loans totaling \$64.5 million were unable to return to regular payments of P&I.

The 25 loans needing support beyond the second round of relief over the following months all returned to regular payments of P&I. LCEF, its borrowers, and the church survived the pandemic with little harm to ministry programs and finances. An initiative-taking approach on the part of LCEF in reaching out to its borrowing base coupled with efforts of the federal government to support payrolls and the conservative nature of most LCMS ministries allowed the church to move forward from the pandemic poised for continued ministry in the future.

Strategic Plan

Prior to the pandemic, the LCEF Board of Directors was undertaking strategic conversations with the goal of moving LCEF beyond the successes of the past. The board members believe they, and the organization, have a role and responsibility to help grow the church. The board believes that is accomplished through the objectives and duties of the church extension fund within the Synod. Yet those "financial resources and related services" must never become static and stagnant. LCEF must be dynamic and responsive to the needs and opportunities before the church as it engages the world with the Gospel. The strategic plan establishes a three-year vision: Be the trusted partner in providing solutions that inspire ministry, innovation, and growth.

The primary focus of the strategic plan is five three-year objectives and 24 initiatives that prioritize and establish the future work and direction of LCEF. To ensure the future success of growth initiatives that move LCEF beyond where we are today, we must strengthen our core and prepare the organization for the innovation and change required to successfully implement growth initiatives that provide improved solutions, moving LCEF beyond our current model to a place where we help grow the church through expanded and improved "financial resources and related services." That work is underway.

The three-year objectives set the overall direction for the work outlined in this plan. These five objectives receive prioritization of resources and efforts as they enable us to achieve our strategic and growth initiatives well beyond the duration of this plan. Each

objective is broad in scope and includes operational objectives necessary for success. The three-year objectives are:

- Continuous Improvement
- Increase Investment in Core Technology
- Transform Identity and Position
- Develop Key Partnerships
- Access to Greater Financial Resources

The plan also includes financial growth drivers that focus on increasing the total loan portfolio to \$1.85 billion by the end of fiscal 2025. This would be supported by \$2.5 billion of total assets. Growth will come through the expansion of products that better serve congregations, schools, organizations, and workers of the church.

LCEF is focused on people, processes, and technology as we endeavor to provide products and services that expand the work of the church. Updating our core banking system, providing digital account creation, streamlining underwriting and loan processing, and improving the customer experience for both investors and borrowers remains our top priority.

Supporting the Work of the Synod

Over the triennium, LCEF has given special consideration to Resolution 8-03, “To Ensure Timely and Transparent Financial Report to the Synod,” and Resolution 9-06, “To Add Bylaw 3.3.4.10 to Clarify Access by the Board of Directors to Information of Synod Agencies,” both of which were passed at the 2019 Synod Convention. LCEF makes an annual disclosure of its financial position through an audit, the Offering Circular, and the annual report shared with its members and available via its website. LCEF has satisfied all requests for information from the LCMS Board of Directors, assuring their oversight responsibilities are carried out with the requested information, per the bylaw.

LCEF continues to find ways to support the mission priorities of the Synod and the work of the national, international, and pastoral education offices. Noteworthy endeavors of the past triennium include providing grant dollars to support “Set Apart to Serve” resources, a property purchase in Uruguay, expansion of a children’s home in Tanzania, and, most significantly, a \$1 million grant to support the Soldiers of the Cross—Amplified program during the pandemic. New international loan opportunities are being considered in collaboration with Synod. LCEF continues to provide Mission InSite resources that give meaningful demographic insights into future ministry expansion. LCEF is working with the church planting initiative to evaluate and identify sites while creating financial models that better support new starts. Likewise, as the Synod considers ways to launch new Lutheran schools, LCEF is committed to providing financial and other resources to assure success.

LCEF is working to support church workers through special loan and investment products as well as integrating worker wellness resources into its processes. The launch of a new investment product to establish a loan pool offering below-markets rates to support church workers is an important way LCEF will address home ownership and debt challenges some workers face. Leadership development remains critical to the future success of LCEF as church workers and laity consider creative ways to extend the mission of serving the church and the world. Supporting the development of leaders continues to be explored through partnerships

with Synod entities and universities. The impact of LCEF’s work and the breadth of its partnerships are highlighted in the publication *Interest Time*. Detailed information about LCEF products and activities are available at lcef.org.

Bart Day, *President and CEO*

R18

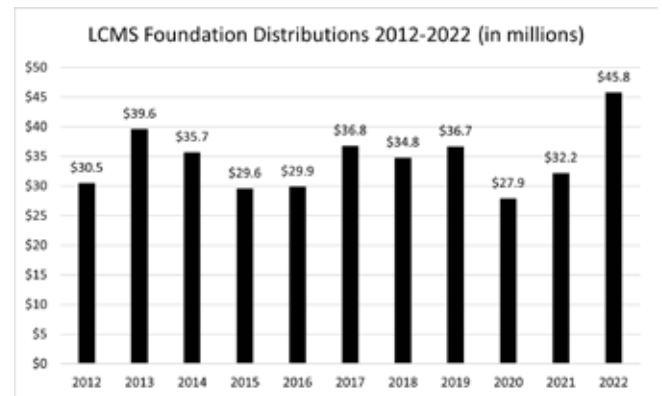
LCMS Foundation

The LCMS Foundation was created in 1958 by The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod to assist LCMS members in the creation of charitable estate plans, to accept noncash gifts on behalf of LCMS organizations, and to help LCMS ministries invest the assets they possess, whether received as estate gifts or through other sources.

We celebrate the generosity of God’s people in supporting the work of His church 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.

Gift Planning

During fiscal years 2020–2022, the LCMS Foundation distributed more than 9,300 gifts totaling \$105.9 million (including a record \$45.8 million in 2022) to several thousand LCMS organizations. These ministries include our congregations, schools, seminaries, districts, and ministries providing missionary support, rural and urban outreach, housing assistance, and much more.



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, and so on administered by the Foundation and distributed to a particular ministry after the donor is called to his or her heavenly home.

To carry out this work, 20 gift planning counselors are located across the United States. They assist individuals and families in creating comprehensive estate plans to support families and ministries with the very best gifts.

Investment Services

Ministries who receive significant gifts from donors or already possess sizeable assets can benefit by working with the Foundation to invest those gifts for future growth. The Foundation presently manages more than \$1 billion in investment and trust assets for nearly 600 LCMS organizations. We provide sophisticated,

diversified investment portfolios at a low cost aimed to help LCMS ministries accomplish their long-term goals.

By managing assets collectively for the church, the Foundation offers access to 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. Currently, 64 full-time employees serve the Foundation in various capacities.

Governance

Direct oversight of 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 13 trustees, 8 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 55 member organizations, which 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, and so on. Once a year, delegates from this group meet to elect trustees and to vote on other official actions at the Foundation's annual meeting.

Strategic Plan

As the Foundation looks to the future, we seek to grow our impact on the LCMS 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 three years:

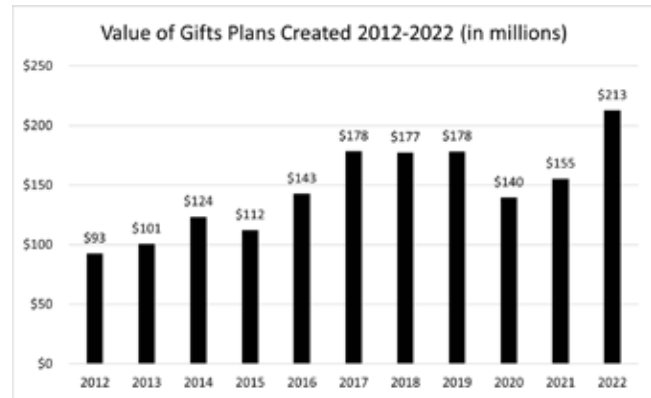
- Improve message clarity and understanding.
- Increase awareness of and preference for the Foundation's abilities to support ministries.
- Increase retention and realization of revocable gifts.
- Expand the ability for organizations and individuals to participate through products and services.
- Lead collaboration across Synod entities.
- Maintain infrastructure vigilance to ensure a balance of purposeful growth and high standards of service.

Transfer the Blessings

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 intention-

ally 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.

In 2022, God truly blessed the Foundation's work; we helped new donors create gifts to ministry (both future "planned gifts" as well as immediate gifts) totaling more than \$213 million. This was a record amount for the Foundation and nearly 50 percent higher than our average over the past 10 years.



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 the LCMS and its ministries through these efforts. 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 W. Fiedler, *President*

R19

Board of Trustees—Concordia Plans; Board of Directors—Concordia Plan Services

Concordia Plan Services (CPS) has been charged with managing the Concordia Plans (the employee benefit plans and trusts of the LCMS) and providing other ancillary programs, including supplemental insurance and administrative services that serve the needs of ministries and church workers. CPS serves a critical component in fulfilling the 10th formation objective of our Synod: Directly aiding in the care of our church workers and their families.

CPS administers benefits that improve and support the health and financial wellness of LCMS workers so that they can focus on spreading the Word of God. Approximately 6,000 ministries, 30,000 workers, 41,000 retirees and beneficiaries, and 53,000 covered dependents count on CPS to help them be well to serve well.

A. Responding to Needs

A.1. COVID-19 Response

CPS was blessed to serve and support LCMS ministries and workers throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

CPS is an active member of the Church Alliance, comprised of nearly 40 faith-based employee benefits organizations. Church Alliance members were active during COVID, working with na-

tional legislators to ensure that the interests of faith-based organizations were represented in any legislative action. These interests included making churches eligible to receive forgivable Paycheck Protection Program loans, which helped sustain countless churches and church workers economically through the early months of the pandemic. The CPS legal and communications teams also were active in helping ministries and members understand the impact of pandemic-related legislation.

The *concordiaplans.org* website served as a central home for online resources for ministries and workers during the pandemic. The site included resources from the LCMS, Lutheran Church Extension Fund, LCMS Foundation, several RSOs, and others so those in need could quickly find information critical to their health, finances, and more.

A.2. Focus on Worker Wellness

The CPS mission is to “Serve ministries ... care for workers ... so that the Word of God spreads.” In alignment with this mission, CPS is dedicated to providing the plans, as well as tools and resources that nurture the well-being of all church workers.

During the last triennium, we expanded our wellness resources to care for LCMS workers and their families. During the pandemic, we introduced a new text-based care program so members could more easily receive care at home with shorter wait times than some telemedicine options.

We introduced a new virtual physical therapy program to reduce the number of in-office visits required. In 2021, 55 percent of participants reported a reduction in pain within 12 weeks, and 57 percent reported a reduction in intent to have surgery. These results are positive for the member and the health plan overall. Other significant results in wellness programs in 2021 include 6,977 pounds lost by participants in one program and 62 percent of diabetic medications eliminated by participants in another.

The menu of mental health tools and resources available to ministries and members also expanded, including a new toolkit that helps ministry leaders create a workplace culture that supports mental health. Emotional well-being resources from other LCMS entities also were curated on our *concordiaplans.org*.

CPS continued to develop resources to help workers on their financial wellness journey. These included more one-on-one sessions with workers, additional content through webinars and videos, and the launch of a financial planning app custom built for LCMS workers.

A.3. Ministry Resources

CPS has introduced and expanded services in the last triennium to assist ministries in addressing common challenges.

CPS introduced human resources services, providing them at no cost early in the pandemic. HR services provides ministries with information and resources to help them be compliant and keep up with legal changes that relate to personnel issues.

The Compensation Decision Support Tool continued to grow in scope and usage. New positions were added to both the church and school tools, giving those calling or hiring more information about compensation benchmarks in a variety of roles. More than 16,000 compensation estimates were created in 2022.

B. Serving the Synod

Our staff continually looks for new and better ways to serve

and support ministries and workers. Examples of impactful connections include the following:

1. During the height of the pandemic, CPS staff members were regular participants in calls with district business managers and education executives, sharing expertise on legislation, coverage changes, and more.
2. Our worker wellness team met with nearly 3,300 LCMS workers one-on-one in the last triennium, helping them better understand their personal finances today and into the future as they plan for retirement.
3. We identified a need for communications professionals in district offices to connect and collaborate and established a “District Communicators Roundtable” for them to share best practices and resources.
4. Our connections with LCMS education have strengthened, including cohosting the 2020 Lutheran Education Association Administrators Conference.
5. Our Ministry Engagement team worked with districts to host online town hall meetings to reach more ministries than ever with details on health plan elections and enrollment for the coming year. This was essential during the height of COVID-19 due to travel restrictions.

C. Conclusion

C.1. Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats

Strengths include:

1. Our 2022 customer survey resulted in Net Promoter Scores (the percentage of respondents who would recommend an organization to others) among ministries and customer satisfaction among members significantly higher than industry averages.
2. Our most recent staff engagement survey revealed an 86 percent engagement score, more than 20 points higher than the global average. We have twice been named a “Top Workplace” in St. Louis. We were also named a “Top Workplace USA” in 2023 based on staff survey responses.
3. We have a strong board, leadership team, and staff and work with the highest quality vendor partners and consultants.

Organizational weaknesses:

1. Our online system for administering benefits has been difficult to use for some. A new system launched earlier in 2023 that should ease challenges for those who administer benefits online.
2. The design and cost of the Concordia Health Plan and Concordia Disability and Survivor Plan have been challenging for some ministries. We’ve studied the situation and are introducing modifications and flexibility to better serve ministries.

Opportunities include:

1. A stronger connection could be made between lay leaders of LCMS ministries. CPS is providing them an opportunity to connect and share resources through an

online networking and information-sharing platform that launched in 2023.

2. Through financial one-on-ones, webinars, and other tools, we can continue to reach more church workers to help elevate their personal financial knowledge and help them be retirement ready. We also can continue to grow usage in wellness point solutions to help more workers be well to serve well.
3. Membership in our plans can grow, bringing in ministries that once—or never—were in the plans.

External threats:

1. We will continue to closely monitor activities in Washington, DC, and work to represent the interests of ministries and church workers with respect to continued significant legislative and regulatory activity.
2. In light of economic volatility and uncertainty, CPS works closely with industry-leading consultants and advisors to manage expected investment risk and return dynamics over a long-term horizon while adhering to certain fundamental principles such as diversification, portfolio rebalancing, and liquidity management.
3. The Concordia Plans are built on the strength of large participation numbers, and any ministries choosing to leave the plans create an impact our board and leadership would be required to navigate.

C.2. Goals

As a ministry partner, we want to be viewed as a trusted member of a ministry's team that brings valuable solutions to employee benefit and business challenges. As a worker advocate, we want to not only be the source and resource for all matters related to the care of church workers and their families but also to be these workers' physical, emotional, and financial wellness champions.

In the short term, we are focused on the following projects to enhance the way we serve:

1. Introducing a new online portal to ease the benefits administration process and improve the member benefit experience for those who prefer to interact online
2. Enhancing the product designs of the Concordia Health Plan and Concordia Disability and Survivor Plan to meet the varied needs of ministries and provide a comparable level of care to LCMS workers
3. Enhancing the value and ease of enrollment in the Concordia Plans, including reducing administrative burden by performing essential ministry business functions
4. Further supporting the mental health of LCMS workers
5. Utilizing an online platform to connect LCMS lay leaders in order to collaborate, share resources, and access expert materials
6. Continuing to cultivate a culture focused on delivering exceptional customer experiences

Concordia Plans is dedicated to serving LCMS organizations and church workers. We bring together thousands of ministries of all sizes, enabling us to offer affordable, quality benefits and business solutions that allow ministries and workers to focus on what really matters: **spreading the Word of God.**

James F. (Jim) Sanft, *President and CEO*

R20

Lutheran Center for Religious Liberty

Introduction

The mission of the Lutheran Center for Religious Liberty (LCRL), The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod's (LCMS) two-kingdom, First Amendment organization in Washington, D.C., 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 LCMS churches, schools, and universities.

Purpose and Services

The LCMS, through the LCRL, monitors and protects the church's First Amendment rights—guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution—in the public square so that LCMS churches, schools, and universities can continue to boldly preach Christ crucified as the power of God for salvation without government coercion or interference. The LCRL equips 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.

Why This Matters

We are living in a time when Christian values and morals are under attack—culturally, legally, and politically—from cultural and political forces throughout society that are committed to:

- aggressively chipping away at Americans' most basic religious liberties despite the protections of the First Amendment;
- rapidly deconstructing and redefining, through law and litigation, the biblical definitions of marriage and the family—the very building blocks of our culture;
- discarding as inconsequential, despite *Roe v. Wade*'s defeat, the lives of 64 million preborn Americans;
- politically and legally targeting LCMS schools and pre-schools, regardless of their constitutional protections, because of our biblical teachings on marriage and sexuality; and
- politicizing and demonizing the public expression of our Christian faith, even its main teaching of “We Preach Christ Crucified,” and seeking to silence any form of publicly “testifying to the whole counsel of God” (Acts 20:27), the catalyst and calling that is the heartbeat of who we are as Lutherans.

An evaluation of current faith-based entities and think tanks in Washington, D.C., 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, 1937 Synod in convention

This void is now filled by the growing voice of the LCRL for the betterment of the country and in opposition to any movements, views, or legislation that would harm the right to religious freedom in the public square.

The LCRL office offers advantages, specifically that it:

- 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 as well as infringement on religious liberty and other matters of concern to LCMS members, congregations, recognized service organizations, and other LCMS institutions;
- provides a venue and a process to engage, encourage, and equip Lutherans of all ages to exercise their vocations as part of God’s preserving work through government or political engagement; and
- offers proximity to a growing list of partner organizations and offices to help build coalitions, thus strengthening our First Amendment voice in Washington, DC.

The LCRL’s Four Primary Tasks

1. Advocacy and Encouragement on Capitol Hill
 - a. With an active presence on the Hill in various advocacy meetings, visits to members of Congress and the executive branch, and the expanding radio voice of the LCRL Washington, D.C. radio program, *The Liberty Action Alert with Greg Seltz*, LCRL is ensuring that the needs of LCMS churches, schools, and universities are heard by those who represent us. LCRL is also supporting and encouraging the work of those who defend LCRL on the Hill.
2. Education and Assistance
 - a. The LCRL, through our growing body of resources, seeks to educate laity on major issues facing the country, the Lutheran doctrine of vocation (in particular Christian citizenship), and two-kingdom theology. It also prepares them for cultural engagement in service to the protection and mission of Christ’s Church.
 - b. The LCRL, through our partners, also connects Christians with legal defense when they suffer persecution (e.g., arrest, lawsuits, and so on) for public-square speech and actions that agree with Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions but conflict with the culture and government. LCRL’s partnerships with Alliance Defending Freedom, First Liberty, and the Becket Fund allow us to connect churches with the information and the support they need.
3. Advocacy, Advocacy Training, and Support across the Synod
 - a. LCRL’s Champions for Liberty Network of churches, with our various levels of training and coaching, continues to grow to meet the needs of LCMS churches, schools, and

universities, empowering laity for service in God’s left-hand kingdom.

4. Publication and Communication

- a. We partner with other voices on the Hill to present LCMS views to governing bodies and policymakers regarding the orthodox Lutheran, two-kingdom view on cultural issues.

Alignment with LCMS Priorities

1. Sustain and revitalize Lutheran churches: This office exists to protect the public voice and the religious liberty of LCMS churches, missions, schools, and universities for the sake of mission.
2. Theological education: As mentioned above, the LCRL is building a network of churches trained to deal with issues in culture and politics for the sake of the mission of the Church. This training program, network of influence, and leadership may continue to grow into an academic program, training the next generation of leadership for the LCMS.
3. Collaborate to enhance mission effectiveness: The LCRL effort, in all its teachings and literature, emphasizes why and how two-kingdom cultural engagement is vital to effective missional outreach.

Great Opportunities Seized from 2019–2023

1. Established a growing LCMS two-kingdom citizenship voice in Washington, D.C.
 - a. LCRL engaged in regular member participation with various advocacy groups, such as the Values Action Team of the House and Senate, the National Right to Life, the March for Life, the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, the Liberty Radio Network, the Religious Freedom Institute, the Heritage Foundation, and the Weyrich luncheon. These groups are all seeking to undergird religious liberty, the sanctity of life, traditional marriage, and educational freedom.
 - b. Advocacy visits on the Hill included conversations and interviews with representatives and thought leaders in government.
 - c. In response to the COVID-19 shutdown of the Capitol, the LCRL established and grew the radio program *The Liberty Action Alert with Greg Seltz*, which both advocates for our positions with leaders in the country as well as informs LCMS congregations about issues, advocacy, and action in interviews with thought leaders on the Hill.
 - d. Partnership with Alliance Defending Freedom (ADF) in various efforts offered both LCRL’s two-kingdom voice/training and ADF’s legal support to the issues that beset our churches and schools today.
 - Challenge: While the LCRL’s presence has been established in Washington, DC, the next phase of development needs to further launch our unique voice regarding the cultural/political issues of the day. The challenges of the next steps in advocacy are to expand LCRL’s role on committees and our radio voice as well as become a go-to resource for two-kingdom answers to the issues surrounding religious liberty, life, marriage, and education.

2. LCRL established and grew the main LCRL website—*LCRLfreedom.org*—the two-kingdom web resource for LCMS churches and schools.
 - a. 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.” Available resources are (1) the weekly “Word from the Center” devotions and op-eds; (2) “Mom and Pop” and two-kingdom papers on issues of the day; and (3) podcasts of all the “Liberty Action Alerts” with its various guests and topics.
 - o Challenge: The resources, which are many and growing, need to be more accessible and easily investigated for use and application. LCRL is presently addressing this issue.
 - o Challenge: Social media use is necessary, if also a necessary evil, to LCRL’s awareness, growth, and usefulness to churches and ministries. LCRL is presently expanding our social media platforms to meet those challenges and opportunities.
3. LCRL established a growing “Champions for Liberty” network of churches. Members are trained not only in two-kingdom engagement of various issues in our culture but stand ready and equipped in service to the mission of the church rather than in political ideologies.
 - a. LCRL hired a Champions for Liberty Network director. As the need for training laity grows, the LCRL has recently called the Rev. Mark Frith to expand the network and to make it a support network for our churches and people throughout the country.
 - b. LCRL created a Champions for Liberty educational process. Through both lecture and application, LCRL prepares and equips Christians for differentiating God’s preserving and saving work, thus being more effective in the left-hand kingdom work in service to the mission of the church. LCRL is intentional to do so without politicizing the Gospel, as many advocacy groups are tempted to do.
 - c. LCRL hosted Champions for Liberty weekends. From 2019 to present, LCRL has conducted some 80 events with churches and schools to empower pastoral and lay leaders to engage these seminal issues.
 - d. Due to COVID-19, LCRL’s university initiative with Concordia University, Nebraska (CUNE) was tabled until further notice. The university was also changing presidents, grappling with the challenges of COVID-19, and absorbing students from Concordia University, Portland. With so many uncertainties, the university decided not to go forward with the mutual plan to establish the two-kingdom minor in public engagement with internships in Washington, D.C. at that time. Due to expanding the Champions for Liberty Network, LCRL has not revisited this with CUNE but is open to such efforts in the future.
 - o Challenge: LCRL must continue to grow and streamline the delivery process of the Champions for Liberty Network educational process and ensure its application to the many needs of our congregations and schools.
 - o Challenge: LCRL must add a more definitive legal dimension to the resources it provides when a congregation partners with it through the Champions for Liberty Network.

Presently, LCRL defers to organizations such as Alliance Defending Freedom, First Liberty, and the Becket Fund.

Goals for 2023 and Beyond

1. LCRL seeks to grow our advocating and encouraging presence on the Hill.
 - a. In spite of the change of tenor in the present administration, the LCRL seeks to grow our presence as a thought leader in the various partnerships and meetings presently attended.
 - b. Post-COVID-19, LCRL is returning to a more robust visitation of our Lutheran representatives on the Hill and reinstating its two-kingdom roundtable events that gather various LCMS workers on the Hill to relay and undergird our two-kingdom perspective on various issues.
 - c. LCRL will continue to be an encouraging voice to congressional leaders by supporting them in prayer, visitation, and the Word from the center devotions, which are meant to give them strength for the important work that they do.
2. LCRL looks to expand our Champions for Liberty Network of churches.
 - a. LCRL has plans to expand its web resources and more effectively utilize social media for the work of the LCRL.
 - b. LCRL will strive to increase our weekend Champions for Liberty events around the country to better train and equip laity.
3. LCRL will expand our partner base and resources to ensure that we have the capability to meet the growing needs of LCMS churches in this present partisan environment in the public square.
 - a. While God continues to bless LCRL with the support that it needs, LCRL’s next opportunity for growth is to build our capacity—both concerning financials and staff—to meet growing opportunities and challenges more effectively.
 - b. To do that, the LCRL is now partnering with Meyer+Partners, a consulting and fundraising agency, to unlock the potential of LCMS churches and people with regard to the efforts that the LCRL is making on behalf of all of us.

Gregory P. Seltz, *Executive Director*

R21

Atlantic District

The Atlantic District’s geographical area encompasses the eastern half of the state of New York. Twenty million people reside in this district that is composed of the vast rural areas in its northern and eastern regions; the sprawling suburbs throughout its northern, central, and eastern regions; and the bustling metropolitan areas of Albany in its northern region and the city of New York in its central region. The Atlantic District has an unparalleled cultural diversity and population density, replete with exciting mission opportunities. *The Atlantic District’s congregations, workers, and agencies share God’s grace in Christ Jesus by nurturing Christians and reaching out to others* (mission statement of the Atlantic District) as it is *Making Disciples for Life* (LCMS mission emphasis) by *Engag-*

ing the World with the Gospel of Hope (mission emphasis of the Atlantic District).

Our ever-gracious Lord has carried the Atlantic District through significant challenges since the Synod's last regular convention, including the COVID-19 pandemic (with many deaths connected with this virus in its congregations, schools, and agencies), the closure of congregations and schools, the closure of Concordia College—New York (after 140 years of service to the Church), and the resignation of the bishop/district president. Yet, even with these, the Atlantic District has endeavored to *Live Loved* (the theme of the 2022 district convention) as the love of God in Christ Jesus has been shared through the Holy Word and blessed Sacraments. As the crucified, risen, ascended, and returning Christ continues to be proclaimed with vigor, this district rejoices with every Baptism, confirmation, marriage, commissioning, ordination, installation, and new and creative mission initiative while confessing the one true faith as children of the Augustana.

Parishes, schools, and agencies of the Atlantic District responded to the incomparable trials of the COVID-19 pandemic prayerfully with appropriate uses of technology in addition to responsible in-person spiritual care. Circuit visitors and the district Praesidium continue to meet monthly via Zoom for the sharing of information, for planning, and for encouragement. Bible classes, Services of the Holy Word, meetings, and other events using digital technology stretched congregations, schools, and agencies to proclaim Christ crucified to even more people than before the pandemic began. Resources were shared to help congregations, schools, and agencies initiate and strengthen online giving platforms and develop more effective digital presences for both Christians and seekers. With a strong confessional commitment moved by the Holy Spirit, the church in eastern New York has not been prevented from proclaiming Christ crucified by the pandemic and its consequences.

With the unfortunate and devastating closure of Concordia College—New York, people in this district and beyond have expressed a profound and pronounced need not only for repentance but also for renewal as new opportunities for church worker formation and religious education remain possibilities for this region while partnerships with others in the Synod can be strengthened. As a result of the closure of Concordia College—New York, the district office moved from the Concordia campus in Bronxville to midtown Manhattan. Staff positions have been shifted, adjusted, and added as the office continues to be reorganized for efficiency and effectiveness.

The district also provided workers to serve in national capacities in the Lutheran Women in Mission (LWML) and the LCMS Board for National Mission in addition to the Association of Lutheran Church Musicians. This *Engaging the World with the Gospel of Hope*, then, has happened not only in eastern New York but in other parts of the nation with impact all over the world.

The witness of individuals and congregations (2019 Res. 1-01A and the Synod Mission Priority [MP] 1, "Plant, sustain, and revitalize Lutheran churches") has been strengthened with monthly prayer guides that include every congregation of the district and monthly prayer meetings via Zoom. *Here I Stand Sunday* provided a chance to highlight witnessing despite threatening circumstances (2019 Res. 4-09). The Lutheran Church Extension Fund (LCEF) has assisted with ministry solutions and clarity while the district has begun pilot projects with *Set Apart to Serve* and Concordia Plans Services (MP 4, "collaborate with the Synod's members and partners to enhance mission effectiveness") in addition to other appropriate local partnerships to assist with revitalization, reorganiza-

tion, and growth. Congregations, schools, and agencies have been informed of resources available from the LCMS national office while support for international mission has continued. Congregations are encouraged and assisted in the sharing of resources (2019 Res. 1-03) while addressing mental illness and other challenges through district task forces and partner organizations, especially because of the COVID-19 pandemic (Res. 3-04A, MP 4).

During the pandemic, a special Zoom educational gathering for pastors promoted an ongoing and healthy discussion about racism in the church. A district convention resolution carries forward the Synod's condemnation of racism while affirming the common humanity of all people (2019 Res. 11-04A, MP 3, "perform human care in close proximity to Word and Sacrament") as the district engages daily in multiethnic outreach (Res. 1-05A) and studies racism in the history of the church with a desire to proclaim both Law and Gospel. As the district is undertaking a reassessment in conjunction with the LWML Atlantic District coming out of the pandemic, it continued to offer workers continuing education opportunities (in-person and online) and to encourage all members to update their biographical and statistical information (2019 Res. 6-04, MP 5, "promote and nurture the spiritual, emotional, financial, and physical well-being of pastors and professional church workers"), so that *vitalized congregations*, *sanctified workers*, and *dynamic agencies* reflect the vision of this district (words from the Vision Statement of the Atlantic District).

While giving thanks to the Lord for and providing for all schools (Res. 12-01A, MP 6, "enhance early childhood education, elementary and secondary education, and youth ministry"), theological education (MP 2, "support and expand theological education") and supporting families (MP 7, "strengthen and support the Lutheran family in living out God's design") remain important priorities for the days ahead as the district's task forces, board of directors, circuit visitors, Praesidium, and workers endeavor to address both the needs of the church and the needs of those who do not have faith in Christ. The Atlantic District's *Festival of Workshops* in March of 2023 was themed *Making Disciples for Life* and highlighted the Synod's seven mission priorities to *preach Christ crucified* (1 Cor. 1:18–25). It provided an opportunity to begin a new chapter in the life of the saints of this district with a parish pastor as its new bishop and president, highlighting not only the ties that bind the Lord's people across the Synod who walk together but also a renewed commitment to *vigorously make known the love of Christ by word and in deed* with an evangelical, catholic, and reforming habitus to the praise and glory of God—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Dien Ashley Taylor, *President*

R22

California-Nevada-Hawaii District

Under the theme *Building on the Rock*, the 2022 California-Nevada-Hawaii (CNH) District Convention reelected their District President Mike Lange of Brentwood, California, and elected First Vice-President Mitchell Gowen of Aiea, Hawaii. The convention resolved together to make one new ministry start in each circuit in the next triennium. In addition, the convention accepted and endorsed a triennium strategic mission plan under this mission statement: *We strengthen God's People to serve and bear witness to Christ*. Its five goals serve these purposes:

- connection and collaboration: promote a culture of God's people working together;
- leadership development: effective leadership in recruiting, retention, and training;
- growing ministries: create and strengthen new and existing ministries;
- worker wellness: provide resources to enhance physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being; and
- effective use of resources: establish an effective clearinghouse of people and resources.

Congregational additions to our district during this time included Trinity Lutheran in Chowchilla, California; Shepherd of the Valley in Galt, California; and St. Matthew in Kauai, Hawaii. We also added a micro-school and two preschools, as well as two additional "other language" ministries. The challenges of the pandemic led the CNH District into a greater focus upon Worker Wellness and Health. Intentional connections, training, wellness and respite training, and options were made available to all workers at no or minimal cost. Creative ongoing Worker Health initiatives have been created and are in the process of being enhanced.

Three new executive staff leaders were added during this triennium. Ms. Denise Lo was promoted to the position of Executive Director of Operations. The Rev. Joseph Robb was called to serve as Executive Director—Mission Leadership. Mr. Joel Wahlers was called to serve as Executive Director for Education and Congregational Services. All serve as assistants to the Office of the President. LINC Bay Area, under the direction of the Rev. Aaron Putnam, continues to serve as a trusted partner for the development of leaders and mission assistance, especially in the greater Bay Area. The Missio Dei West Foundation, an independent nonprofit, serves as an independent holding, investment, and granting source with the single purpose of supporting mission and ministry of the CNH District.

The CNH District continues to offer grants and mission loans for newly planted outreach ministries and for the purpose of enhancing congregations and making new inroads for intentional Gospel proclamation into their communities. These grants are funded by congregational remittance as well as the generosity of individual donors. Additional education grants for residential students as well as continuing education are made available upon request. The CNH District took ownership of the Mission Training Center this past triennium together with the Northwest and Pacific Southwest districts. This lay training platform partners with Concordia University, Irvine, to provide quality theological and missiological training in support of the congregational and pastoral ministry. The CNH District has emphasized the identification and education of "in place" servants for pastoral ministry. Four more former lay deacons were processed through the Specific Ministry Pastor (SMP) colloquy program, and of the remaining two lay deacons operating with Word and Sacrament Council of Presidents (COP) exceptions, one will begin SMP studies. The CNH District's need for well-trained pastoral leadership has not waned. We continue to explore ways in which workers can be identified, appropriately educated, called, and sent to serve both the gathered and the scattered. We will intentionally raise up and train lay leaders for disciple-making ministry, equipping them for works of service and proclamation in their communities and beyond.

Natural disasters have continued to be a part the CNH District landscape during this triennium. Family homes and one of our

churches were burned out during this triennium. Congregational members around the district have been supportive, giving of their treasures and their time. Comfort Dog ministries have doubled in our congregations, which have given those congregations involved unprecedented access to difficult and challenging ministry opportunities. Connections have been made by our church and local school ministries to partnership opportunities in East Asia and Africa, and support has been provided for a PhD student who is a primary missionary leader in the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus (EECMY).

Michael R. Lange, *President*

R23

Central Illinois District

It seemed like nothing was normal these past four years in the Central Illinois District (CID). While the first year of the triennium started out like others, global pandemic disrupted our routine for several years—even adding a "bonus year" to the triennium. The government, state and federal, tried its best to limit possible exposure to the widest population and we ended up with limitations in the public square, at the workplace, and in the markets and businesses that had a direct effect on how we did things. The economy took a hit. The state determined that the church was an unessential activity and curtailed how we could worship and how many could be gathered. The three Illinois district presidents made a joint attempt to school the governor of our state about the church's essential nature and still it took the opinion of a Supreme Court justice to make him change his mind. Still, churches scrambled to comply as best they could, without deserting the Lord and His people.

Congregational leadership, pastoral and lay, sought to provide an online presence to continue to reach out to members who were staying at home but had computer access. This affected how outreach was done in a vast number of congregations. Some pastors had parking lot services where the congregants stayed in their cars and listened by an FM radio signal. When we were told that only ten people could be assembled in the church for worship at any single time, some pastors increased the number of services they conducted over the weekend so that they could accommodate the ten-person limit as many as ten times on Saturday and Sunday. Communion was especially hard. The common cup was not used for a period. People were kept apart from one another in the pew and at the rail. Antiseptic practices were put into place, and we cleansed, sanitized, and wiped down more than ever before. Hymnals were replaced by full and disposable bulletins. Offerings were gathered as you entered. Handshaking was not done. Some stopped singing for a while. In 2020, the high festival of Easter was canceled in the vast majority of our churches simply because the illness came, and its restrictions were set upon us at such speed and at an inconvenient time. Our state had large outbreaks in metropolitan areas, but huge swaths of rural territory were far less affected/infected. Yet the restrictions did not take these matters under consideration. There were tensions that arose in the congregations between pastors and leadership regarding how many, how long, and what form these limitations would take locally. In some places law enforcement questioned the churches about their meetings, while in other locales some refused to enforce the mandates.

It was a confusing and very difficult time, but on the basis of God's promises, when all was said and done, the devil could try his worst, but he could not (and we knew he would not) prevail

against the kingdom of God. A number of saints succumbed to the ravages of COVID-19 and were summoned to the Lord's waiting arms. Even then it was not a loss but their gain as they were removed from this vale of tears to heavenly bliss where there are no tears, no pain, and no darkness but only light, no anguish but only rest as they await the reunion of body and soul, and of all the saints, planned when the Lord returns on the Last Day.

Now we have much to do to reclaim the wandering, the fearful, the uncertain, and the stymied. Our doors are open, the Gospel is proclaimed, and the Lord Jesus still reigns. We who still stand and breathe have no one other than our holy, true, and Triune God to thank for that.

Since last we met as a Synod in convention, we have seen one congregation, Beautiful Savior, Colona, conduct its last service before commending the saints in her care to neighboring congregations. One congregation, Faith, Flora, was transferred to our neighboring Southern Illinois District so she and her new dual parish partner, Trinity, Iuka, could enjoy membership in the same district.

In Christ ... Newness of Life marked the theme of our 2022 district convention. Essayist the Rev. Dr. Scott Murray led us in a study of Romans 6:3–4 which expounded upon our identity in Christ through Holy Baptism, the sanctified life we now live because of that Baptism, and the resurrection of the body that comes to us as God's baptized children. Because of changes in convention schedules postponed a year due to COVID-19, ours was not the final district convention of the triennial cycle. The Rev. Mark Miller concluded his third term as district president, announcing his impending retirement well before the "bonus year" was added to the cycle. We are grateful to God for the leadership that President Miller provided during his ten years as district president. The Rev. Michael Mohr, then serving Holy Cross Lutheran Church in Vandalia, was elected on the first ballot as the new district president.

This was a convention of transitions. The district concluded its successful "Bring Giving Home" stewardship initiative, reinvigorating the members of her congregations in their vocation as stewards of the resources our Lord brings into their lives. At the same time, a new effort began, "Dollars for Missions," fulfilling the 2019 Synod convention's charge that "each district set before the member congregations the defined mission outcomes that all congregations can see and help achieve through their extra designated funds received via the 1.1.1 mission funding model" (2019 Res. 8-02). Our district is also working through the *Making Disciples for Life* effort of our Synod to implement the "Beyond the Classroom" module, assisting schools in reaching out into their communities to bring the Good News of Christ to those who do not regularly receive the Word.

While the convention was one of transitions, we also rejoiced in a bit of stability at the district office. While the district president is new, the other district executives continue their service. The Rev. Dr. Ken Schurb serves in the areas of Missions, Evangelism, Stewardship, and Human Care, while Mr. Lewis "Trip" Rodgers oversees Education, Congregational Life, and Communications. Mr. Hugh Shown provides steady and stalwart support as our bookkeeper, taking on some of the duties of receptionist and business manager as well. Mrs. Christine Anderson continues in her leadership as Executive Director of our independent CID Church Extension Fund, ably aided by longtime assistant Mrs. Susan Short. Gift Planning Counselor the Rev. Chuck Olander continues his faithful duties, looking to expand his work in the coming years. One addition to our staff came this past triennium in Mrs. Amy Holmes, pro-

viding much needed secretarial support. While starting in person at the office, Amy continues to work remotely now after her family relocated to Tennessee during the pandemic.

We remain God's baptized people, rejoicing to see the opportunities He presents as we march into the coming triennium, into the "new normal."

Michael W. Mohr, *President*

R24

Eastern District

The 100th Convention of the Eastern District was held at First Trinity Lutheran Church in Tonawanda, New York, June 17–18, 2022, with 138 voting delegates in attendance. The convention theme was "To the Ends of the Earth," drawn from Acts 1:8. The Rev. Dr. Chris Wicher presided. The Rev. Charles Whited served as convention chaplain, the Rev. Ron Bright as election committee chair and the Rev. Sean Walters as credentials committee chair.

The Rev. Dr. Matthew C. Harrison served as the Synod's representative and presented to the convention on the state of the LCMS at several junctures in the convention proceedings. Among those who would also address the convention would be Mr. Rick Porter, Regional VP for LCEF, who would bring greetings from the same; Mark Elberding, on behalf of the Eastern District board of directors; Dee Grzyb, president of the Eastern District LWML; Steve Klafehn, representing the Eastern District LLL; the Rev. Nicholas Grieg, who brought greetings from the newly constituted "Friends of Pioneer"; Mrs. Susan Knowles, representing the Ambassadors of Reconciliation; and the Rev. Robert Marshall, presenting on behalf of the Lutheran Heritage Foundation.

A resolution was presented at the convention approving the realignment of circuits of the Eastern District in response to changing demographics. This resolution represented a great deal of work in the preceding weeks and months. Happily, the resolution was passed by unanimous vote. Circuit visitors for the newly configured circuits were elected by circuit caucuses.

A major focus of the convention was the "partnering" of congregations in situations where a full-time pastor is no longer feasible due to financial constraints on the part of one or more congregations. A number of pastors who are serving in such "yoked" situations presented during the course of the proceedings.

The Rev. John L. Pingel of Buffalo was elected as president of the Eastern District; also elected were regional vice-presidents: the Rev. Charles Whited, Buffalo Region; the Rev. Larry Stojkovic, Rochester Region; the Rev. Dan Hahn, Pittsburgh Region; and the Rev. Fred Hoover, Philadelphia Region.

Challenges affecting the Eastern District are similar to those found across the Synod. Cultural winds opposing the Gospel message grow increasingly strong. Many congregations face decreased funding and declining membership. Nevertheless, God's Word and Sacraments remain efficacious. God's Word continues to go forth imparting grace and peace. People continue to be brought to saving faith in Christ and sustained in that faith through the Means of Grace.

Staff serving the Eastern District out of the district office, in addition to the district president, include: Bruce Sutherland, assistant to the president; Ruth Marzano, administrative assistant to the president; Kathy Fretthold, assistant to the president for education;

John Fretthold, business manager; Cheryl Brzyski, receptionist; and Rick Porter, regional vice president for LCEF, who maintains his office at district headquarters and is a valued member of the Eastern District team.

Among goals set for the district are the following:

- increase efficiency in congregational assessment during vacancy, in the obtaining of pastoral care during vacancies, and in the calling of a new pastor;
- stabilize and encourage congregations that are in crisis or in decline;
- address post-pandemic concerns of congregations;
- increase quality of existing ministries;
- create “rapid response” teams to minister to congregations in distress;
- motivate congregations to move from minimal services and survival mode to active status;
- address wellness concerns and increase support measures for ordained and commissioned workers;
- encourage and facilitate continuing education for church workers;
- foster a spirit of collegiality among congregations and workers;
- educate and resource congregations for increased contact with their communities;
- maximize effectiveness of existing ministries and broaden ministry to ethnic communities;
- encourage outreach to all age groups; and
- seek to expand Word and Sacrament ministry to unserved areas within the geographic boundaries of the Eastern District, including urban areas.

The Rochester Region will host the Rev. Billy Brath who will lead area congregations in the Mission Clarity program provided through LCEF. This will serve as the prototype for introducing the Clarity process to other areas of the Eastern District.

Strategies to facilitate stated goals include regional listening sessions with district staff; a variety of conferences, meetings, and training sessions; and sending church workers and laity alike to various training and information gathering events.

John L. Pingel, *President*

R25

English District

For the last 112 years, the English District has faithfully served the people of God in 160 congregations throughout 22 states in the U.S. and the Ontario province of Canada. As one of the two non-geographical districts of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, we are blessed to operate without borders and seek the lost in all corners of God’s creation. Focused on and with a high desire to advance the LCMS objectives found in Article III of the Constitution, the English District has continued through these past four years to conserve and promote the unity of the true faith and the united defense of the Gospel of Christ our Lord in the world. Over the last four years, we have endeavored to support and strengthen our con-

gregations, church workers, and members as they seek to spread the Gospel and care for people locally where our churches reside. Over these last four years, the district has focused on recruiting and increasing the number of church workers from our district congregations. By the grace of God, we have seen a significant increase in the number of men and women seeking to enter church work vocations.

The 57th convention of the English District was held June 20–22, 2022, at Concordia University Wisconsin’s Ann Arbor campus with the theme from Luke 10:27: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind.” The delegation at the convention showed great joy and thankfulness to God for His love over the last four years and through the struggles of the COVID-19 pandemic. For the most part, the district congregations remained stable and, in many cases, thrived during the pandemic. This was primarily accomplished because of faithful and hard-working pastors working side by side with the dedicated and passionate lay leaders from our beautiful congregations. These were some of the highlights of the convention:

- receiving a report from Synod President Rev. Dr. Matthew Harrison on the status and work of the Synod;
- hearing presentations by
 - Lieutenant General (ret.) William Boykin, who now serves as Family Research Council’s executive vice president, on the theme of “Loving God in a Hostile world”;
 - Mr. Jack Philips, the Colorado cake maker who refused to make a cake for a gay couple and found himself in front of the U.S. Supreme Court defending his beliefs in marriage as between one man and one woman; and
 - the Rev. Keith Speaks on serving and working together as God’s people;
- seeing actions taken by the convention:
 - Resolution 1-09: “To Prevent Harmful Philosophies, Ideologies and Contemporary Movements Contrary to the Christian Faith from Damaging Our Congregations, Schools, Colleges and Seminaries”;
 - Res. 1-04: “To Establish a National Lutheran Teacher Student Debt Assistance Program for LCMS Commissioned Ministers—Teachers”;
 - Res. 2-01: “To Affirm the Need for Open Churches During Times of Plague, Pestilence and Pandemic”;
 - Res. 4-03A: “To Direct LCMS Life Ministry to Support Congregations in Developing Mercy Ministries to Promote a Culture of Life.”

Another highlight from the convention was the report on our mission work regarding planting and revitalizations throughout the district. The report included the mission activity in the district at four congregations: Blessed Sacrament, Hayden, Idaho; Holy Cross, Hazelwood, Pennsylvania; St. John’s, Clarksburg, West Virginia; St. John the Divine, Chicago, Illinois. It is a great joy to see the hand of God moving and working in His church throughout the U.S. and Canada.

The new triennial theme for the district is from 2 Cor. 9:8, “God is able to make all grace abound to you so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work.” This theme speaks of our firm faith in the ability of our God

and His work in our lives and the lives of our churches. From this theme, the district board of directors, with the assistance of the district president, arrived at these End Statements that will guide the district over the next three years:

- ALL GRACE
 - Empowering and enabling the sharing of God's grace and love to all in existing congregations and schools and new starts
- ALL SUFFICIENCY
 - Providing resources to church workers that promote joy and foster positive mental, physical, spiritual, and financial health
 - Encouraging congregations to identify and recruit well-qualified seminary and professional church worker candidates
- ALL THINGS
 - Recognizing and responding to the ever-changing ministry needs of district congregations and schools

Jamison J. Hardy, *President*

R26

Florida-Georgia District

The Florida-Georgia District continues to live out its mission of "Connecting People to Jesus" through equipping, empowering, and engaging God's people for witness and service. This year we are celebrating our 75th anniversary of mission and ministry, growing from 22 original congregations to 192 today and 59 schools and early childhood ministries! We rejoice in the Kingdom work of our past and are committed to boldly living as the "called-out ones" that others may come to know and believe the life-transforming Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Work is underway to bring together nearly 1,000 lay leaders, pastors, and commissioned workers at our fall *President's Equip Conference*. Our theme is focused on living as *Disciples who Make Disciple Makers*. As part of our anniversary celebration, a capital drive to raise \$1.5 million will culminate at the conference. These funds are being designated to provide mission grants to start ten new church plants in the next five years. The statistics show that the Western church is in decline, but God is not done and there is still a harvest for us to bring in!

At our district convention in June 2022, a new district president was elected as President Greg Walton termed out. Under the leadership of President James Rockey, the district is building upon its mission heart of the past. President Rockey is committed to strengthening congregations and God's people with focus on the three R's: restoring, reaching, and rejoicing. This spring, the district board of directors began a process of prayer, study, discussion, and visioning for its work over the next ten years. Even though we live in a day where the church is faced by many challenges, the district believes that this is a time for us to remain steadfast and bold in our witness that many more might come to saving faith.

The district is diverse as it stretches from the Florida Keys to the mountains of north Georgia. Despite Lutherans being a minority in a sea of denominations, we are joyfully Lutheran, proclaiming the message of God's grace through Christ by faith alone. We are committed to sharing this one true hope with all. We are committed to

standing upon the Word of God and celebrating the Sacraments in accord with the Word of God.

The district is blessed with a wonderful spirit of unity. Pastors joyfully gather forwinkel conferences, sharing worship, Bible study, mutual encouragement, and friendship. Commissioned workers gather locally and in mass at our annual educator conferences. Across the district, the focus remains on outreach and leadership. As those who are God's redeemed, we are sent to be a blessing. When so many are hurting, struggling, and living outside of God's grace, it is our calling to "share the hope that is within us." Therefore, the district continues to provide opportunities to equip and empower the people to be the leaders that the church needs, and to see each opportunity as a "divine appointment" for outreach in service to the Lord.

Such equipping is accomplished through pastors conferences, regional gatherings and workshops, Emergent Leader Training, treasurer workshops, outreach/evangelism training, and in providing other resources through the district staff. Others have been encouraged and strengthened in their life and ministry through Grace Place Wellness Retreats, Doxology, Pastoral Leadership Institute and in a number of seminary workshops held. Due to COVID-19, our 2022 Fall Pastors Conference and Educators Conference were our first in-person conferences in three years and attendance was among our highest ever. The desire for reconnecting, renewal, and growth, along with excellent programs and speakers was a strong draw.

During the past triennium, the district not only saw the passing of the baton to a new district president, but in other key leadership roles as well. Mark Brink retired in 2020 after more than 30 years of service as Executive Director of Schools and Youth Ministry. The district has been blessed with Jennifer Tanner, who brings her own great gifts, passion, and vision for this growing area. The schools across our district are all growing, creating wonderful opportunities, and, at times, challenges. Yet our school leaders and congregations are working to fully utilize this growth for ministry to both the students and families. Many of our schools are seeing multiple baptisms a year as they faithfully share the Gospel.

Youth ministry and children's ministry in a number of our congregations has reflected much of the change across Synod in recent years with lower participation. This has been further impacted by COVID-19. Yet we remain blessed with great DCEs, deaconesses, and other youth and children's ministry leaders who are working to reach out into their communities. Even with the challenges, we continue to offer excellent youth district gatherings for middle schoolers and high school students, along with an annual servant event.

In 2020, immediately as the impact of COVID-19 began, the Rev. Dr. Peter Meier joined the staff as Executive Director of Outreach and Missions. He has brought incredible experience and fresh ideas and is doing a great job in helping to raise up new leaders and engage congregations of all sizes in mission. Much focus has been given to equipping God's people for their daily vocations as followers of Christ. In addition, resources and time are being spent in developing micro-church groups as an effective way to reach unreached neighborhoods and people groups. Lastly, a strong commitment remains to walk with congregations that are struggling. District staff is reaffirming and engaging more congregations through circuit district partnership events and visitations and offering to lead visioning and mission workshops and more.

The population of both states continues to grow rapidly (2% in 2022 alone). With that growth comes many opportunities. Yet one that we continue to need to improve upon is that of reaching the diverse and growing ethnic population. Challenges include few bilingual pastors, but also leaders and congregations that will answer the call to “send workers into the harvest.” We are indeed blessed to have a number of ethnic ministries including Latino, Hispanic, Haitian, Korean, and Ethiopian. But there is more to do. One response to these opportunities is our REV7:9 project that is involving 22 congregations in reaching out to diverse ethnic groups. This project is being supported through a partnership with Mission Nation Publishing and a grant from LWML.

We continue to support campus ministries across our district in order to reach over 665,000 students spread out in our many state universities. These students are not only being fed on Word and Sacrament but being equipped and sent both locally and on mission trips in Latin America.

Financially, our district has remained strong and debt free. Our executive director of finance and administration, Laura Zirbel, has been a great blessing in guiding us through this time of change, and continues to help us be faithful stewards in all that the Lord provides. Our LCEF vice president, Jay Wendland, continues to serve wonderfully as an advocate for partnerships with our congregations and schools. The people of the district also love supporting the Lord’s work with nearly double the average percentage of investors comparatively across Synod. The LCEF Vice President also serves as our Disaster Response Coordinator and has done an amazing job, particularly in the aftermath of Hurricane Ian. Please also allow me this opportunity to thank you, the people of God across the Synod, for your generous gifts in support of the recovery efforts. In partnership with the Synod’s Disaster Response office, we have helped nearly 100 workers and 14 congregations with financial aid totalling more than \$825,000!

My prayer is that we will continue to be bold in living as Christ’s ambassadors together! Let us walk together as the redeemed of Christ that His Kingdom may see incredible growth. May we honor our Lord and daily live out His command to “Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another” (John 13: 34–35).

Finally, I leave you with these words of the Apostle Paul from 2 Thessalonians, “May our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved us and by His grace gave us eternal encouragement and good hope, encourage your hearts and strengthen you in every good deed and word.”

James H. Rockey, *President*

R27

Indiana District

The Indiana District comprises some 235 congregations, along with their pastors, schools, teachers, and commissioned workers in Indiana and northern Kentucky. By God’s grace we are a strong and healthy district with many blessings received with thanksgiving and being used to the glory of His name and for the good of His church.

As Dr. Brege indicated in his report to the 2019 convention, our district office has gone through some significant transitions.

Indeed, over the past five years we had almost a complete turnover among our executive and support staff. Toward the beginning of his fourth year in office, Dr. Brege made the difficult decision not to let his name stand for election to a second term. We give thanks to God for his faithful leadership, especially his consistent confession and teaching of the Word of our Lord. As he was concluding his service, the undersigned was elected at the 2022 Indiana district convention and is grateful for the beautiful example that Dr. Brege provided.

Dr. Kevin Brockberg was brought on board in 2018 to serve as our new education executive. And Mr. Cody Dodson was brought on board the following year to serve as our new finance executive. We are grateful that Dr. Geoff Robinson remains in his office as our mission executive, faithfully serving in a variety of capacities.

The district president’s office has been immensely blessed with a new administrative assistant, Mrs. Lisa Slack, who stepped into the position held for over forty years by Mrs. Jan Koenig, and we give thanks for both of these ladies. The education executive’s office likewise has a new administrative assistant, Mrs. Kirsten Bohnke, who is serving admirably in that position. Mrs. Sara Pierce now handles many of the secretarial duties within the office. And Mrs. Diane Ottinger remains our excellent accounting assistant.

Along with so many transitions within the district office, the last four years also included the COVID-19 pandemic and the whole assortment of challenges that went along with it. Christ be praised that our pastors and congregations found ways to stay the course and continued to provide pastoral care and administer the Gospel to God’s people. And in support of those efforts, our district board of directors set aside significant funds that were made available and distributed as needed to churches and workers who were severely impacted by the pandemic and the accompanying lockdowns.

In response to a resolution of the 2018 district convention, the board of directors took a careful look at our polity, structure, and governance in an effort to discern various ways in which we might better serve the goals and purposes of the Lord’s church among us. To that end, the regional vice presidents met with the circuit pastors to discuss potential improvement, and then met together with Dr. Brege to formulate a recommendation to the board of directors. Although further work remains to be done, the board presented the 2022 district convention with an overture, subsequently adopted to dissolve our current commissions and some of our committees at the conclusion of this current triennium, and to address the areas of education, finance, missions and outreach, worship, and pastoral care by way of ad hoc committees, task forces, working groups, and individuals, to be enlisted by the board of directors as needed.

Among the more exciting endeavors of our Indiana District, we have been able to contribute significantly to ongoing mission and mercy efforts in support of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania. That support has included the training of pastors, the building of orphanages, and the beginnings of a seminary. And as a district we have committed to continue our support of these endeavors.

Closer to home, within our district, some initial efforts have gotten underway with “Outreach Kentucky,” the goal being that we would establish a Lutheran church for the ministry and mission of the Gospel in Richmond, Kentucky. Rev. Vernon Wendt has been called to serve Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in Lexington, KY, while also doing outreach in Richmond, focusing especially on the campus and students of Eastern Kentucky University.

Stemming from a resolution of our 2022 district convention, the board of directors authorized the undersigned to form a task force for the study of classical education and a consideration of the ways it might inform and assist the work of our Lutheran schools. That task force had its first meeting in January of 2023, and will aim to provide a report and recommendations to the board of directors at the conclusion of this calendar year. It is hoped and expected that the efforts of this task force will be of great assistance to our schools in strengthening their curricula, pedagogy, and catechesis, and also in resisting the growing pressures of “progressive” ideologies.

Also significant in early 2023 was the “Katie Retreat” for the wives of our district pastors, gathering together in person again for the first time since the COVID-19 pandemic. In this case, the retreat was conducted by Doxology, which has been of such benefit to so many of our LCMS pastors, but which has not previously done any such retreats for pastors’ wives. It was well attended and went well.

The “Katie Retreat” has been a blessing and benefit for many ladies over the years, but an annual retreat (pandemics aside) is not the answer or solution for the ongoing day-by-day needs of pastors’ wives. Meeting those needs and providing year-long care for those women and their children are among a number of key priorities and emphases that the undersigned has set forth for himself and for the pastors and congregations that constitute the Indiana District in the present triennium. Simply stated, those priorities are as follows:

- Encouraging, facilitating, and/or providing pastoral care for the pastors of the Indiana District
- Likewise, supporting and caring for the pastors’ families
- Promoting an active fellowship between brother pastors and sister congregations at the circuit level
- Increasing the clarity and consistency of the practice of closed Communion throughout all of our congregations
- Fostering a more harmonious unity of worship practice across the district, for the sake of the clarity, consistency, and continuity of our catechesis and confession of Christ

God grant us, according to His tender mercies and steadfast loving-kindness in Christ Jesus, to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, as together we hear and confess His Word, receive the gifts He freely gives in faith and with thanksgiving, and live in love for Him and one another, to the glory of His Holy Name.

D. Richard Stuckwisch Jr., *President*

R28

Iowa East District

Iowa District East (IDE) is comprised of 118 congregations with 131 active, candidate, and emeriti pastors. We also have 8 Lutheran elementary schools, one high school, and 26 preschools. The commissioned workers number 24 principals, deaconesses, DCEs, parish nurses, and other parish workers. Our schools are staffed with 110 commissioned or contracted teachers and para educators. The geographical setting of IDE is the eastern half of the state of Iowa. This district office currently employs two full-time and three part-time servants. In reference to the resolutions passed in the 2022 district 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. An intentional effort is being made this triennium to increase our church worker recruitment. We are working with Synod to be involved in the *Set Apart to Serve* campaign headed up by Rev. Dr. James Baneck from the International Center. We have assembled a task force to implement recruitment efforts with on-site visitations and communications with each congregation.

While we have been blessed in the recent past with few vacancies, the shortage of church workers graduating from our colleges and seminaries is beginning to increase our vacancies. We make ample use of available candidates (those currently without a call) to fill out call lists. The pastoral and lay leadership in each parish highly value the Word of God and the Lutheran Confessions. As such they dearly desire to be led by properly and adequately prepared servants.

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. My 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 congregations these past four years and have had some congregations close. 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 His free gift of grace. What we receive is worth inviting others to come and receive. 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 the pure Word of God. Our schools prepare our children rightly. We have everything Pentecost has given the church in every era. 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 S. Saunders, *President*

R29

Iowa West District

The theme verse guiding Iowa District West (IDW) for the next triennium is Philippians 1:3–5: “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.”

It is an honor to bring this report to the 2023 Synod convention as president of IDW. Our congregations are faithfully proclaiming God’s Word and administering His Sacraments. Pastors are present with their people as they faithfully visit the sick and shut-ins of their congregations. 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. We are blessed!

Who would have guessed at the 2019 Synod convention that COVID-19 would attack us and those we love? The impact on our society, our communities, our churches, our families, and each of us as individuals will not be fully known for years to come. At first, we didn't know what we were dealing with, and so society virtually shut down. All the schools in the state ended in-person education from the middle of March until the end of the school year in 2020. Many of our churches suspended in-person activities, including public worship services, at least for a few Sundays. Our pastors and leaders did the best they could in determining when and how to conduct worship services, how to deal with the issue of masks and social distancing, and how to care for church members in their time of distress and loss. It was a challenge for us all.

Not everyone was happy with the decisions that were made. I am sure mistakes were made and unkind words may have been exchanged. This is why the proclamation of the Gospel is so very important. We hear again and again the sweet words of the love and mercy of Christ for us. When your pastor says following your confession, I as a called and ordained servant of Christ forgive you, know for certain it is true! Forgiveness is not based on what you did or did not do during this pandemic, it is based on the life, death, and resurrection of God's one and only Son, Jesus Christ. With the word of absolution, we don't have to be caught up in the decisions we have made in the past. We preach Christ crucified. The blood of Jesus makes us bold to continue, as frail, flawed, and imperfect people, to share this Good News of God's love for us.

This past year, Iowa and The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod both celebrated 175th anniversaries. The partnership we share with The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod is a blessing. The seminaries and the colleges are providing pastors, commissioned ministers, and lay leaders for now and the next generation. In the last four years, the congregations of IDW have provided \$2,693,850 for our work together with the LCMS. We are blessed! Mission Central is a unique partnership between IDW, the Nebraska District, and LCMS International Mission. This year, people from all over the world partnered through Mission Central and sponsored nearly 100 missionary families. Our partnership with missionary Gary has made Mission Central the single largest missionary supporting ministry in the Synod.

This partnership in the Gospel is lived out every day in the congregations of IDW. Our urban centers have more people and a diverse demographic. Our rural communities may be getting smaller, but they also have a more varied population. Long-time members remember when the church was packed most Sundays and enjoyed an active ministry. They look at declining attendance, facilities in need of repairs, an aging congregation, and wonder why this is happening to their congregation. COVID-19 has not helped with these fears.

There is no easy or simple answer to these challenges. I believe congregations who wish to thrive into the future need to be preparing today. Partnerships will prove to be helpful in serving these changing communities. Pastors and congregations need to know what the mission of God is in their communities. This begins with an intentional and intensive study of God's Word. This is a time of reflection on God's will and God's promises. God invites us in difficult times to call on Him in prayer.

I was recently visiting with a congregation going through the

call process and was asked the question, When should we be looking for a partner congregation to work with us in calling a pastor? That is a great question and I wish I had a great answer! It depends on a variety of circumstances and one answer does not fit all situations.

One blessing of being in Iowa West is that our communities are close together. Congregations have opportunities to work together to care for members and to engage the unchurched population in their respective communities. This is the time for congregations to consider how they can partner together for God's Mission. New models (beyond just dual parishes) are being developed to be able to care for the growing number of small congregations. There needs to be a desire to pool resources for efforts to engage communities. Dialogue between pastors and lay leaders of congregations is necessary to consider the needs of their respective flocks and to explore mission opportunities.

God is sending us the opportunity to share this Gospel with the world, right here in Iowa. Who would have thought 40 years ago we would have waves of immigrants coming to our state? In 2021, your congregation partnered with other congregations in Iowa West to call a full-time missionary to the Spanish speaking people of Iowa. Pastor Pedro Lopez is now serving Christ and bringing the love of Jesus to our communities. God is sending African refugees to cities and small towns in Iowa. These brothers and sisters in Christ with their own Christian pastors are coming to us and asking us to help them become Lutherans.

The COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting economic recession have negatively affected many people's mental health and created new barriers for people already suffering from mental illness and substance use disorders. During the pandemic, about 4 in 10 adults in the U.S. have reported symptoms of anxiety or depressive disorder, up from 1 in 10 adults who reported these symptoms from January to June 2019. Compassion fatigue is a term that describes the physical, emotional, spiritual, and psychological impact of helping others—often through experiences of stress or trauma.

IDW has a long history of partnership with Lutheran Family Service (LFS). Their professional counselors have consulted with our pastors and commissioned church workers, assisting them in ways they care for members of their congregations. Our church workers themselves have turned to the counselors at LFS during these dark days.

I value these and all the other partnerships we have in the Gospel. I join my words with the words of St. Paul, "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" (Phil. 1:3–5).

Your Partner in the Gospel,
Steven D. Turner, *President*

R30

Kansas District

Our work in the Kansas District is aptly reflected in the theme of our 2022 convention: "Proclaim. Teach. Share." We are the baptized, royal priests of Christ, called to proclaim His excellencies (1 Pt. 2:9–10). Fed and strengthened by the Means of Grace, we serve as the baptized disciples of Christ with a free and joyful spirit, free to proclaim, teach and share Jesus to all nations; free to love

and to serve; joyful to pray and eager to sacrifice; and willing to steward what God first entrusts to our care so that we might be a blessing to our neighbor. We have the privilege of supporting and encouraging the members of the district—156 congregations, 14 elementary schools, one high school, 44 preschools, and nearly 400 workers—in carrying out the mission Christ has given His church. We're also thankful for the 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 LCMS 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

2018 Res. 18-01-03: To Support Lutheran Mission and Mercy Work in Guinea and West Africa (also LCMS 2019 2-09)—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. Our annual Pentecost offering has gone to support theological and pastoral education at CLET Togo, and more recently, Guinea. In celebration of our 25th year of this partnership, LCMS Kansans raised over \$55,000 in support of this mission.

2018 Res. 18-03-09: To Foster Active Participation in the Koinonia Project Through the LCMS Kansas District—For several years, we had three of our 16 circuits engaged in the *Koinonia* project. A district *Koinonia* task force was established to develop a plan for expanding the project throughout the district. The fall 2021 pastors conference was wholly focused on the *Koinonia* project under the topic “Walking Together in a Digital Age.” Pastors worked together in 17 groups of 5–7 men and in four different sessions to discuss different, but related topics. The pre-Lent retreat in January 2022 continued the work of the *Koinonia* project as the discussion dealt with the potential benefits and drawbacks of the online Divine Service.

2018 Res. 18-01-04: To Prioritize New Models and Resources for Small, Struggling and/or Isolated Congregations (also LCMS 2019 1-03)—The Kansas District developed and is actively promoting and implementing partnership resources. These include Bible studies, planning documents, and partnership models.

Synod Priorities

LCMS Bylaw 4.4.4: Visitation—We conducted 22 “official” visitations in the Kansas District since the last convention before the pandemic. The visits were intentionally based on Article III of the Synod's Constitution and Bylaw 4.4.4 (e). Visitation in this triennium will also be centered on the same focus.

2016 Resolution 13-02A: Licensed Lay Deacons (LLDs)—In October 2016, the Kansas District had 58 LLDs, but most were not serving in regular Word and Sacrament ministry as *de facto* pastors. Since that time, we identified deacons who seemed to meet the criteria for LLD to SMP colloquy. All eligible men have been ordained and installed. Today, the district has 13 LLDs, all of whom are current with their annual reports.

2019 Resolution 6-01: To Support and Participate in the Comprehensive Church Worker Recruitment Initiative—The Kansas District is actively supporting the *Set Apart to Serve* church worker recruitment initiative with prayer, active engagement, and a gift of \$20,000 to the LCMS.

Performance Assessment

As servant leaders, the district staff and board of directors strive to be good stewards of the mission gifts our congregations entrust to the district for our common work together. Here are a few ways we have sought to advance the mission and vision of the Kansas District, strengthening our partnership with the Synod and other organizations since the last convention.

- Timely COVID-19 communications and provision of resources to congregations and schools
- Kansas District resource webpage for vetted Christian counselors
- Church planting and church revitalization; *Every One His Witness (EIHWW)*
- Annual visit by the DP and assistant to the DP for missions and stewardship to each monthly circuit conference of pastors
- Annual visit by the assistant to the DP for education and youth to each of the schools
- Increased and intentional visits and communication with congregations and schools all across the district
- District disaster response efforts through district disaster response coordinator and LERT
- Post-Seminary Applied Learning and Support (PALS) for pastors in first three years of ministry
- Study and discussion has gone into church worker care with resources being provided through a “Church Worker Care Manual”
- Partnership with the LCMS Foundation for planned giving services

Looking Ahead

Shortly after our 2022 convention, we created a strategic direction document to guide our work as “Living as the Baptized” in the new triennium. At the core of the document are four key aims:

1. Abiding in the Word (John 8:31–32)
2. Connecting in Christ (Rom. 12:5)
3. Equipping the Saints (Eph. 4:11–12)
4. Engaging in Christ's Mission (Matt. 28:19–20a)

We have a charge in front us—to be His priests, His baptized, His salt and light, His body in this world—and the confused, angry, and hurting world needs us now more than ever!

Justin A. Panzer, *President*

R31**Michigan District**

Focusing on these Michigan District Critical Targets:

- Great Commission Ministry
- Great Compassion Ministry
- Healthy Congregations
- Healthy Church Workers

The Michigan District seeks above all things, in and through her congregations and in every endeavor it undertakes, to proclaim Jesus. Indeed, *We Preach Christ Crucified*.

The State of Michigan

Three realities impact Christian ministry in the state of Michigan. First, the latest election approved one of the most liberal positions regarding abortion and gender issues in the nation. Second, the state continues to be one of the few in the Midwest that does not provide a voucher system for education. Third, social practices continue to accelerate the use of marijuana and legalized gambling across the state.

Ministry during the Pandemic

During the pandemic, the district helped its churches transition to online (recorded) and livestream worship by providing resources such as phone and Zoom consultations with our staff videographer, how-to videos and podcasts on how to livestream, and a listing of congregations offering online worship. We also created videos based on *The Hymnal Project* (an ongoing project whereby hymns in the public domain receive new arrangements and are distributed free of charge), adding lyrics to facilitate singing via livestream. These videos blessed many congregations not only in our district but also in other states and even around the world. A website page with pandemic resources was created to help congregations and schools navigate the social, educational, financial, and legal environments during state lockdowns.

Unfortunately, some of our major conferences had to be canceled during 2020. Most were rescheduled for a later date, or we moved to a hybrid or virtual-style conference instead. We thank God for the flexibility of our professional church workers as things changed regularly.

All of the turmoil took a heavy toll on church workers, and the district sought to provide support by means of podcasts on mental health, as well as reminding workers of the availability of our Mental Health Case Manager.

Schools

Our Lutheran schools and early childhood centers have rebounded from the pandemic, and, despite the challenges of the shortage of educators and roadblocks from the state department of education, we continue to push forward as we explore a variety of ways for Lutheran education to thrive in the years to come.

Other Ministry Initiatives during the Last Four Years

The Digital Footprint Initiative continued to address the challenges some congregations face when they do not have a web presence, an updated website, or skilled, willing, and trained volunteers.

It provides an inexpensive website platform with a template that requires little to no manning.

The Michigan District Stewardship Committee put together the video curriculum *God's Children Are God's Disciples* for parents and teachers to engage children in stewardship principles as they grow in their life as disciples of God.

Here We Stand Campaign

The Michigan District's *Here We Stand* campaign, which was launched in 2015, ended in June 2022, having surpassed its \$10 million goal by raising \$10,392,875.86. The campaign focused on four initiatives: Professional Church Worker Scholarships; Innovative Missional Ministry; Endowment Fund; and International Ministry.

Circuit Visitors

Our circuit visitors meet monthly by Zoom and twice a year for a two-day conference. The circuit visitors work with congregations on the call process, maintain monthly circuit meetings, and meet regularly with individual pastors.

Michigan District Church Extension Fund

Our Church Extension Fund continues to be a strong partner with our district. CEF provided a total of \$1,290,000 in financial support of our *Here We Stand* capital campaign. CEF continues to provide low-cost loans to congregations for building, renovation, and church-worker housing, and competitive investment instruments to all our members. CEF also provides services and grant programs that assist our congregations in various ways (e.g., aesthetic updates, Lutheran education, security, technology, and ministry worker wellness).

Michigan District Convention

Our convention theme was *People of Hope ... It's Time*. Key-note speakers were Rev. Dr. Chad D. Lakies and Rev. John A. Nunes, PhD. The convention expressed its gratitude to Rev. Dr. David P. E. Maier for his 13 years of faithful service as district president. Convention business focused on resolutions toward the reversal of *Roe v. Wade* with Gospel understanding and care (1-17); the CUS/CUE proposed governance model (2-06a); strengthening the advisory delegate participation at district conventions (2-01); a CUW/CUAA board of regents representation (2-08); addressing the issues of race by utilizing resources such as *Heart Issues Are Hard Issues* (1-05a); a culture of Bible reading (1-01a); focusing on spiritual formation (1-06); and encouraging congregations to raise up new commissioned and ordained church workers (1-10).

The convention elected a new praesidium: David Davis, president; Dean Davenport, first vice-president; Darryl Andrzejewski, second vice-president; Craig Bickel, third vice-president; and Erik Cloeter, fourth vice-president.

Synod Convention Actions

Michigan District leadership priorities align with the following Synod resolutions:

- We are determined to move forward with church planting and church revamping (helping smaller congregations work with others to forestall closure and maintain an incarnational presence) (2019 Res. 1-02, 1-03, 1-05A).
- We are determined to take advantage of lessons learned during the COVID-19 pandemic to find ways to expand the

reach of our extensive parochial education system. We call it Parochial Education 2.0 (Res. 12-01).

- We offer a wide range of services to our church workers regarding mental health (Res. 3-04A).
- We will encourage our circuit visitors to have all district pastors' PIF/SET updated during this triennium (Res. 6-04).
- We have worked to ensure that we are in compliance with the Synod relative to licensed lay deacons.

Building an Ethic of Bible Reading

During this triennium, the district will work toward more disciplined Bible reading. Our annual theological conference explored the topic *The Word Works*. With our faith formed by Scripture, our people are able to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus and fully communicate the Synod convention theme, *We Preach Christ Crucified*.

Leadership Pipeline

We are building a coordinated effort to raise up workers through an integrated pipeline. That pipeline includes generous support of and encouragement to our young people to attend our Concordia Ann Arbor, another Concordia, or one of our seminaries. The recent *Here We Stand* capital campaign raised \$1.73 million for financial assistance to professional church work students. Respecting recent Synod resolutions, we also have a robust deacon training program that provides congregations with credentialed deacons, and many congregations are utilizing the Specific Ministry Pastor program. Additional aspects of the pipeline include utilizing EIIT and CHS routes to ordination as we seek to serve the growing number of immigrants with the Gospel. We will identify and train more of their own spiritual leaders as qualified and gifted pastors, teachers, evangelists, etc. We also provide regular conferences for pastors, teachers, commissioned workers, and circuit visitors. In fall 2023, we will hold a professional church worker conference, where we expect over 1,000 in attendance.

David A. Davis, *President*

R32

Mid-South District

The 21st regular convention of the Mid-South District was held in July 2021, following the normal convention cycle. The dedicated pastors, teachers, principals, DCEs, and lay members of our 123 congregations, 9 schools, 22 early childhood centers, and affiliated agencies joined together to *Declare His Marvelous Works*, the theme of our convention, based on 1 Chronicles 16:23–24. The Mid-South District is blessed with ministries throughout Tennessee; Arkansas; Kentucky; Sallisaw, Oklahoma; Olive Branch, Mississippi; and Abingdon, Virginia. Despite not being able to worship in person for months, our steadfast parishioners continued to support the mission and ministry of the district as well as the LCMS at large. Thanks be to God!

The 2021 Mid-South District convention passed the following resolutions:

- **R-01-01-21:** To Memorialize the Next Synodical Convention to Mark the 50th Anniversary of *Roe v. Wade* with More Fervent Teaching, Proclamation, and Efforts to Promote God's Gift of Life
- **R-01-02-21:** To Memorialize the Next Synodical Convention

to Mark the 50th Anniversary of the 1974 Concordia Seminary St. Louis "Walkout" with Thorough Teaching about the Controversy and Renewed Emphasis on the Pure Doctrine

- **R-01-07-21:** To Encourage Further Consideration of Successful Completion of Specific Ministry Pastor (SMP) Coursework before Ordination and Placement on Ordained Roster
- **R-02-01-21:** To Commend and Support the Work of Trinity HOPE in Haiti
- **R-02-02-21:** To Continue a Relationship with the Southeast of Lake Victoria Diocese of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Tanzania
- **R-02-03-21:** To Continue a Relationship with the Confessional Malagasy Lutheran Church in Madagascar
- **R-02-04-21:** To Reaffirm Church Planting and Revitalization
- **R-02-05-21:** To Encourage Financial Support for Professional Church Workers
- **R-02-06-21:** To Encourage All Christians in Personal Witnessing
- **R-02-07-21:** To Address the Use of Technology in the Life of the Church and the Ministry of Congregations
- **R-02-08-21:** To Encourage Congregational Men's Ministry
- **R-02-09-21:** To Encourage the Study and Use of Biblically Based Stewardship Resources
- **R-03-01-21:** To Give Thanks to God for Sustaining His Church through the Global Corona Virus Pandemic
- **R-03-02-21:** To Increase the Awareness of Human Trafficking to the Congregations of the Mid-South District and The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod
- **R-03-03A-21:** Protect Christian Consciences
- **R-03-04A-21:** To Reject Racism and Advance the Gospel

The Mid-South District remains committed to our missions and ministries, along with providing support for our professional church workers, our congregations, and our education ministries. The congregations and schools of the Mid-South District remain strong and vibrant. The commitments from our member congregations remain stable, thus providing essential dollars to continuously support mission and ministry efforts within the district and around the world.

Congregation commitment dollars are used to support program services of the Mid-South District, not support services that encompass management and general areas.

Church planting remains a top priority. There are currently nine active church-plant sites in the Mid-South District. Additionally, the district supported a Hispanic church plant, an African American mission, and international missions in Tanzania (SELVD), Trinity/HOPE missions in Haiti, and the Malagasy Lutheran Church and its LIME (university) Institute.

After the 2019 Synod convention, the Mid-South District continued its work on the *Generation to Generation* (G2G) initiative, which develops materials and training to reach future generations to become active and supportive church members. The Youth and Family Ministry Committee concluded its beta-study with several congregations and continues its work of presenting *Generation to*

Generation to other congregations. The G2G project was presented to the Council of Presidents in February 2022 for its final report to the 2023 Synod convention. Three other LCMS districts have requested presentation of the study results.

With the conclusion of 2016 Synod Resolution 13-02A, the transition from deacon (LLD) to ordained pastor in the Mid-South District is completed. There were 14 men who were certified for ordination in accordance with Synod guidelines, which allows for Word and Sacrament in their specific location. Praise God for His calling of workers for the harvest!

The *CAR* (Congregation Assessment Resources) and *COMPASS* programs, services to the congregations of the Mid-South District, assist congregations, schools, and ECCs to compare vital ministry information with other congregations. The *COMPASS* visitation provides strategic information for participating congregations and has a proven outcome for growing ministry outreach and operational efficiencies. Over 80 congregations have utilized the *CAR* information for their strategic efforts. Eight other districts have utilized the *COMPASS* visitation teams.

The Mid-South District offered basic Greek classes to the SMP and SMP-colloquy pastors, under the direction of Rev. Gregory Bauch and video presentations by Rev. Dr. James Voelz. Additionally, the district continues to offer a weekly discussion Zoom meeting for all pastors on an in-depth study of the upcoming lessons from the lectionary. A variety of pastors lead the discussions for possible sermon presentations.

In December 2021, tornadoes ripped across Arkansas, Kentucky, and Tennessee, leaving a trail of destruction and devastation over 200 miles long and 10 to 14 miles wide. Through the efforts of LCMS Disaster Relief, our Mid-South District disaster coordinator, Ms. Jan Simko, and Rev. David Appold of St. Paul Lutheran Church, Paducah, the district distributed disaster-relief grants totaling \$585,000 to those in need. These funds were received from fellow Lutherans across the entire nation who were touched by the devastation.

The Mid-South District was blessed to partner with Soldiers of the Cross and offer assistance to many in our district who suddenly found themselves out of work or struggling to make ends meet. Over \$58,000 was awarded in the form of grants to all who applied for assistance.

The Mid-South District remains committed to providing financial support to students from our congregations who attend Synod universities and seminaries. Over the past three years, financial aid in the amount of \$241,000 has been provided to 51 students; this averages out to \$4,725 per student per year. Special thanks goes to the Mid-South District LWML for the faithful support of this program through significant annual grants as well as their assistance with *Each 1 Reach 1* as we continue this important initiative throughout the district. *Each 1 Reach 1* includes information from Synod's *Every One His Witness* program.

With the help of our annual earnings distribution from LCEF, the Mid-South District was able to implement an initiative titled GROW Grants, which offers a one-time financial outlay of up to \$15,000 for each ministry or program that will be an ongoing and self-sustaining mission and ministry. Examples of such programs or initiatives include new ethnic ministries, outreach to college students, a community food pantry or clothing closet, a ministry for the homeless, or any ongoing program that provides unique opportunities for Gospel-sharing with the community at large. Through

these grants, the district will encourage and support innovative ministry programs that emphasize the **Gospel Reaching Our World** so that the knowledge of God's love, grace, and mercy may grow.

The Mid-South District is in discussions with Jack Preus to develop micro-schools in at least six different locations across the district. One objective of micro-schools is to make use of under-utilized congregation space to make connections to the general community where it resides.

The church worker initiative of the LCMS, *Set Apart to Serve (SAS)*, has been launched in the Mid-South District to help respond to the growing number of vacancies created by retirements of professional church workers. The Mid-South District has assembled a special task force to generate information and cultivate interest among the young people of our member congregations. With the decline of applicants in our Concordia University System and seminaries, we need to be more proactive about actively recruiting members. The Mid-South District has 15 young people in our Concordia University System settings and seminaries. Seven men are in the process of completing their seminary education, while five more have been approved for admission in fall 2023. This means that the Mid-South District has one seminarian for every 3,600 baptized members. Given that there are 1.8 million members in the LCMS, our Synod could have 500 men in seminary at that ratio.

Given the number of small and rural congregations along the border of the Mid-South and Missouri Districts, conversations are taking place regarding the possibility of circuit riders to help serve existing congregations. On their own, these congregations cannot afford full-time pastors. Our districts will provide essential services to our members in this cooperative effort.

The Mid-South District has continued to strengthen the financial position of the district through controlled spending and implementation of development programs such as *IMPACT* and *Funding the Ministry*. By God's grace and the generosity of the people of the Mid-South District, I am pleased to share these development highlights, which have been instrumental in helping support the district's strategic plan:

- *IMPACT*-awareness events have been held around the district to increase visibility of the district's work.
- There has been an increase of over 40 percent of current giving donors.
- Over the eight-year period since the *IMPACT* strategic plan was initiated, \$2,384,500 has been committed and over \$2,431,300 received for ministry in the Mid-South District.
- In addition, 14 *Funding the Ministry* campaigns have been conducted in congregations, resulting in nearly \$3 million being committed for ministry in the congregations.

Through our faithful stewards, over \$5 million dollars has been committed for ministry since 2013. These dollars are over and above the tithes and offerings to the local congregations.

Praise God for His people in the Mid-South District!

It is a great honor to serve as the president of the Mid-South District. I pray that God would continue to lead and guide us together in a partnership where the "talents" given to our members and leadership can be about the work of the Great Commission.

Roger C. Paavola, *President*

R33

Minnesota North District

“Keep preaching Jesus!” a mentor told me after a few years into ministry. I had spent the better part of an hour lamenting to him about the realities of the church. Our laments can go on forever as we labor in His harvest. Paul asks, “Where is the one who is wise?” (1 Corinthians 1:20). In our day, we ask, “Where is the one who hasn’t returned to worship?” “Where is the one to protect life?” “Where is the volunteer to teach?” “Where is the one who is generous?” “Where is the one who believes?”

Paul points us from the questions to the foundation of our faith: Christ. His crucifixion. His resurrection. His ascension. What should we do while surrounded with so many questions? Preach Jesus (1 Corinthians 1:23). All the wisdom of the world leaves us always wanting, but in Christ we are filled with truth, comfort, and peace. We, as the baptized, faithfully lament the struggles by Word and prayer and even more boldly, “Keep preaching Jesus!”

Preach. Teach. Visit.

Each week in the Minnesota North District, 198 congregations preach Law and Gospel, forgiving and retaining sin and serving their communities. Each school day, our 7 elementary schools, 1 high school, and 19 preschools proclaim the truth of Christ to our young people and instruct them in His ways. I am humbled each day by the commitment of each of our workers, congregational leaders, and all the baptized who keep receiving His gifts and serving in His name.

Our first focus in Minnesota North is to go back to the sources. At every installation of our workers, we ask them if they believe, teach, and confess the truth from God’s Word and the Lutheran Confessions. If we are asking our workers to fulfill this service, we should probably be reading these too. We have invited all workers and members to follow a daily weekday plan of reading the Scriptures and Confessions while praying a psalm. “Lord God, keep us steadfast in Your Word. Amen.”

Our other focus is on visitations. The Minnesota North District office has had many changes since the last Synod convention due to retirements and calls. Since I’m new and naïve to the needs of every church, we are committing ourselves this triennium to the intentional visitation of our 200+ churches, schools, and missions. We follow Paul’s words to Barnabas, “Let us return and visit ... every city where we proclaimed the word of the Lord, and see how they are” (Acts 15:36). Each visit is centered on prayer, encouragement, and blessing by God’s Word. “O Lord, help us to visit and bring Your gifts to Your people. Amen.”

Finally, we keep our eyes open to the many blessings and needs around us. Our visits thus far have showed us the many ways that the Lord is bearing fruit by His Word (Isaiah 55:10–11). We have seen the joy of a celebration of fruitful ministry of pastor and congregation for 29 years. The humility of the saints of a sister congregation willing to help another congregation during a pastoral vacancy. The excitement of our schools seeing major growth in enrollment. But the visits also present many challenges. The anxieties of churches trying to fill pulpits. The financial struggles for congregations manifesting with an increase of dual/tri/part-time parishes. The fear of the future due to aging congregations. The darkness that surrounds us in our culture with policies that are not in line with biblical values. “O Lord, we give You thanks for the

blessings. Be our light and strength to boldly proclaim Christ and Him crucified. Amen.”

Keep preaching Jesus! Keep preaching His crucifixion. His resurrection. His ascension (see 2 Timothy 4:2). Lord, have mercy.

Brady L. Finnerm, *President*

R34

Minnesota South District

2019 Resolution 4-03A: Making Disciples for Life

The Synod in convention established *Making Disciples for Life* as its mission and ministry emphasis for the 2019–2023 triennium and directed the resourcing of congregations, schools, circuits, and districts to do the following:

1. Evangelize and disciple the lost
2. Retain the faithful
3. Strengthen congregations and schools
4. Plant new congregations and schools wherever possible, especially in urban and multicultural communities
5. Engage in international mission in partnership with the Office of International Mission

Implementation of Synod Emphases

In 2018, the 78th convention of the Minnesota South District was convened under the theme *Chosen to Proclaim*. Delegates enthusiastically resolved to build on the district’s mission to “cultivate leaders intentionally engaged in the mission of God.” The staff and Board of Directors initially gathered the resolutions passed by the convention under 11 initiatives, which were later identified as supporting efforts of 3 primary initiatives:

1. In the Word
2. Worker Wellness
3. Networking and Collaboration in Ministry

However, barely halfway into the triennium, new questions and challenges emerged surrounding the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting governmental restrictions. Shortly after those restrictions began, leaders were faced with new questions when racial inequity came to the front following the death of George Floyd in Minneapolis. Amidst these challenging questions, leaders in the district had to consider different ways to minister to the people of God, and congregations were challenged to discover new ways to connect with their communities. These events focused the district’s efforts to equip, support, and encourage ministry among its 234 congregations and more than 900 ordained and commissioned workers with the purpose of carrying forward the ministry emphases directed by the Synod in convention.

In the Word Initiative

The Word of God, in all its forms, is central to our life and work as His people in this world. However, in an increasingly pagan culture, with every kind of temptation competing for our time and attention, dwelling together upon the Word of God is increasingly rare. Research indicates that nearly every conflicted congregation has, at its core, basic biblical illiteracy among its leaders. District staff launched a survey of Bible study opportunities available in congregations throughout the district. Responses to the

survey indicated that nearly 80 percent of congregations responding to the survey reported that less than half of those who regularly participated in worship also participated in shared Bible study opportunities. Many leaders reported that participation in regular Bible study was less than 20 percent of regular worshippers.

Responding to these opportunities, the district launched its *In The Word* initiative, which challenged all congregations to develop and enhance both Sunday and midweek Bible study offerings and to find new ways to ensure that congregational and school leadership were attending one of these Bible studies. The district partnered with Ambassadors of Reconciliation to host two events, one in person and one online, led by Ted Kober, the author of *Built on the Rock: The Healthy Congregation*. Participants explored how they might become leaders in their congregation who champion Bible study throughout the life of the congregation.

Networking and Collaboration in Mission and Ministry

The district continues to experience decline in the number, size, and financial resources of congregations. More important than ever is the need to encourage networking and cooperation between congregations and other local and national ministries to more effectively share the Good News of Jesus Christ. The convention adopted many resolutions encouraging such efforts, especially with new immigrant and refugee outreach, planting new churches, new outreach efforts in existing congregations, evangelistic activity through campus ministries, and support for Lutheran education from early childhood through high school and beyond.

New Immigrant and Refugee Outreach

Since 2018, it is reported that southern Minnesota is growing by roughly 43,000 new people each year, 82 percent of whom are new immigrants. Currently, first- and second-generation immigrants make up 30 percent of the metro corridor. Southern Minnesota is home to the largest U.S. populations of Hmong, Oromo (Ethiopian), Liberian, Karen (Burmese), Anuak (Sudanese), and Somali people. Recent studies tell us that 90 percent of these new residents do not know Jesus as their Savior and Lord. In response, the district has been active in supporting 18 new pastors who are being trained through the Synod's EIIT, CMC, DELTO, and SMP training programs. The district also supported the Oromo Evangelical Lutheran Ministry Summit, held in St. Paul in 2021, and has assisted in the launch of two new second-generation ethnic ministry church plants. The district also provides partial financial support to pastors serving first- and second-generation Hmong, Sudanese, and other ethnic ministries, and we pray that this is only the beginning of our response to these opportunities in God's harvest field.

New Church Starts and Restarts

New ministries development, whether new church plants or new efforts within existing congregations, proved to be the most effective means of reaching new people for Jesus. During this past triennium, the district worked to identify and train three pastors with a specific focus on new church planting and was blessed to participate in efforts to plant five new churches. In addition, five congregations formed "two churches—one mission" partnerships when small, struggling congregations each invited a sister congregation to provide coaching and other resources to strengthen and guide their renewed mission and ministry efforts. In a similar effort, four congregations chose to merge with a sister congregation to create single congregations with two or more physical locations

for ministry, maintaining the physical presence in the community for Word-and-Sacrament ministry while providing an invigorated approach to community connection.

Collaboration and Lutheran Education Development

The district's *To All Generations* (TAG) education-ministry focused fund appeal was celebrated at the 2018 district convention and, although the intentional public campaign seeking donors ended with that celebration, TAG continue to leave a lasting legacy in the district throughout the past triennium. New donors have come forward to join those who pledged funds during the initial campaign. These dedicated funds provide seed money for new education initiatives in the district, which include marketing Lutheran schools, expanding preschools, launching after-school care programs, and advocating for greater parental choice in education. During the COVID-19 shutdown, district staff worked closely with their Schools and Commissioned Ministers Committee to coordinate virtual conferencing and email serve groups, provide communication of the ever-changing state COVID-19 regulations and federal mandates, administer a Synod grant of \$2,000 for restorative wellness webinars for commissioned ministers, and sponsor a *Concordia Plans Wellness Workshop* led by Darrell Zimmer.

Here are three significant statistical shifts taking place in Lutheran education that are expected to have lasting impact in the district:

1. The changing nature of our education workforce. Only 38 percent of the teachers in MNS district schools are Synod rostered. Teacher shortage is an ongoing reality that has caused more than one early childhood center or preschool to close its doors in the last year.
2. COVID-19 brought growing enrollment in most of our schools. Many schools in the district reported that they had turned away students due to full classrooms, lack of physical space to expand, or a lack of teachers or other staff. Many of the district's early childhood programs are experiencing staffing issues that prevent growth.
3. The impact of a changing demographic of students coming into our Lutheran schools. Nearly one third of the students in early childhood education programs of the district claim no church connection. This is a growing challenge to school teachers and leaders and a growing opportunity for outreach for our churches and school. In the past triennium, district schools reported 246 school-aged students were baptized and 153 families joined district congregations as a direct result of their affiliation with a partner school. Praise God.

Development of Congregation Partnerships

All through this past triennium, developing partnerships has been critical for a growing number of congregations. Even in the midst of physical distancing, Missional Learning Communities continued to meet online. These small groups and their volunteer leaders shared mission insights and provided some much-needed support, encouragement, and mutual accountability to mission efforts in their congregations.

The district also partnered with 18 congregations to send teams of pastors and lay leaders to either the Best Practices for Ministry or the Rural and Small-Town Ministry conferences. These teams joined hundreds of others from the district as they explored opportunities and developed plans for new ministry efforts to reach into their local community. These shared learning experiences were multiplied when other congregational leaders in the district heard

of their efforts and were inspired to launch similar new ministries in their own community.

There are also opportunities for partnership in the midst of the most difficult circumstances. During this past triennium, 12 district congregations made the decision to close, a rate that is nearly six times that of the previous two trienniums. The Mission Legacy Fund was established to receive and use the assets of closing congregations, providing a way to pass on to future generations a legacy of great significance. These resources are not held as an endowment but are reinvested through a grant process to congregations in support of new outreach efforts.

Congregations and leaders of the district also found ways to partner with LCMS ReVitality and the Office of National Missions, the Lutheran Church Extension Fund, Lutheran Hour Ministries, and other mission-focused Lutheran organizations to formulate new outreach efforts. These valuable partnerships, and others like them, continue to provide valuable guidance, coaching, and needed programing resources to many district coaggregations.

Worker Care and Support

Over the past triennium, the district Worker Wellness Initiative created a bridge between the workers in the district and resources made available for their support and encouragement during some very difficult times of ministry. These resources fostered greater care of church workers, especially during the challenge of the COVID-19 lockdown. In cooperation with the Synod's Soldiers of the Cross COVID-19 Response, more than \$135,000 was distributed to over 100 workers, especially early childhood workers, whose income was most impacted by the suspension of their school or ministry. Alongside these efforts, partnerships between congregations created Worker Support Teams, which assist workers to connect with needed support resources in counseling and restorative retreats.

Looking Forward with Gratitude

As we look forward to this next triennium, we understand better than ever before the uncertainty of this world in which we live and serve and the certainty of our place in the kingdom of God. As the number and size of district congregations continues to decline, the opportunities to proclaim the Good News of Jesus as Savior continues to increase. With over 2 million people on our doorsteps who claim no religious affiliation, and with fully one third of the district's population who are new first- or second-generation immigrants to our towns and cities, it would be easy to feel overwhelmed. Instead, we choose to look with hope to the Lord of the Harvest, asking Him to send workers into His harvest field.

Our promise statement to those we serve is "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." So it is with deep gratitude and thanks to God that we look forward to this next triennium together. In partnerships of mutual trust, we join together in His Word and in the mission He has entrusted to us as His church, to the glory of His name.

Lucas V. Woodford, *President*

R35

Missouri District

The Missouri District is comprised of 291 congregations, with 128,000 baptized and approximately 100,000 communicant members. The 105 educational ministries serve approximately 14,100 enrolled students from early childhood through high school. There are also 1,600 rostered church workers serving in congregations, schools, Recognized Service Organizations, and Synod entities. Missouri District missions focus on church planting, multiethnic, urban, rural, and small-town missions; campus ministries; and military outreach as our congregations seek to reach our mission field of more than 3 million people.

A. Missouri District 21st Convention

The Missouri District held its 21st Regular Convention under the theme "Tell the Next Generation," based upon Psalm 78:6–7. The convention essayist was Dr. Mark Kiessling, director of youth ministry in the LCMS Office of National Mission. Special guests included Synod President Rev. Dr. Matthew Harrison, who led a Bible study, and Fifth Vice-President, Rev. Benjamin T. Ball, who served as the preacher at the opening Divine Service. In his report to the convention, Missouri District President Rev. Dr. R. Lee Hagan highlighted the five critical targets for the 2018–2022 term: Healthy Servants, Healthy Congregations, Healthy Schools, Engaging Communities, and Equipping Families.

The convention included a series of "Tell the Next Generation" videos, highlighting ways in which congregations and schools are passing on the Christian faith. Resolution 2-01 encouraged congregations, schools, and district leadership to encourage and support families in their role of faith formation in the home. The convention also highlighted the Missouri District 2021 and 2022 *SHINE!* events, which included 5,500 and 8,100 participants respectively. The delegates adopted Res. 1-01, which encouraged participation in *SHINE!* during April 14–23, 2023. The convention adopted Res. 3-02, which encouraged the Synod to develop resources to aid congregations and schools in addressing gender identity issues "that enable the Church to confess the truth boldly and deal compassionately with those who struggle with gender identity issues as well as with those who care for them." Resolution 3-03 affirmed biblical anthropology and denounced racism as anti-Gospel belief. Additional resolutions commended the work among immigrants and refugees, campus ministries, and support for those who serve in the Armed Forces and their families.

The convention reelected Rev. Dr. R. Lee Hagan for his third term as district president. Also elected were Rev. William Marler as first vice-president, Rev. Kristopher Morris as second vice-president, Rev. Brian Thieme as third vice-president, and Rev. Jason Shaw as fourth vice-president.

B. Strategic Plan

The Missouri District's strategic plan for the 2022–2025 triennium has four critical targets:

1. *Church Worker Recruitment and Retention*—The need for the next generation of church workers is great in schools and churches. This critical target will work to develop strategies to promote churchwork vocations and support those already serving.

2. *Family Discipleship Expansion*—This target includes providing trained coaches to assist congregations in developing support for parents within congregations.
3. *Community Engagement*—These strategies include helping congregations move beyond one-time events to consistent service and witness engagement to their respective communities.
4. *Shared Ministry*—The opportunities for collaboration among our congregations are many and necessary as we look at declining numbers of seminary graduates and shrinking church membership and attendance. This target will utilize circuits and their respective leadership to foster such cooperative work.

C. Key Initiatives

Supporting these four critical targets, the Missouri District has several key initiatives in the works. The first Missouri District Lutheran College Fair was held in November 2022, with representatives from six LCMS university campuses, both seminaries, and Synod's Set Apart to Serve. The Missouri District has launched family discipleship coaches to assist congregations in equipping parents for family discipleship in the home. A biennial "Tell the Next Generation" Conference was held in 2021 and 2023 to support family discipleship.

D. Changes to Missouri District Staff

Rev. Gene Wyssmann retired from serving the Missouri District at the end of 2019 and was succeeded by Rev. Marty Hasz. Dr. Alan Freeman and Casey Carlson took new positions with Synod's Office of National Mission and Concordia Plan Services, respectively. Joshua Swartz joined the staff in 2022 as Director of Schools, and Rev. Peter Kirby came on board in 2023 as Executive Director of Congregational Services.

R. Lee Hagan, *President*

R36

Montana District

By God's grace, the Montana District sought to organize its work together during the 2019–2023 period under the theme from John 1:17, "The truth came through Jesus Christ." We focused our thoughts and actions on the power of God's Word, which is the truth.

A. Presidential Activities

During this quadrennium, the president of the Montana District visited every congregation of the district on a Sunday morning and offered a presentation designed to teach the biblical concept of truth under the theme verse from John 1:17. He also visited with the elders of each congregation using the same theme to teach how elders can support their pastors. In addition, he met with the pastors of the district individually to review their Pastor's Information Forms in order to encourage them in their ministries. Finally, he visited the schools of the district making a similar presentation on truth.

B. Goals Being Met

The Montana district has made progress regarding resolutions of the 2019 Synod convention.

The congregations have been encouraged to use the evangelism programs the Synod has developed. A few of the congregations sponsored Everyone His Witness, Making Disciples for Life, and Rural Small Town events.

The congregations have also exhibited growth in sharing ministry. Some 58 percent of our congregations have fewer than 50 people in church on a weekend. As a result, 72 percent of our congregations are in multicongregation parish relationships. This means they have to learn to care for one another. In addition, we have seen numerous occasions where congregations with budget surpluses have shared them with needy congregations of the district.

The Montana District has a rich heritage of supporting life as a gift of God from cradle to grave. Congregational members from across the district attended a conference in Billings on life, and many generously support local Lutherans For Life groups. One of our circuits accessed the Life Grant from the Synod offices by raising \$50,000 to support the local crisis pregnancy center.

Likewise, there is great support in our district for Lutheran schools. Since most of our congregations are small, we have only six K–8 schools in the district. We have, however, developed a program whereby congregations without schools and their members can support those with schools through a fund offering scholarships to elementary Lutheran school students.

The president in his visits strongly encourages the support of Lutheran schools and Lutheran school teachers, as well as strong catechetical instruction especially in the home. The goal is to foster a next generation of Lutherans who know and live the faith.

The Montana District is anxiously looking forward to the roll-out of the *Set Apart to Serve* initiative of the Synod. We have one congregation participating in the pilot program. This initiative is highly publicized in our district communications and in the presidential presentation to congregations. The number of full-time church work students hailing from Montana has been markedly reduced during the last five years. One of our goals is to increase that number, not only for ourselves but for the work of the Kingdom.

Another goal for the coming triennium is to carefully review our four subsidized congregations. Two of those congregations are on Native American reservations, and two are our newest mission congregations. The district board of directors is dedicated to making sure that offerings from our congregations are put to the best use for the proclamation of the Gospel.

This triennium, our district theme is from Psalm 119:105, "Thy Word." It dovetails nicely with the Synod's theme, "We Preach Christ Crucified." A world that does not believe in truth desperately needs to hear the Word of God proclaiming Christ crucified. The Montana District looks forward to such bold proclamation.

Finally, we are looking forward to receiving our newest mission congregation into fellowship as a congregation of the Synod sometime this summer.

C. Strengths

The Montana District is remarkably homogenous in its dedication to the truth of God's Word and the Lutheran Confessions. The ministerium loves and cares for one another. The people of God are generous. Congregational offerings to the district have risen in all but one of the last 16 years. Our schools are growing. District conventions are looked forward to as times to study God's Word together and celebrate the gift He has given us in one another.

D. Weaknesses

Not only are the congregations of the district predominantly small, but they are spread out. The pastors of the Montana District cover a lot of territory. It seems to be increasingly unpopular to pastors to serve in multiple parishes. In addition, 40 percent of active Montana pastors are 63 years old or older. This means that the next three years could see a drastic increase in vacancies that will be hard to fill. The need for more pastors is very real for the Montana District.

E. Truth

God's Word is powerful. The message of Christ crucified is just what the world needs to hear. The congregations of the Montana District are resisting the impulse to circle the wagons and take care of our own. We are dedicated to advancing the Good News of Jesus to the people of our district.

Terry R. Forke, *President*

R37

Nebraska District

The challenges of this last convention cycle are greater than we could have ever predicted. The challenges before us could easily overwhelm. I am daily reminded that the task is too great, yet God has chosen you and me, in the midst of our brokenness, as members of His Body, to perform His gracious work. This is why We Preach Christ Crucified.

Much of our time and effort has gone to visitation. I yearly visit each of the circuits as pastors gather in their monthly meetings. I present a topic and facilitate discussion on issues that challenge us. Most of those visits are in person, though some have required virtual presence. Government restrictions also inhibited some of my congregational visits, but outside of those restricted months, the goal is to visit two congregations each month to worship, listen, share, and evaluate ministry on the local level. We can't walk together if we don't talk together, and we can't talk together if we don't meet together. I continue to pursue transparency, trust, and mutual encouragement. I receive encouragement in these visits, and I am proud of our congregations and workers as I see the effort and creativity in all circumstances to proclaim the reconciling grace of our Lord with one another and with the community. As promised, God works for the good in all things for those who have been called according to His purpose.

Critical to our work is the understanding that the Nebraska District is not a small group of staff working out of an office in Seward. Rather, it is 233 congregations and related ministries and leaders in various locations, working side by side to strengthen the found and reach out to the lost. For this body to work the best, each part needs to function.

Outcome #1: Strengthen Relational Health of Ordained, Commissioned, and Other Workers—Our personal lives and relationships are our loudest Gospel message. God calls us to live in and live out that Gospel first to those closest to us, which in turn speaks to those around us. Conferences, trainings, intentional communication, and individual interactions seek to promote an engaged faith integrated in all of life. We are working to bless workers' spiritual relationship with our triune God. We are working to nurture cognitive, emotional, physical, and financial health. We are working

to build strong bonds in marriage, family, and close friends. Enhancing the relational health of our workers strengthens our work to reach out to the lost with a heart for the hurting. We have developed and are monitoring a triennial health questionnaire to develop a longitudinal study to measure outcomes.

Outcome #2: Healthier Congregations and Ministries—The Holy Spirit works through the Means of Grace when and where He pleases. This faith produces good fruit and good works. 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. Conferences, trainings, intentional communication, and individual interactions seek to build the Body of Christ as it grows in discipleship. Divine Service and Bible study are fundamental. Parents, grandparents, and guardians are called to make disciples with the children God has placed in their lives. Ministry opportunities like VBS, daycare, preschool, school, youth, and small group are used to develop relationships and foster discipleship, service, and outreach. Vocations of neighbor and coworker give us opportunity to reach out with Christ's compassion and Gospel. Assisting in the call process is my highest priority. Visitation and evaluation to encourage congregations is also a critical priority for me.

Outcome # 3: Healthier Circuits, District, and Synod—We cannot walk together if we do not talk together. We cannot talk together if we do not meet together. As leaders, we seek to care for one another, foster unity, and build trust in our work together of sharing the Gospel message. Each of us has our own work, and each congregation has its own work. We also need one another to do those things we cannot do working alone. A healthy Synod must have healthy relationships. God calls us to work together. As a Synod, we have committed to walk together. Pastors communicating, congregations cooperating, and reconciliation happening are signs of a healthy church. Again, visitation—meeting with circuits and congregations—is my second highest priority. We meet together around Scripture and our Confessions to transparently and fraternally discuss issues of doctrine and practice and build consensus. We celebrate and share ministry opportunities and successes. We also are working to find greater ways to help congregations and districts collaborate for greater impact and efficiency.

All three of these outcomes are aspects of discipleship. In the Means of Grace, God pours out His grace and empowers us with new life. This is a life of repentance. The discipleship journey calls us to new ways of living. To that end, we are working to see change. Our approach to conferences is not just gaining more information but pursuing transformation. Pastors conferences are more than "one and done" as we design ongoing professional development through circuit gatherings, personal reflective practice, and lifelong learning. Circuit visitor training is focused to enhance a growth environment for our pastors to look at their own self-care and relational health. We just began our fourth Leadership Learning Community, an intensive gathering of 12 pastors for two years. They meet, learn, and grow together, building capacity to lead themselves, their families, and their ministries. Leading by example, the district staff has focused our development on relational health and discipleship.

Our 2018 convention celebrated the plan to renovate University Lutheran Chapel in Lincoln and the district office in Seward. Both of these renovations are now complete with over \$3.5 million donated. Ministry has benefited greatly at both locations. Accessibility and larger meeting space has allowed more groups to gather for planning, workshops, and training at both locations. Partnerships have developed with Concordia University, Nebraska, and Grace-Point Institute for Relational Health to use the Chapel. Pandemic and cultural stress has brought more and more people through our doors. Mission to our campus students and community remain first priority, but so much more ministry has been enabled by these renovations.

The Nebraska District has four campus ministries. University Lutheran Chapel in Lincoln has been in ministry since 1923. We also provide funding for campus ministry in 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. More and more of our churches are looking at ways to reach out to ethnic populations in their own backyard.

In all this work, we seek but one thing: to preach Christ and Him crucified. To God alone be the glory.

Richard L. Snow, *President*

R38

New England District

Although New England is a fairly large geographic area that encompasses six states, the district is one of the smallest in the Synod as far as the number of congregations, parishioners, and church workers. The years 2021–2022 were a very difficult time in the district, and not only because of COVID-19. The former and much-loved president, the Rev. Dr. Tim Yeadon, became seriously ill in March 2021 and had to go on disability. This necessitated that I, as the first vice-president, assume the role of acting district president (while also pastoring my congregation in Norwalk, Connecticut). President Yeadon was taken home to heaven in January 2022, and I was subsequently elected as district president in June 2022. Through this difficult time, our gracious Lord strengthened and upheld President Yeadon and his family; the pastors, other church workers, and congregations of the district; and especially me and my congregation. I thank and praise Him for His grace and mercy in Christ, and I also extend my thanks to President Harrison and the leaders of our Synod who, along with my brother district presidents and their staffs, often responded to my questions and calls for help. Above all, I thank the wonderful people of St. Peter in Norwalk, whom I had the joy to serve for over 28 years. Their love and support made a difficult 18 months not only doable but often enjoyable. May our good Lord raise up many such congregations!

A. Congregations

There are 67 congregations in the district, most of which are small (less than 200 members) but several of which are fairly large (over 500 members). In the first quarter of 2023, there were 17 congregations that were without a pastor. Some were in the process of calling a pastor, and some were being served by pastors who are retired or are currently without a call. In fall 2022, I sent a letter to the congregations of the district who were being served by pastors, asking if they would be willing to allow their pastor to serve a vacant congregation one Sunday every three months or so, while they

themselves had a lay-led service that day. Many gladly indicated their willingness to do so, and this not only has been a blessing to the vacant congregations of the district but also has helped to further unite our congregations. Although the New England states are some of the most unchurched and secular in the nation—and at times even boast of their opposition to basic Christian teaching and morality (in their support of abortion, for instance, which all the New England states offer with little restriction)—our pastors and congregations enjoy great peace and unity. New England is not an easy place for pastors and other church workers to serve, but the Lord has blessed us with joy by His Holy Spirit as we proclaim Christ crucified and bear His cross.

Grace Lutheran in Nashua, New Hampshire, had the honor of being chosen to participate in a pilot project headed by the LCMS Office of Pastoral Education. *Set Apart to Serve* is providing resources and training to pastors and lay people to assist them in talking to youth about pursuing church work vocations. May the Lord bless this effort by raising up many workers for the harvest fields!

Since the last Synod convention in 2019, New England has been blessed with five new graduates from our seminaries, one graduate of the Specific Ministry Pastor (SMP) program who completed his studies and is now a general pastor, and one new SMP student. Our seminaries are training and graduating excellent pastors, and these men are proving to be a great blessing to our congregations. Thanks be to God!

B. Schools

There are three LCMS elementary schools in the district (one in New Hampshire, one in Massachusetts, and one in Connecticut), each of which is connected to a congregation. Although the past years of dealing with COVID-19 have been difficult, this has for the most part been a blessing for our schools. Enrollments are up, and the schools are doing well. We also have 11 preschools being run by district congregations. This ministry of our schools is increasingly important in a region where ignorance of, and even opposition to, the Gospel is strong and is growing.

C. Missions

In fall 2022, the district called the Rev. Adam Teferi as a missionary-at-large to serve a growing population of people in the Boston area from the Oromo tribe of Ethiopia. Pastor Teferi is himself an Ethiopian immigrant who was received into the LCMS as a pastor through colloquy. He is leading this growing group in weekly worship in one of our church buildings, and we hope that by the time of the Synod convention, they will be a newly constituted congregation of the district and the Synod.

Another mission that started in the last triennium is in the Lakes Region of central New Hampshire. This small but growing group of worshipers is being led primarily by retired pastors in the area. We thank God for their continued zeal to serve!

Mission work to serve our neighbors in their bodily needs is also taking place. “Hands of Grace” is a food and clothing bank outreach of St. Paul’s in New Hartford, Connecticut. It is led by a specific ministry pastor from the congregation who also provides spiritual support and worship to those who are served. Two other congregations in Connecticut also support similar ministries: “The Bridge” in South Windsor and “Caring Shepherds” in Hebron.

D. Conclusion

I have served all 37+ years since my ordination—and also served my vicarage—in the New England District. Although born and raised in Ohio, I have found New England to be an area where, for the most part, pastors are appreciated and their ministry is respected. Most of our congregations are small, but their worship is solidly Lutheran and joyful, and Christ crucified is faithfully preached. Come and visit us, and enjoy with us the joy of forgiveness and new life in Christ Jesus!

Robert D. Beinke, *President*

R39

New Jersey District

Ministry Situation and Challenges

From the Jersey Shore to the Highlands and from the New York or Philadelphia suburbs to the Pinelands, New Jersey is a wonderful and diverse place to live and preach Christ crucified. Yet the geography only points to an even more diverse demography. New Jersey is the home to more scientists and engineers per square mile than any other area of the world. Religiously and ethnically, it is host to the second largest population in the U.S. of Jews, Muslims, and Cubans; the largest population of Peruvians; as well as high numbers of Portuguese, Brazilians, Hispanics, Arabs, African Americans, Asians, Chinese, and Italians. This great diversity within a population of over 9.4 million and growing is all gathered together into 8,721 square miles, making New Jersey the most densely populated state in the U.S.. Yet there are only four cities with a population greater than 100,000! That means the population is spread out over a multitude of smaller cities and municipalities.

The challenges of culture, language, religion, thought, and worldview are readily evident within this environment. How does a well-established, relatively long-term resident, primarily of northern European descent church share the Gospel of Christ crucified with such a diverse population? The good news is that this has begun to happen and with God's blessing will accelerate in the coming days. Both our prayers and our work aim at reaching all the people of New Jersey in their great diversity one person at a time.

Ironically, the dense population of New Jersey is, in some ways, an advantage. It means that while the NJ District is the smallest of districts in terms of churches and geography, we are relatively close. First, we are close in distance meaning that circuits are small and sister congregations are nearby. As our congregations struggle with the high cost of living and housing, they find it evermore advantageous to build relationships with nearby congregations and share a pastor and ministry. Our close proximity makes this easier to do. Second, we are close in relationship. Our close proximity enables us to gather more easily for circuit meetings, district meetings, training, and fellowship. We enjoy a high level of collegiality and friendship, which fosters the care and well-being of our pastors and church workers. Third, district president visitation is facilitated as most congregations are within an hour drive and all are within two hours. To that end, all of the NJ District congregations received a presidential visit in the first 16 months of the new president taking office in September 2021.

Synodical Focuses

The seven mission priorities previously affirmed at the 2016 Synod convention and included in 2019 Res. 4-03A have helped shape the NJ District's ministry response to its mission and challenges. They are

- 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; and
- strengthen and support the Lutheran family in living out God's design.

In addition, 2019 resolutions regarding church planting, strengthening multiethnic outreach, shared ministry, active witness, church worker recruitment, continuing education, and more helped shape the district's ministry response.

Ministry Plan

In 2022, the New Jersey District celebrated her 50th anniversary! Back in 1972, the Atlantic District was divided into three new districts: Atlantic, New England, and New Jersey. One of the stated purposes at the time recognized the unique characteristics of each of these regions and allowed each new district to focus ministry on the unique needs within its territory. So, after 50 years of ministry, the NJ District gathered at the Princeton University Chapel for a service of praise and thanksgiving to God for this wonderful opportunity and to ask for His inspiration and blessing in the years ahead. Congregants were blessed by the address of previous and current district presidents from New England and Atlantic.

The Initiative for Ministry Development (IMD) is the flagship of the district's short- and long-term ministry plans. Working in conjunction with LCEF's Ministry Solutions, the district has developed a long-term, ongoing plan to help congregations develop and implement ministry plans.

Phase 1, Small Church Clarity (SCC), is meant to help small congregations that have done little in terms of ministry planning to develop and implement a manageable and effective annual ministry plan. The end result starts with a simple guiding statement and boasts of goals and action steps in the areas of worship, study of the Word, fellowship, and service (outreach). It presents the ministry of the congregation in a printed brochure for distribution to visitors and at outreach events.

Phase 2, NJ District University (NJDU), is a fuller, more in-depth version of SCC for more mature congregations. Since these are larger congregations, their plans will encompass more areas of ministry, in a more sophisticated way. NJDU is a seven-session, seven-month process compared to SCC's four-session, four-month process.

Phase 3 is Advanced Development. Congregations that have completed either SCC or NJDU are eligible to enroll in

Advanced Development sessions that will cover a host of topics such as Elder Training, Discipleship Program Development, Stewardship and Finance, Outreach Ministry, Understanding Your Demographics, Next Gen Ministries, Ethnic and Mission Starts, etc.

It is recognized that congregations will need continued support and encouragement throughout this planning process. As a result, a NJ District coaching network has been developed to aid pastors and congregations as they do the work of IMD. Each congregation that completes any phase of IMD is offered an NJ District coach to assist them through challenges and hold them accountable to their stated desires. In addition, annual Renewal Sessions will be offered to help congregations evaluate and update their ministry plans.

Helping our district to more closely reflect the ethnic diversity of our state is also a part of the NJ District's plans.

- Our African American congregation meets in Newark.
- Our Hispanic congregation meets at multiple sites and is seeking to add additional sites while training leaders.
- Our Korean ministry is seeking a site to start an educational/Gospel ministry.
- Our new Jewish ministry in conjunction with Apple of His Eye Missions is beginning work in the northeast section of New Jersey.

To address the pastor shortage our Synod is experiencing, the NJ District has been assisting and encouraging congregations, where practical and advantageous, to enter into ministry sharing situations where a pastor is shared between congregations. In addition, the district has started recruiting efforts and anticipates being involved with *Set Apart to Serve*. As always, pastor retention is a key part of the equation, so pastor and church worker well-being receive high priority in the ministry plans and actions of the NJ District.

May our triune God be honored in all we do.

Stephen A. Gewecke, *President*

R40

North Dakota District

Due to COVID-19, the North Dakota District's January 2020 convention was postponed until January 2021. The theme of the convention was "Rejoice in the Lord Always! Rejoice!" from Philippians 4:4–9.

When I hear the words of Philippians 4, I think of "rejoicing in music!" This love of music and hymns in church has caused me to do a study on songs versus hymns in the LCMS churches of North Dakota. The study was done on 414 songs used in the North Dakota District churches in comparison to 414 hymns from *Lutheran Service Book*.

To do this, I asked pastors for the lyrics of the songs they were using from other sources than the hymnal, and the hymns were chosen randomly. I would take two and skip one throughout the whole hymnal so that I would not be picking only the hymns I wanted or liked. When I had these 414 songs and 414 hymns, I would read the text of the song or hymn and ask of each one 48 questions and score or grade them. Now, I can't sing or read a hymn or song without running 48 questions through my mind.

One of the questions was, Does the song or hymn text men-

tion *heaven*? One of the tendencies of Lutheran hymnody is that we contemplate our death and give thanks for the victory over sin, death, and the grave through Jesus Christ. Jesus Himself teaches us that we are to be ready for the end of life, for we do not know the day or hour (Mark 13:32–33). We long for our real home, heaven, which was given to us when our names were written in the Book of Life through the waters of Holy Baptism connecting us to the death and resurrection of Jesus.

Heaven was revealed 74 times in the texts of songs, although 51 of those times there was only a desire, never assurance, and without using the word! That leaves 23 times the word *heaven* was actually used.

With the hymns, the word *heaven* or assurance of heaven was given 332 times in the 414 hymns scored. That is 80 percent. Of the 332 times heaven was mentioned, 272 times it was in the last or second-to-last verse of the hymn. When it was in the second-to-last verse, it was there because the last verse ended with the triune God Doxology. Therefore, we rejoice in our rich hymns reminding us of the joy of heaven that has been won for us by Christ crucified.

The North Dakota District adopted a new model for funding the missions of the district. This model was first implemented in the English District in June 2018 and commended to all districts by the Synod in convention of July 2019 (Res. 8-02). It is called 1.1.1. Every baptized member of the Body of Christ in the congregation (from the newest baby baptized to the oldest member) is involved by giving one dollar every week. It demonstrates the power of the Body of Christ working together, prompted by faith, with many giving a little regularly. COVID-19 came along and slowed this model, so an effort is underway now to reinvigorate this 1.1.1 mission model.

The district missions are annual support of \$10,000 for "Christ Care for Children-Kenya"; \$20,000 a year in mission support of the Maule Region of the Iglesia Luterana Confessional de Chile; support of a full-time campus pastor at the Wittenberg Chapel located at the University of North Dakota campus in Grand Forks; and \$5,000 a year for Shepherd's Hill at the Crossroads Camp, which is a Recognized Service Organization of the LCMS found in the Turtle Mountains of North Dakota.

A few of the Synod resolutions the ND District has worked on are 2019 Res. 3-04A, 4-11A, and 5-09A.

Res. 3-04A: To Encourage Training of Our Pastors, Church Workers, and Congregations to Recognize and Provide Pastoral Care for Those Suffering from Clinical Depression, Mental Illness, and Other Mental Disorders. The district is in a process of pursuing working with the Recognized Service Organization of Lutheran Family Service of Iowa to assist our pastors and the members of the churches that they serve to recognize and assist those with these sin-fallen-world sufferings.

Res. 4-11A: To Encourage the Study of the Doctrine of Close(d) Communion and Faithful Practice in All Congregations has been attempted with a North Dakota District guidebook on the practices of the district in different areas including close/closed Communion with a Communion statement that could and is encouraged to be used by all for a common practice.

Resolution 5-09A: To Confess the Biblical Six-Day Creation, to Encourage Pastoral Conferences to Study Our Synod's Statements on Creation, and to Help Congregations Concertedly Address Issues Related to the Intersections of Faith and Science is being accomplished through continued pastors conferences

with presenters presenting on good theological topics.

The pastors of the North Dakota District are faithful in Preaching Christ Crucified in their service to God's people in all settings. When I say all settings, I am speaking of single, double, and triple parishes, and even one quad parish. This is ministry in North Dakota.

Arie D. Bertsch, *President*

R41

North Wisconsin District

The North Wisconsin District (NWD) is a corporate body consisting of the various congregations of north Wisconsin and Upper Michigan that accept and remain true to the canonical books of the Old and New Testaments and the sound doctrine of the Book of Concord. Our district is independent in the administration of affairs that concern our district only, with the understanding that what is done here is in the best interests of the Synod. Our mission statement sums it up: "Encourage, network, and equip Lutheran congregations of the NWD—LCMS to vigorously make known the love of Christ."

To fulfill our mission, we in the NWD work to carry out the three following outcomes, reflecting priorities expressed by the 2019 convention:

1. Professional church workers have been encouraged, networked, and equipped to fulfill their calls and vocations.

- Our 2022 district convention approved establishing a million-dollar endowment called "Labor of Love" to assist church workers with their student debt.
- Annually, we have shared around \$100,000 in scholarships with future church workers.
- In the last triennium, NWD established a Wellness Worker Task Force to support church workers during the pandemic. NWD also shared a GracePlace book as a resource for personal or staff study.
- The district convention endorsed *Set Apart to Serve* with the hope of raising the need for all—church workers and laypersons—to encourage future church workers.
- A ministry safe sexual abuse awareness system was implemented by NWD schools.
- NWD participated in training future principals (FLAME) to combat a shortage of school leaders.
- A team ministry workshop was offered in 2020 and 2022 to explore best practices.
- Conferences were conducted for professional church workers, early childhood workers, principal academics, PALS, circuit visitors, and new workers.

2. Congregations have been encouraged, networked, and equipped to minister to the needs of all through Word and Sacrament.

- Lay leader training was conducted to encourage, network, and equip congregation lay leaders.
- Office support gatherings were conducted to encourage, network, and equip those working in NWD church or school offices.

- Board training was provided to help church school boards understand their role and to help with planning. Different models of governance and how to transition were shared with boards.
- Adult gathering shared district information and equipped attendees to deal with daily issues.
- Lutheran Church Extension Fund continued to help fund congregation projects.

3. District ministry resources and aid have been identified, and resources have been deployed to collectively carry out *Making Disciples for Life*.

- NWD continues to help support and fund campus, deaf, and chaplain ministries.
- NWD continues to support the work of a French African congregation started in Appleton, Wisconsin.
- NWD supports the work of LCMS mission work in Peru, participating two times a year in the FORO.
- Congregations receive mission mini grants for outreach in their communities.

Camp Luther celebrated 75 years of ministry in 2021. It continues to focus on Christ-centered community, relationships, servant leadership, and meaningful service for campers young and old. It provides opportunities for young counselors to live out and share the Gospel. It also encourages them to consider being church workers.

Soli Deo Gloria

Dwayne M. Lueck, *President*

R42

Northern Illinois District

"Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain." (1 Corinthians 15:58)

The Northern Illinois District of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (NID) covers the northern third of Illinois counties. Only one of those counties, Carroll County, in western Illinois, does not have an LCMS congregation. Here are some of our statistics:

- 201 active congregations
- 42 elementary schools
- 2 high schools
- 38 stand-alone preschool/childcare centers
- 1 university (Concordia University Chicago)
- 1 camp (Walcamp Outdoor Ministries and Retreat Center, located in Kingston, Illinois)
- 3 new congregations (since 2019)
- 2 congregations closed (since 2019)

We rejoice that we are brought together and kept together by our Lord Jesus Christ and His gifts given in Word, Baptism, and the Lord's Supper. We give thanks for the power of the Word, joy in the Gospel, and our identity as confessional Lutherans who love to share what we have been given by our generous God!

We rejoice in thousands of laymen and laywomen who serve, care, give, pray, and engage in their congregation, ministry, and community. It has been a great joy to meet them. Their labor is not in vain!

A special group of men and women are the church workers who serve in the NID. We are blessed with the following:

- 224 active pastors;
- 268 active commissioned workers;
- 567 active nonrostered workers;
- 100 ordained pastors, emeriti; and
- 295 commissioned workers, emeriti

Like every district, the NID recognizes the need for more workers in the harvest of our Lord. He helps us see what He always sees: “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few” (Matthew 9:37). We pray, work, and encourage!

COVID-19 presented unique challenges for the NID and our congregations, schools, ministries, and workers, both professional and lay. It was a stressful time, especially with health concerns, government restrictions, disagreements on how to handle the situations, our limited knowledge, and our sinful nature, which doesn’t always “put the best construction on everything.” For all of us, there were plenty of opportunities to “repent and believe in the gospel” (Mark 1:15).

The Lord promises that all things work together for good for those who love Him, and we rejoice in His abiding and faithful love. We connected more deeply and regularly through Zoom calls with laity, pastors, commissioned workers, and our emeriti. We provided videos for encouragement, direction to Christ and His Word, and opportunities to stay connected. What a blessing for the three Illinois districts to be more deeply connected as we discussed, pondered, and looked for responses to the state of Illinois mandates. The cooperation between our Illinois districts continues.

In the summer of 2022, the NID offices moved to the campus of Concordia University Chicago (CUC) in River Forest, Illinois. The facilities used for 42 years in Hillside, Illinois, were sold to a local developer. We lease a house on campus and are blessed by the welcome and community of CUC. There are many benefits, including engaging with students in our daily work and engaging with future church workers. Some of our NID board meetings are held on CUC’s campus, while others are hosted by NID congregations, schools, and ministries. We regularly join the CUC community in chapel services. Over the past four years, congregational and school visitations have been one of our priorities throughout the week.

Before COVID-19, we began an intentional commitment to the wellness of our professional church workers. (Little did we know how the Lord provided what was needed.) We have a care team of ordained and commissioned workers who are available for those who have questions, concerns, and struggles with the work to which they have been called or life in general. Individuals from this group have made themselves available at our professional conferences and through one-on-one conversations by phone or in person. This work does not replace professional Christian counseling and pastoral care but remains valuable to our workers.

The NID is blessed to provide grants to congregations, schools, and RSOs for special ministry projects with an emphasis on sharing the Gospel with those outside the church and those who do not

know Jesus as Lord and Savior. That grant pool grew through the vision and generosity of a congregation that closed and gave a large portion of its assets to the ongoing Gospel work in northern Illinois. We remember and thank God for Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Des Plaines, Illinois.

The NID has several urban centers that provide both challenges and opportunities for the congregations, workers, and the Gospel mission. We have some great lay leaders, workers, and ministry partners. We have begun meetings in Chicago to discuss the struggles, partnerships, and work of the Holy Spirit. A special thanks to our African American and Hispanic pastors who in so many cases help us see that greater vision of Jesus and His passion for people of “every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages” (Revelation 7:9). We have held several urban and multicultural gatherings.

The 2021 NID convention was postponed and became the 2022 convention. It was held March 11–12, 2022, at CUC. The theme was “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly” (Colossians 3:16). The theme highlighted the blessing of the Word among us, one which we too often take for granted and neglect. It was back to basics for all of us so that in our present circumstances, we remain the beautiful Church Christ redeemed us to be! The Word is where the power is and remains. Worship was enriched by the preaching of President Harrison and the music of several of our NID schools participating with young voices. In addition, we were blessed with the orchestra of Walther Christian Academy.

These are among the actions of the district convention:

- NID adopted Word, Wellness, and Witness as the threefold emphasis of the NID as we work and serve together under Christ.
- NID adopted Belize as the “ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8) mission of the NID. With this action, the NID encourages short-term mission teams from NID congregations. This encourages congregations of all sizes to participate together for this mission endeavor. (NID Lutheran schools have made the mission work in Belize their “Hearts for Jesus” project.) We are partnering with LCMS International Mission and the Belize Mission Society.
- NID formed a task force on ethnic ministry that has since been titled “Northern Illinois District Task Force on Multi-Ethnic Mission and Ministry.” The task force is currently working on a history of ethnic ministry in the NID and the creation of Bible study materials and resources for future discussion by congregations, schools, and individuals on how we as Christ’s people proceed to His honor with our diverse ethnic backgrounds.
- NID encouraged individual Bible reading and gave thanks for the 500th anniversary of Luther’s translation of the New Testament into the language of the people.
- NID asked the district president to continue the ministry of visitation with his representatives to encourage congregational life, mission, and faithfulness in the administration of the Lord’s gift of Holy Communion for the sake of greater harmony among us.
- The Rev. Dr. Allan R. Buss was elected to his second term.

Services of Installation were held on May 22, 2022, in two congregations of the NID: St. Andrews Lutheran Church, Park Ridge, and Trinity Lutheran Church, Tinley Park. We were grateful for the participation of Rev. Dr. Thomas Egger as preacher and Rev. Dr.

Matthew Harrison as installer. We were grateful for these services with grassroots participation in the heart of the NID, our congregations.

Finally, a great joy has been Circuit Partnership Gatherings held throughout the NID. While delayed because of COVID-19, congregational chairs, vice-chairs, treasurers, lead elders, and others have gathered with pastors and NID staff to discuss, lament, rejoice, and look for possible areas of partnership. It has been a joy to see opportunities discovered, care given, new connections made, and encouragement through Christ generously given. Yes, we rejoice that we proclaim Christ crucified and risen, ascended, our great High Priest, the Lord of the nations, Church, and the mission!

Allan R. Buss, *President*

R43

Northwest District

“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.” This was the theme of the 2022 Northwest (NOW) District convention, and it has been a driving theme for our work together in the Pacific Northwest. We have been set apart to bring the message of God’s love in Christ in a cultural context that is unfamiliar and unsupportive of the church. It is our great challenge to communicate God’s deep love to people who neither recognize Him nor His desire to love and care for them.

NOW continues to emphasize the importance of leadership training and the development of its professional church workers. The district staff operates with the goal of “helping leaders do their best work ... together,” and it is in this vein that we support worker wellness, coaching opportunities, and access to spiritual, personal, and emotional support.

A. Closure of Concordia University, Portland

By far the most significant event of the past triennium was the closure of Concordia University, Portland (CUP), in 2020. It was a deep loss to the people of NOW and the church at large. While we are thankful for the lasting legacy of CUP, its closure has created a deep void. We have lost an important mission outpost. The challenge of maintaining a clear confession must include pointing to the heart of God for lost people, and CUP’s closure has limited that opportunity significantly.

B. Northwest District Leadership Initiative

Toward the end of 2019, the NOW District Board of Directors charged the district president with identifying new leaders for the church. The NOW District Leadership Initiative (NOW L.I.) was the result. The vision for this effort works hand in hand with the Synod’s *Set Apart to Serve* project of identifying church workers for the future. The NOW L.I. adds the identification and training of lay leaders to the conversation as well. This initiative is based on the New Testament model of the Body of Christ identifying and supporting people for leadership roles.

C. Mission Training Center

NOW began the practice of training laypeople for ministry in the 1980s, and that effort led to the establishment of Mission Training Center—an online training opportunity that delivers “just in time” training. NOW has joined forces with the California-Nevada-

Hawaii District and the Pacific Southwest District to continue providing this ministry to the churches of our districts and the church at large. The Mission Training Center, which was once operated in partnership with CUP, is now partnering with Concordia University Irvine. In Jan. 2023, we identified a new director, Rev. Jonathan Priest, to lead the effort in preparing God’s people for works of service.

D. NOW District Grant Programs

The Catalyst Grant program is an effort by the NOW office to encourage the beginning of new ministries within our congregations and communities. Ministry entities are given the opportunity to request time-limited grants that are designed to help them start something new in their scope of influence. Catalyst Grants have been used to assist the growth and expansion of Lutheran schools, counseling centers, and brand-new ministries.

The Faith Community Grant program is designed to launch new faith communities that are focused on reaching people who are not already a part of an LCMS ministry. They are intended to cultivate relationships with neighboring ministries.

E. NOW Start Network

The NOW Start Network is a grassroots effort supporting the identification and implementation of new ministries across the district. It is an effort led by pastors in the field who gather to resource and support one another in beginning new ministries.

F. Speaking the Truth in Love

In response to a resolution from the 2018 NOW District convention, a task force was established to address the concern of racism. This effort was put into play before the issue captured the attention of our nation in 2020. To prepare the delegates for healthy conversation at the convention in 2022, the task force, with the help of the district staff, assembled the “Speaking the Truth in Love” toolkit. We continue to encourage our ministries to engage in this important conversation.

G. NOW Resource Library

The NOW staff established a redesigned website during the last triennium that includes the opportunity to access a library of resources we have accumulated over the years. These include toolkits for legacy congregations, becoming essential participants in one’s own community, and the legacy of the LCMS in mission. In development is a toolkit designed to help congregations who are resource challenged and are considering the options of a merger, shared ministry, or closure. The district staff continues to provide resources like the *NOWLeading* podcast to help workers grow in their service.

NOW is the largest geographic district in the Synod, including the states of Alaska, Idaho, Oregon, and Washington. We also count the Church of All Nations in Hong Kong among our congregations. We are in the top 15 percent of LCMS districts in terms of the number of congregations and near the 50 percent mark in the number of members. This means we are a large district with many smaller congregations that are far apart. NOW also includes people who represent many different cultural backgrounds. We find our unity in the saving love of our God in the person of His Son, Jesus. It is our calling and our challenge to reflect the love of Christ to this unique and challenging population while we strive to walk together with our brothers and sisters across the Synod. May God bless us

all with His picture of sharing His love with the world.

Paul A. Linnemann, *President*

R44

Ohio District

“Gathered and Sent” was the theme of the Ohio District’s 2022 convention. The theme was based on Luke 10:1–12. This theme was especially pertinent given the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Ohio District congregations. Yet it also captured challenges for mission and ministry for congregations coming out of the pandemic.

The Pandemic

A majority of Ohio District congregations ceased in-person worship for three to six months at the height of the pandemic. Around ten congregations never stopped meeting in person. Some churches did not meet in person for a year and a half.

During this time, our Lutheran schools provided an invaluable service to their communities. Public schools ceased to meet in person, using online options for education. All the Lutheran elementary and high schools in Ohio continued to meet in person, some offering additional online education. This not only provided the best possible education context for students in Lutheran schools but provided an option for students in public schools.

A majority of churches reported in 2022 that average in-person worship attendance was down 10 to 20 percent compared to before the pandemic. However, some church leaders reported 40 percent lower attendance. A handful of congregations said worship attendance was higher after the pandemic than before it.

Congregational Challenges

Presidential visits discovered three primary challenges facing Ohio District congregations. Almost all congregations reported that they struggled to reach new people, especially young families. A number of times, congregational leaders said they also were concerned about reaching their own young families who no longer participated in church life.

The second challenge was engaging members in the life of the church. A number of times, congregational leaders reported that not so long ago, members said that regular worship attendance meant worshipping three weekends a month. Now members say that attending one out of six Sundays is regular attendance. Engaging members in serving beyond Sundays has also become an issue.

The final challenge was addressing social issues impacting congregations and congregational families. There are a range of issues that fit under the “woke” banner, ranging from the sanctity of human life to sexual identity to same-sex relationships. On the one hand, congregations wanted help in understanding these changes in society. On the other hand, they wanted resources to equip families grappling with these issues.

These challenges were reflected in congregational statistics during the past four years. Seven Ohio District congregations went through dissolution, with two merging with other Ohio District congregations. Meanwhile, the Ohio District accepted one new congregation into the LCMS.

Another challenge was an increasing number of congregations that could not afford to support a full-time pastor. In 2012, 34 Ohio District congregations could afford 50 percent of the district guide-

lines for compensation for a pastor. In 2022, that number increased to 60 congregations.

Mission Priorities

The mission of the Ohio District is to foster the fulfillment of the Great Commission in ways that are faithful to the Scriptures and Lutheran Confessions. As such, the district was already engaged in areas of mission that matched LCMS priorities.

Synod’s first mission priority is to “plant, sustain, and revitalize Lutheran churches.” The primary strategy for the Ohio District to accomplish this is forming relationships between congregations. Due to a culture of congregational autonomy, this presented a challenge at first. The effort is now gaining steam. Churches form relationships through fellowship events, shared mercy ministry, and engaging in mission work together. While these efforts are beneficial to congregations, they also can lead to congregations partnering to share staff, supporting struggling sister churches, or starting new congregations.

Progress was also made in the Ohio District toward the second mission priority, “Support and expand theological education.” The district provided financial grants to district students enrolled in professional church work degrees at LCMS universities and seminaries. An average of 20 Ohio District students were enrolled in these programs each year. The district has also taken an active role in Synod’s church worker recruitment program called *Set Apart to Serve*. The district has promoted *Set Apart to Serve* resources to congregations and schools, including at the 2022 district convention. One of the Ohio District congregations—Trinity Lutheran Church in Toledo, Ohio—is participating in a *Set Apart to Serve* pilot program.

The Ohio District also supported local partnerships with People of the Book Lutheran Outreach (POBLO). POBLO sent evangelists to Columbus, Ohio, and Dayton, Ohio. Local churches supported the work of the evangelists, providing volunteers and financial resources. In return, the evangelists connected immigrants in the community to LCMS congregations. The district also offered Synod’s Vitality workshops, especially “Every One His Witness.”

The Ohio District also addressed the fifth mission priority, “Promote and nurture the spiritual, emotional, financial, and physical well-being of pastors and professional church workers.” Several professional church worker conferences sponsored by the district focused on worker wellness, including partnering with Grace Place Ministries. The Ohio District was also blessed to have Doxology retreats readily available for workers. At the same time, the district staff worked with the district Care Partners, who are available for all Ohio District church workers and church worker families.

The Ohio District also made progress toward the sixth mission priority, “Enhance early childhood education, elementary and secondary education, and youth ministry.” The Ohio District helped congregations explore opening new early learning centers. At the same time, the district increased staffing to support current and future early learning centers. Throughout the pandemic, district staff held specific Zoom meetings with school administrators, youth, and family life leaders, offering support through the challenging times. The district also provided support in the exploration of starting new Lutheran elementary schools.

Going forward, the Ohio District intends to fully engage in “Making Disciples for Life.” For example, the 2022 district con-

vention passed a resolution to increase the in-depth study of God's Word daily among district members.

Kevin A. Wilson, *President*

R45

Oklahoma District

The Oklahoma District is a fellowship of congregations committed to caring, sharing, teaching, preaching, and reaching people. Through God's divine service in Word and Sacrament, the Holy Spirit brings them into a living relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. The 78 congregations of the Oklahoma District met at the 50th convention from June 10–11, 2022, under the theme **"Burning Hearts, Open Lips, Joyful Witness,"** based on Luke 24:31–36.

On May 19, 2024, the district will celebrate its 100th anniversary at St. John's Lutheran Church in Okarche. Some of the participants in the Oklahoma Land Rush of 1889 were members of the Lutheran Church. They helped establish a foothold for the church in the Oklahoma Territory. Many had migrated to Oklahoma from Kansas. Lutheran pioneers also came from Nebraska, Illinois, Missouri, Iowa, and the northern states. In 1922, the Kansas District petitioned the Synod to create an independent Oklahoma District. The 1923 Synod convention, held in St. Louis, granted the request. Oklahoma became the 28th district of the LCMS in 1924, convening at St. John's Lutheran Church in Okarche.

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 callings. The only salaried positions include an administrative assistant, an outdoor ministries director and codirector, a communications director, 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.

Within the three regions and nine circuits, the Oklahoma District works to ensure that each congregation and professional church worker has sufficient resources available to them. We encourage them in mission and ministry, new starts, school development, stewardship endeavors, and mission challenges.

Even though the district spans the state of Oklahoma, there is a unity of spirit and purpose within our joint endeavors. The Oklahoma District is able to designate three-fourths of its budget for mission work, with the remaining budget used for administrative, professional growth, and ministerial wellness. The district's board of directors also steadfastly pledges one-fourth of its budget as a financial commitment to Synod.

The district continues to promote and implement revitalization efforts for many congregations. Equipped with the effectual Word of God, many new people groups are being touched with Christ's grace, including Burmese Karen, Hmong, Latino, and Liberian populations.

Campus ministries are active on three college campuses in the state, including Norman (University of Oklahoma), Stillwater (Oklahoma State University), and Tulsa (The University of Tulsa). The impact of these ministries has included Baptisms, confirmations, and marriages. Students have been directed into various church vocations of deaconess, teacher, DCE, and pastor. Pastoral

supervised vicars and student peer ministers have served in these campus ministries. English as a Second Language and International Student Ministries on campus have also brought the Gospel to various cultures and people groups.

The district educates children from infants to 12th grade. We currently have 18 early childhood programs and 8 elementary/middle schools across the state. Our oldest school is St. Paul in Enid, which was established in 1926. Immanuel in Broken Arrow (Tulsa area) is home to our only Lutheran high school.

In the **Western Region**, which includes the Enid, Kingfisher, and Panhandle circuits, outreach has continued among the Burmese Karen people. The result includes multiple Baptisms and confirmations. New work has begun among the Latino population. Lutherhaven Retreat Center, located near Knowles, offers wilderness and waterfront experiences. Youth retreats are held in the summer. Continuing education courses are also hosted there for church workers. Various seminary professors have taught there and discovered the wide-open spaces of the Oklahoma panhandle.

In the **Central Region**, which includes the Oklahoma City (OKC), 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 offers exciting potential. We support a pastor/missionary from this region who now serves at the new seminary in Shinyanga, Tanzania, as a professor of Greek and Hebrew and assists in pastoral formation. The ministry to the Armed Forces has continued at the U.S. Army Training Center at Fort Sill. Local pastors have conducted the Divine Service on the military base for soldiers serving our country.

In the **Eastern Region**, which includes the Tulsa, Miami, and Ponca City circuits, spiritual doors have opened for outreach among the Hispanic, the Liberian, and the Hmong people. Camp Lutheroma resides on 120 acres in beautiful eastern Oklahoma, located along the Illinois River just east of Tahlequah. The mission of Camp Lutheroma is to nurture discipleship in Jesus Christ in outdoor settings. It ministers to hundreds of youth during the summer and winter programs. They learn how to share the love of Christ to the world. It also opens the beautiful facilities as retreat settings for groups, congregations, and families.

Throughout the Oklahoma District, preaching stations continue to be maintained, with some serving as satellites for more established congregations. More bivocational pastorates and dual parishes are being developed in an attempt to provide Word and Sacrament ministry to struggling congregations.

The saints of Oklahoma continue to carry out the Lord Jesus' Great Commission. **"We Preach Christ Crucified"** in the southwest part of our country and throughout the world. **Jesus is indeed "the power of God and the wisdom of God!"**

Respectfully submitted,
David R. Nehrenz, *President*

R46

Pacific Southwest District

Abundantly More was the theme of the 2022 Pacific Southwest District (PSD) convention held in Summerlin, Nevada (Las Vegas), on the beautiful campus of Faith Middle and High School, the

largest Lutheran school in the country. The convention encouraged and resourced the almost 300 congregations and 150 schools of the PSD to aggressively engage in God's mission as He does *far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us* (Ephesians 3:20) and as we reach out to 36 million people in six major metropolitan areas across three states.

Eight Critical Areas of Engagement

The PSD is resourcing congregations and schools in eight critical areas of mission and ministry (references to 2019 Synod resolutions where appropriate):

1. **100 in 10 Initiative** is a commitment to launch 100 new Gospel-proclaiming ministries (they may or may not be new congregations) over the next 10 years, by the time of the 100th anniversary of the PSD in 2030–31 (Res. 1-02, "To Encourage the Planting of Churches").
2. **Congregational Partnerships** assist congregations of all sizes to work together in mission to their communities. This results in stronger and healthier ministries through creative partnerships, sharing of church workers for Word and Sacrament ministry, multicampus ministries, mergers, multicongregation parishes, etc. A "Small Church Essentials Conference" was offered remotely to district congregations during COVID-19. This outstanding one-day conference is available on our website: psd-lcms.org/psd-videos (Res. 1-03, "To Study Shared Ministry among Small Congregations").
3. **Leadership Development** identifies, trains, and deploys leadership coaches to serve 100 PSD church and school leaders, believing that healthy visionary leaders result in healthy visionary ministries that are more effective in Gospel proclamation and Word and Sacrament ministry multiplication.
4. **Expansion of Multicultural and Immigrant Ministries** emphasizes the PSD's commitment to celebrating the increasing diversity of the cultures and people God brings to our communities. To create a pathway for effective multicultural engagement, the 2022 PSD convention approved a resolution to reject racism; rectify past wrongs of commission and omission; and recognize the PSD's successes, failures, and opportunities in ministry within its communities. Additionally, the PSD in convention called upon its pastors, leaders, and congregations to continue to cultivate, from our immigrant, non-Anglo communities, new leaders who are intentionally engaged in the mission of God and memorialized the Synod in convention to encourage the seminaries to maintain and strengthen their nonresidential, learning-in-ministry, and distance programs and to award financial aid more equitably toward the students in these programs. Another very important step toward ministry equality included the creation of Korean and Hispanic affinity circuits to provide greater fellowship, cultural awareness, support, equipping, and ownership of specific-culture ministry (Res. 1-05A, "To Strengthen Multi-Ethnic Outreach").
5. **The Mission Training Center (MTC):** The PSD has joined with the California-Nevada-Hawaii District and Northwest District and Concordia University Irvine to provide online and on-demand training for laypeople who serve alongside church workers to give greater biblical and theological knowledge, insight, and missional application. The MTC provides great opportunities for continuing education for all church workers (Res. 12-03A: "To Encourage Lifelong

Catechesis in the Home and Church"; Res. 6-04: "To Support, Encourage, and Expect Continuing Education for all Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod Pastors").

6. **Retain-Remodel-Replant** is the strategy implemented by the PSD to properly steward the resources of declining and legacy ministries, redevelopment of property for new ministry, and maximizing facilities for mission. The Mission Training Center in Norwalk, California (Los Angeles), is an example of the R-R-R strategy where asset-based community development and spiritual formation work side by side to reestablish connections to the community for Gospel proclamation. It is our goal to establish additional context-specific outreach training centers in San Diego, Las Vegas, and Phoenix (Res. 1-02, "To Encourage the Planting of Churches").
7. **Creation of LuTEC:** LuTEC is the first career and technical education Lutheran micro-high school in the nation serving as a model to assist urban congregations with underutilized church and school campuses to reestablish relationship bridges with their neighborhoods, to educate students, to evangelize families, and to care for underserved communities. The PSD schools report an increase of 6,000 new students over the last year (Res. 12-01A, "To Commend and Give Thanks for our Lutheran Early Childhood Centers, Elementary Schools, and High Schools").
8. **Church Worker Care** provides regional, local, and individual support for workers, counseling referrals, workshops, retreats, and on-demand resources. The PSD said goodbye to beloved district pastor-counselor, the Rev. Ron Rehrer, who entered glory after 30 years of service to ordained and commissioned ministers. A new team of five dedicated individuals with unique gifts and areas of counseling specialty are now serving in partnership with the district president's office to provide expanded opportunities to support and care for our church workers. Visitation of congregations and schools continues to be an important part of this focus (Res. 3-04A, "To Encourage Training of Our Pastors, Church Workers, and Congregations to Recognize and Provide Pastoral Care for Those Suffering from Clinical Depression, Mental Illnesses, and Other Mental Disorders").

The 2022 Pacific Southwest District Convention:

1. Made the necessary adjustments to bring its bylaws into compliance with the resolutions passed at recent LCMS conventions (Res. 9-01, "To Amend Various Bylaws for Purposes of Clarification").
2. Committed itself to pray for and enlist workers for the harvest field by identifying, encouraging, and financially supporting the formation of future church workers, through all available pathways, as commissioned and ordained ministers. (Res. 6-02, 6-03A) These resolutions include the following:
 - a. Making a concerted effort to increase the number of PSD men and women preparing for church work professions for service in the PSD, understanding the increasing difficulty we are experiencing in calling church workers from other parts of the country to serve on the West Coast.
 - b. Asking Synod to establish a third route to colloquy for LCMS members who receive a Master of Divinity equivalent from an accredited non-LCMS seminary. Currently,

LCMS members must complete the seminary's residential Alternative Route program and are not provided the opportunity to apply for the general colloquy program available to pastors from other denominations.

3. Encouraged the LCMS to establish a task force to reconsider the use of licensed lay deacons for Word and Sacrament ministry. The PSD believes that it is important to reconsider this due to an increasing number of congregations throughout the Synod that are unable to support a pastor, the number of congregations facing shared ministry, and the many potential closures.
4. Made the commitment to strengthen the nonvoting advisory delegate participation at (district) conventions. The 2022 PSD convention provided opportunities on all nonelection decisions to receive an advisory vote from 30 commissioned ministers, who were seated with the regular delegates and provided voting devices.
5. Finally, the PSD officially identified prison ministry as a recognized mission field in our midst. Much is to be done in this specialized area of Gospel proclamation.

Financial Accountability

The PSD is pleased to report that the 2022 district audit was completed without a single comment! Audited financials are annually available. Regular summaries of finances are provided each time a district conference occurs (Res. 8-03, "To Ensure Timely and Transparent Financial Reporting in the Synod").

Concordia University Irvine

As district president, I serve as a member of the board of regents at Concordia University Irvine. I am pleased to report that the university is healthy academically and financially, benefits from outstanding leadership, and is faithful in its Lutheran identity as it prepares students "to be wise, honorable, and cultivated citizens to serve society and the church." Lutheran identity is enshrined in the university's hiring practices, as every faculty and staff member is a professing, practicing Christian. Each full-time hire is interviewed for fidelity by Chief Mission Officer Rev. Dr. Steven Mueller, who also oversees Human Resources. Some 65 percent of full-time faculty are members of LCMS congregations; 39 percent of full-time faculty are rostered/called church workers of the LCMS. All full-time faculty complete Vision-Mission-Vocation (VMV), a Lutheran higher education orientation program. VMV has proven so important to enshrining our Lutheran identity and culture that Concordia is now building a VMV training program for all staff (Res. 7-08, "To Aid Our CUS Schools in Clear Confession").

It is with gratitude and humility that the Pacific Southwest District gives thanks to God for all its congregations, schools, church workers, laypeople, district staff, and others who served faithfully during the difficult COVID-19 years. Restrictions required by local and state governments were particularly difficult in California and Nevada, where certain locations limited gatherings for many months—for over a year in some cases. Throughout those months, the work of God's Church continued faithfully, offering hope, compassion, and the love of Jesus to a very broken and frightened world. Today, we are in the midst of an incredible opportunity to bring the message of Christ to our world, with energy and without hesitation. Our world needs Jesus! We are confident that the churches and schools of the Pacific Southwest District will continue to be used by God for His glory and purposes.

Soli Deo Gloria
Michael E. Gibson, *President*

R47

Rocky Mountain District

Despite the Rocky Mountain District (RMD) being the largest contiguous district of the LCMS, our 168 congregations, 49 pre-schools, 28 elementary schools, and 1 high school remain unified and committed to preaching Christ crucified! The context may be different depending upon the location, language, and culture of our congregations in Colorado; New Mexico; Utah; El Paso, Texas; Page, Arizona; or Big Springs and Venango, Nebraska, but the Gospel remains the same! New opportunities are given to us every day in many different ways!

One of our Recognized Service Organizations, the Lutheran Hispanic Missionary Institute, led by the Rev. Richard Schlack, trains future Hispanic ministry leaders for work not only in the RMD, and not only with other districts, but also with Lutherans in other countries.

Similarly, one of our newest pastors, the Rev. Robert Bennett has, by God's grace, revitalized a congregation in the heart of the Mormon state of Utah with over half of Sunday's attendance being Mormons seeking to know about Christ crucified for them!

And of course, we would be negligent if we did not thank the ongoing work of Deaconess Sara Smith, our District Life Coordinator, who manages and promotes sanctity of life efforts across our vast geography with success!

For me personally, care of our ministries and workers remains one of the highest priorities, especially following the turmoil of the COVID-19 pandemic:

1. Reconciliation training is happening to improve our ability to respond to crisis and early disputes.
2. Many of our workers have benefited from Doxology's "Take Heart!" Respite Retreats, and more will continue to do so at our annual fall workers conference in Breckenridge, Colorado.
3. Our educators attended four offerings of "Nurturing the Faith" workshops (one day) throughout the RMD to uplift and encourage themselves and others.
4. In addition, our staff, district presidium, circuit visitors, and I are intentionally proactive in visiting our ministries.

In closing, one of the key highlights from our district convention, aside from the normal business of bringing our bylaws into coordination with Synod (2019 Res. 9-01), was committing ourselves to raise \$150,000 in support of the Siberian Lutheran Seminary in Novosibirsk, Siberia, a leading pastor training school in Russia. We pray that this effort is blessed!

To Christ be the glory!
James B. Maxwell, *President*

R48

SELCD District

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, "The righteous shall live by faith." (Romans 1:16–17)

It is God's all-powerful Word that called the universe into existence. It is God's eternal Word that became flesh and dwelt among us that He might shed His blood to reconcile us to God, and being reconciled to Him we would have forgiveness and life in His name. Through that same Word, God's Spirit calls, gathers, and enlightens each one of us to know Him and live under Him in His kingdom. Through the living Word of God, the Spirit gathers us into His Church. The Synod of Evangelical Lutheran Churches (SELC) District of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod is the place in this time where God has called us to be and live out our faith in Him. In this communion, we are united in a common confession of His Word, we celebrate together at His table as His family, and we are joined together in His mission to proclaim His Word to the ends of the earth through baptizing and teaching. It is God's will that all people be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth. This life and salvation only comes through the Word of God. "Faith comes through hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ" (Romans 10:17). The Word of Christ is the message of "Christ crucified" for the forgiveness of sins.

There are many blessings which we celebrate and for which we give thanks to God. The congregations and pastors of the SELC continue to 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 dialogue among pastors, allowing the ability to express both agreement and disagreement while maintaining and deepening personal relationships between and among the brothers.

Highlights of the past triennium have included updating our district communications and developing new ways to identify the SELC District. We have completely revamped the SELC communications and have capitalized on the use of technology for meetings, webinars, and gatherings since COVID-19.

While the COVID-19 pandemic has plagued our world in recent years, it has also revealed hidden opportunities to grow in ministry and outreach. Almost every congregation in the SELC responded to the challenge of quarantine by embracing various technologies in their unique situations to reach their flocks and their communities with the Gospel: parking lot services; radio broadcasts; phone call ministries; and Facebook Live, Zoom, and YouTube services, Bible studies, and devotions opened the doors of our churches to tens, if not hundreds, of thousands of hearers of God's life-giving Word. The gifts of modern technology and the freedom of being a "district without borders" enable 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.

SELC Missions

Over the past 40 years, the SELC District has planted 15 churches that have been officially placed on the roster of the LCMS. We have also begun six ethnic ministries in urban areas that are worshiping groups (congregations) within the existing Anglo congregations and the two congregations function as one official church in the LCMS. In recent years, "Church Planting" has also taken the form of "satellite" churches that are separate from the "mother" church but still function under one board of directors and are therefore considered one church by the Synod. The SELC has started seven satellites.

Over the last year and a half, a task force to design a new era in church planting has been meeting to retool our strategies to connect

those who don't know Christ to His saving Gospel. We have also begun to develop a new mission strategy for the next generation of the SELC.

The strength of the SELC in the last generation has been its ability to start and grow new congregations. It is the goal of the SELC District to focus our outreach efforts in the next decade to continue this strength and to start 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. 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 SELC District is facing two major challenges as we plan for the future. Our mission is to extend Christ's kingdom by planting new churches. The greatest challenge is to find and raise up leaders, particularly ethnic pastors, who have the gifts and talents to establish new mission starts. The other important issue is helping smaller, aging congregations plan and prepare for a new future, either embracing a new vision for ministry or responsibly planning their legacy. Many pastors and congregational leaders have labored for years caring for the flock, trying to reach out and serve communities that are becoming more and more disengaged from church and organized religion. Fewer and fewer people are volunteering, and a generation of young people is increasingly lost from the Church. Pastors and lay leaders alike feel tired, discouraged, and burned out (this was exacerbated during COVID-19). A generation of pastors educated and trained in an era when Christianity and the Church were significant cultural institutions are frustrated when their faithful preaching and teaching do not bear more visible fruit as their congregations continue to age and decline.

The Word of God and the power of the Holy Spirit are our greatest strengths and assets. We are also tremendously blessed with wonderful and faithful pastors who serve in the SELC District who love and care for the sheep entrusted to them. The continued existence of many of our long-standing SELC congregations is found in the faithful and committed stewardship of longtime members who give generously, who serve tirelessly, and who pray fervently. Without them, the SELC District would cease to exist. Because of them, we are in a strong position to embrace the next generation of mission and ministry in our district without borders. The SELC continues to be 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.

Respectfully submitted,
Waldemar R. Vinovskis, *President*

R49

South Dakota District

It is an honor to bring you this report regarding God's work among us and through us in the South Dakota District. What a joy it is for us 27,000 LCMS souls in our great state to join you in preaching Christ crucified!

COVID-19: The Unprecedented Challenge to Ministry in Our Time

It hit us hard, as it did all of you. But I am so grateful to our wonderful God that we made our way quite well through this time of virus invasion. Pastors, church leaders, and congregation members made decisions to the best of their ability, and they respected the decisions of other congregations as how to handle matters dealing with the pandemic. And so, by God's grace and the Spirit's direction, the proclamation of God's Word continued, online or in person. Moreover, the saints continued to give their offerings to the Lord so that, in most cases, our ministries did not suffer financially. That some congregations "upped their game" when it comes to technology, including the use of online giving, was a surprising new benefit stemming from our having had to deal with COVID-19.

Our Lutheran schools and early childhood centers carried the tremendous burden of how to educate the children and how to staff their ministries. When schools closed for a time and tuition wasn't coming in, many wondered how they would pay the bills. I'm very grateful to our school administrators, teachers, and staff for how they so patiently and creatively met these and countless other changes and challenges brought about by the pandemic. I'm grateful to our school children and school families for displaying the fruit of the Spirit (love, peace, kindness, patience, etc.), as they and their schools had to adjust to a strange new life under COVID-19.

But along with the difficulties came opportunities. I loved the perspective of one of our pastors. He believed and communicated that, *in spite of COVID-19*, God was on the move. *In spite of COVID-19*, God was accomplishing great things. His message of Law and Gospel was marching forward. God was taking care of us, and we, His precious children, were being good neighbors to others.

Congregations Banding Together or Doing Something Novel in This New and Different Time

Many of us grew up in the Church when our congregations, Sunday School programs, and confirmation classes were bigger. Today, it's different (and it's not just because of the pandemic we've endured). The Church is not the center of life, like it had been in days gone by. People think they are regular church attenders, these days, if they worship once a month. Some of our churches have no Sunday School because they have no children, and some of our churches haven't had a junior confirmand in the past five years.

One decision many of our churches have made is to form a multicongregation parish with one or more congregations. This is nothing new in South Dakota (we have 70 congregations in such arrangements), but now even more of our congregations, for several reasons, are beginning to band together under new parish agreements. Why must they band together in new alignments? Chiefly, in order to afford to call a pastor to serve them, at a time when salaries and benefits for pastors are increasing in cost and church membership numbers have declined (so also has the population in many rural communities). Some congregations, therefore, need other congregations to assist them in keeping the church doors open and the Gospel proclaimed and taught.

In the last triennium, 12 of our congregations entered into new parish alignments. God's people and their pastors in these parishes understand that hearing God's Word and having the Sacraments properly administered in their midst is of life-giving and life-sustaining importance. They understand that God has something for them to do in their communities: share the Gospel and serve their

neighbors with acts of kindness. They accept that they must align in new ways to continue this God-blessed ministry, for their own sake, and for the sake of others. And they're doing it. Praise God for our multipoint parishes and the faithful pastors who serve them!

Beyond the multicongregation parish phenomenon, some congregations and circuits are doing something novel to carry out the mission of God in this world. Examples of this include these:

- St. Paul, Spearfish, is the mother church to Trinity, Belle Fourche, the first church plant in the district in 18 years.
- Participation in the Specific Ministry Pastor program (SMP) is growing, allowing churches to raise up men in their midst for bivocational, ordained ministry.
- Laypeople and pastors in Circuit 1 have launched the Rural Gospel Initiative. The purpose is to support ministry staffing of congregations in the circuit for new or amplified efforts in rural and small-town ministry and to support and encourage education and training events concerning Christian witness and service.

And, in addition to new ministry endeavors, God continues to bless our steady, long-standing ministries to Native Americans on the Rosebud and Pine Ridge reservations, our district-wide deaf ministry, and our campus ministries.

Lutheran Family Service: God's Care for Us in a Special Way

From the beginning of the 2018–2021 triennium, our district has been working with Lutheran Family Service (LFS), based in Fort Dodge, Iowa, to explore how we can join forces to support the mental and emotional health of our LCMS population in South Dakota. After much discussion with LFS, the board of directors of the district voted to enter into a ministry agreement with LFS, beginning in 2020, and renewed for 2021. Delegates to our district convention, at the end of 2021, then voted to extend and strengthen the relationship. What a blessing this has been! LFS and their professional counselors have consulted with our pastors, assisting our pastors in giving counsel to church members. Our church workers themselves have turned to the counselors at LFS, via Telehealth, to work through mental health problems of their own. And now our laypeople are able to turn to LFS counselors for help too. An exciting development has been the opening of counseling offices in Chamberlain and Sioux Falls.

Our Prayer for All of You

Our district convention theme, back in December 2021, was "Rooted in Christ, Abounding in Thanksgiving." Our theme verses were Colossians 2:6–7: *"Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving."* We pray that your life will be marked with such a thankful, rooted connection to the Savior of us all: the crucified, risen, ascended, and reigning Christ!

Scott C. Sailer, *President*

R50

South Wisconsin District

The Lutheran Church was born of a call to repentance and a call to confession. Repentance takes us out of the center of our lives and places our Lord Jesus there. In repentance, we turn to our Lord Jesus for forgiveness, which He readily supplies. Forgiven, we see our lives differently from when we are ruled by sin. With the Lord Jesus at the center of our lives, we confess His holy name.

Generations before us made that good confession, passing the faith on from generation to generation; from fathers and mothers to their children, and then on to their grandchildren, and then to us. It is our time to pass that faith and our confession to those who follow us.

Building on that truth, the tagline of the South Wisconsin District (SWD) is **“Confessing Christ for the Next Generation.”** Beneath that slogan, we have four strategic targets:

1. This is our time to be distinctly Lutheran.
2. This is our time to plant new congregations and schools.
3. This is our time to honor our Christ-centered vocations.
4. This is our time to embrace our communities.

First, **“This is our time to be distinctly Lutheran.”** We are Lutheran Christians as defined by our catechism and our Lutheran Confessions and as displayed in our historic liturgy. We are unique in our confession, unique in our worship, unique in our identity as the people of God in this time. We are Lutheran Christians. We are not neo-evangelicals, not Reformed or Baptist. Our confession is clear, and we need not be ashamed of who we are.

Second, **“This is our time to plant new congregations and schools.”** Currently, the SWD will have a new classical high school starting the fall of 2023, added to our seven other high schools, one of which is a special-needs high school. Not long ago, our SWD board of directors approved “Lutheran Neighborhood Schools” for the city of Milwaukee. The plan is to plant Lutheran elementary schools of 50 students or less in congregations that have the facilities for such a school. Rob Lunak has accepted the Divine Call to serve as the Lutheran Neighborhood Schools superintendent. The first school is in the planning stages. The congregation that will host this school recently baptized 10 children on one Sunday. Other areas are exploring schools, including Holmen/Onalaska, Northern Ozaukee County. Regarding new congregations, we have established a “top ten list” of prime locations for a church plant. One such plant is well on its way, with over a hundred in Divine Service each week. Two others are in the planning stages. One is a preaching station. One is preparing to charter. There will be more.

Third, **“This is our time to honor our Christ-centered vocations.”** We are fathers and mothers, grandchildren and grandparents. We are laborers and farmers. We are supervisors and employees. We are civilian and military. We are rich and we are poor. We are various colors and races. Regardless of our station in life, we are the people of our God in this world. Peter defines what that means for us: “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. Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul. Keep your

conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation” (1 Peter 2:9–12).

Fourth, **“This is our time to embrace our communities.”** South Wisconsin is historically German. Our oldest congregations trace their ancestry back to Pomerania. Some came to America to escape the Prussian Union. Others came because they had served in the Prussian Army and were wearied by the fighting. However, in recent times, the face of the SWD has changed. Our fastest-growing population is Latino. We have several congregations that work exclusively with those of Hispanic descent, and even an elementary school with some 200 students. We also have extensive Gospel witness among the African American community and among the new immigrants from Africa such as Nigerians, French Congolese, Ethiopians, and others.

John C. Wille, *President*

R51

Southeastern District

The Southeastern District (SED) includes York, Pennsylvania; Maryland; Delaware; Washington, DC; Virginia; North and South Carolina; and Bristol, Tennessee. Together we have 3 regions, 21 circuits, 214 churches, 59 early childhood/preschool components, 13 elementary school components, 11 middle school components, 3 high school components, and 8 service organizations.

The Southeastern District Mission: In grateful response to God’s grace and empowered by the Holy Spirit, the Southeastern District connects people with Jesus.

The Southeastern District Vision: As we work together to connect our neighbors to Jesus, lives are transformed, and God’s Kingdom is growing.

Critical Targets of the Southeastern District: Mobilizing Witness and Empowering Wellness: Multiplying individuals and faith communities to share the love of Christ. Empowering individuals and faith communities to thrive through growth and renewal.

The SED has over 33 million people living within the boundaries of the district. We seek to love our neighbors and engage our communities with the Gospel of hope. Our congregations, schools, and service organizations are mission stations where the priesthood of believers are nourished and equipped to live their faith each day and shine the light of Christ in every zip code in the district, seeking to fulfill the mission, vision, and critical targets.

At our 2022 convention, the delegates adopted several initiatives, including giving thanks for the faithful ministry of Concordia College New York, addressing the Lutheran teacher shortage and low salaries of LCMS commissioned workers, using the Koinonia Project process to resolve conflict, and exploring nonresidential opportunities for pastoral education.

The convention mandated that the district recruit and apply for admission for 18 specific ministry pastors by the next Southeastern District convention. Intentional and active recruitment of church workers in the district is vital to mobilizing witness and empowering wellness.

The convention passed a resolution to advance racial equality and the Great Commission where we ask the Synod in convention

to incorporate within our annual celebration of life an encouraging call to repent of all sins against the equal value of life created in God's image, including, but not limited to, all sins devaluing people due to their tribe, language, skin color, or people group.

The Southeastern District is a place where Gospel witness and wellness opportunities abound as people of every race and nation live in our neighborhoods, communities, and cities. Thus, praising the name of Jesus in native tongue is both happening and has mission potential through Hispanic ministry, Ethiopian ministry, Hmong ministry, and in each of the language groups that call this region home.

As the Southeastern District seeks to connect people with Jesus so that lives are transformed and God's kingdom grows, we give thanks for the faithful workers in the district: DCEs, DCOs, musicians, deaconesses, teachers, administrators, lay deacons, pastors, and all workers partnering with the laity to glorify the Lord, serve His people, and fulfill His mission and vision in this part of the LCMS.

"Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever. Amen" (Ephesians 3:20–21).

William A. Harmon, *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 geographically large district that encompasses Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and the Panhandle of Florida. Within this large geographic area, we currently have 155 LCMS congregations—32,000 baptized members—served by 206 called and ordained pastors. In addition, we currently have 16 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, a full-time district president administrative assistant, one full-time business manager, and one part-time administrative assistant.

With a small and limited staff, we are focusing on five important and interconnected areas:

1. Clergy health
2. Congregational health
3. Outreach/Evangelism/Witness
4. Facilitating small congregations in forming shared ministry agreements that will help to provide pastoral ministry to congregations that are unable to call a full-time pastor of their own
5. 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, Baptism, and discipleship in Jesus Christ. A people who are focused on Christ and Him crucified 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 our 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. As a result, we are seeing many congregations growing smaller and unable to afford a full-time pastor who will shepherd them and provide Word and Sacrament ministry. This is a rapidly growing area of great concern. We are focused on helping facilitate smaller congregations to form shared ministry partnerships with other congregations so that together they can afford to call a pastor.

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 up 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. We receive Christ and His good gifts in the Divine Service, and as we are filled to overflowing with Christ's Word and Sacrament, the Holy Spirit overflows those good gifts out of us to others who don't yet know Jesus as Christ. Orthodox, confessional Lutherans want to share the gift of the Gospel; they want to go and be workers in the Lord's harvest fields; they want to 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 Sacrament, 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 in addressing the five main issues of clergy health, congregational health, outreach/evangelism/witness, shared ministry, 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 C. Johnson, *President*

R53

Southern Illinois District

The quadrennium has been a challenging time for the people of the state of Illinois who support life from conception. Illinois prides itself on being the most progressive state in the Midwest and is striving to become the leader in providing abortion services of all kinds in the United States. The 2022 *Dobbs v. Jackson* decision of the United States Supreme Court overturned what was perceived to be a constitutional right to abortion following the *Roe v. Wade* case a half-century ago. Neighboring states are enacting stricter abortion controls or outright bans. Illinois welcomes abortion providers from out of state to relocate to Illinois. A culture of death for the newly conceived and even newborn from a failed abortion surrounds us. Previous restrictions as to who, where, and when an abortion may occur have been lifted by the legislature. There are no mandated reporting requirements or even health standards for clinics providing abortion services. Abortion advocates once called for abortions to be safe, legal, and rare. In the frenzy following *Dobbs*, the health care of the woman is sacrificed to get rid of the newly conceived any way possible.

Amid these challenges, the Southern Illinois District (SID) encouraged the formation of an Advocates for Life team. Dedicated laypeople and church workers have accepted the challenge and do exactly what their name indicates. They advocate for life for all people of all ages. The culture of death threatens to expand into assisted suicide. A day may come when those who are unable to make a positive contribution to society will be left to die or assisted to do so with the blessing of the state.

Within this deadly culture, *We Preach Christ Crucified*. We proclaim the eternal Gospel of life and salvation through the forgiveness of sins in Jesus Christ. The Lord God created life. When man sinned, God the Father sent His own Son to take our sin upon Himself and pay for it through His own death on the cross. It is the Lord who makes people alive again through the birth from above in the waters of Baptism. Isaiah reminds us that the dead will live. Where in Adam all die, in Christ all will be made alive. We need this life-giving and life-affirming message in this culture of death that permeates our state and nation.

Life issues, coupled with the restrictions that followed from the COVID-19 pandemic, have led to greater cooperation among all three geographical districts in Illinois. Together, we are monitoring events in state government that challenge the sanctity of life and restrict the freedom to assemble and worship. Our staffs are pledged to meet regularly to better understand the challenges, coordinate responses, and work with like-minded people across the state on these shared issues.

In response to the government orders to close schools for an initial two weeks to “flatten the curve” of the pandemic outbreak in March 2020, our churches and our elementary and secondary schools responded quickly. Within two weeks of in-person closure, our schools were open with online learning. Several congregations never stopped meeting. Most sought to comply with health department regulations. Some pastors and congregations responded by offering parking lot services broadcast over low-power FM radio. Many others took their services online through Facebook and YouTube. Provisions were made for people to receive the Sacrament of the Altar in person. Our people and church workers are to be commended for their heroic efforts to provide education and Word and Sacrament ministry in a most trying time.

Southern Illinois remains a largely rural and small-town district. There is no community within our district with more than 50,000 in population. The Metro East suburbs of St. Louis have an urban vibe, yet one finds farmland interspersed throughout these communities. A fourth of the SID congregations started in 1865 or earlier. Most of our congregations are within a 75-mile radius of the Gateway Arch in St. Louis. The farther east and south you go from St. Louis, the lower the Lutheran population. These areas may rightly be considered part of the old Bible Belt.

Several smaller congregations are having difficulty finding a pastor to serve them, even part-time. The number of congregations sharing pastors has doubled since 2015. Some dual parishes find it difficult to support a full-time pastor. The farther one is from St. Louis, the greater the difficulty in finding a vacancy pastor or even pulpit supply. Four congregations have closed since the 2019 convention in Tampa. We expect to see further consolidation or closures in the decade ahead. Pray for the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest fields!

Parochial education remains strong within Southern Illinois. Over half our congregations either operate or belong to an association that has a daycare, preschool, K–8 elementary, or Lutheran high school connection. The district supports campus ministry at Southern Illinois University at both of their campuses in Carbondale and Edwardsville. Both campus ministries are known for their work with international students. Prison ministry continues despite various restrictions imposed by the pandemic.

The 2022 SID convention entered partnership with the Concordia the Reformer Seminary in the Dominican Republic. This seminary serves Latin America and the Caribbean with the training of pastors and deaconesses. We are excited to share in the training of workers to be pastors and deaconesses in their home countries that they may also proclaim the crucified and risen Savior.

We Preach Christ Crucified. By God’s grace, this is what we live and do in our modern culture of death. As the triune God blesses, may we never stray from this message!

Timothy J. Scharr, *President*

R54

Texas District

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. In order to accomplish this mission, the Texas District stewards its partnership of nearly 400 congregations and new missions and nearly 130 Lutheran schools to catalyze an exponential mission movement in the Texas District of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. Witness, Mercy, and Life Together are woven into the sharing of the Gospel as we join together to equip, send, and support church workers, church planters, educators, commissioned ministers, and lay evangelists to share the Good News of Jesus, to show His love, and to foster fellowship together.

2019 convention resolutions implemented in Texas have brought vibrant mission and ministry throughout the district:

Res. 1-01A: Encouraged the use of *Everyone His Witness* (EHW), participated in creating an EHW video segment on grief, and initiated lay evangelist training in order to encourage God’s people to engage in active witness.

- Res. 1-02:** Encouraged church planting in Texas, resulting in 27 new Word and Sacrament congregations 2019–2022.
- Res. 1-03:** Studied shared ministry models as circuit visitors.
- Res. 1-04:** Supported the continuing legacy of Dr. Rosa J. Young by equipping and sending missionaries to reach all people in Texas with the Gospel. Some 15 different languages are represented in congregations around the district on any given Sunday.
- Res. 1-05A:** Strengthened multi-ethnic outreach by providing resources for pastoral training and outreach for new ethnic missionaries and church planters in Texas.
- Res. 1-06A:** Supported marriage and families through systems of care, counseling, and coaching in Texas.
- Res. 1-07A:** Provided assistance and communication regarding child protection in Texas Lutheran schools.
- Res. 2-07:** Encouraged partnership of Texas District congregations in international mission in Mexico through the Board for International Mission. Secured several partners who are funding projects and participating in FOROs.
- Res. 3-01:** Partnered with LCMS Disaster Response to meet needs following floods, hurricanes, and shootings.
- Res. 3-04A:** Trained and deployed pastors and offered pastoral care for ones suffering from clinical depression and mental health issues—especially facing post-COVID-19 challenges.
- Res. 4-02:** Supported deaconess training for a cadre of Texas workers and called a deaconess to the Texas District staff.
- Res. 4-03A:** Utilized resources and sent representatives to Making Disciples for Life gatherings.
- Res. 4-05:** Celebrated the 175th anniversary of the LCMS with special communication.
- Res. 4-07:** Supported and evaluated RSOs throughout the Texas District, in cooperation with the LCMS RSO representatives.
- Res. 4-10:** Continued the celebration of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation by setting a goal to send 500 new servant leaders into 500 new communities with the Gospel by 2031, the 125th anniversary of the Texas District.
- Res. 4-11A:** Engaged in the study of close(d) Communion with circuit visitors who could then share in their circuits.
- Res. 6-01:** Encouraged Texas congregation support for and participation in the comprehensive church worker recruitment initiative, “Sent to Serve.”
- Res. 6-02:** Provided more than \$350,000 in financial aid to support residential and alternate route seminary students from Texas. Hosted an annual Texas barbecue at both seminaries to encourage Texas residential students.
- Res. 6-04:** Supported and encouraged continuing education for all LCMS pastors by publicizing available courses and providing scholarships where needed.
- Res. 6-07:** Encouraged participation in *Preach the Word* through pastoral conference and circuit gatherings.
- Res. 7-03:** Provided input from individuals, the district convention, and the district board of directors regarding the new governance plan for the Concordia University System.

Res. 7-08: Regularly visited with leadership and faculty of Concordia University Texas in order to aid in fostering the clear confession of the LCMS.

Res. 8-02: Invited Texas congregations that were not contributing to the LCMS missions to begin giving based on a 1.1.1 concept.

Res. 9-12: Clarified congregational parish representation locally and with the Synod.

Res. 11-01A: Cultivated Life Ministry action and awareness through district life coordinators and Lutherans For Life representatives.

Res. 11-04A: Utilized 2019 res. 11-04A, the 1994 CTCR document, and other conversations and resources to affirm the common humanity of all people and ethnicities.

Res. 11-05A: Supported responsible citizenship and compassion toward neighbors who are immigrants among us through ministry partnerships, congregational service, and mission outreach.

Res. 12-01A: Supported Lutheran schools in Texas with faculty development, encouragement, training, and new school development.

- Our prayer is that to the greatest possible degree, by God’s grace and through the power of the Holy Spirit, the Texas District, along with our brothers and sisters in our beloved Synod, 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

The apostle Peter “preached Christ crucified” in his epistle and applied this preaching directly to the daily life of the forgiven sinner: “For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in His steps. He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in His mouth. When He was reviled, He did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but continued entrusting Himself to Him who judges justly. He Himself bore our sins in His body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By His wounds you have been healed. For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Pastor and Bishop of your souls” (1 Peter 2:21–25). God grant us comfort for the wounds of our sins and courage for the confession we make in our homes, congregations, and communities!

The Wyoming District held its convention May 6–8, 2021, under the theme from Psalm 119:46: “Here I Stand before Kings and Princes.” Not only did we remember Luther’s great confession before Emperor Charles V at the Diet of Worms in April 1521 but we also recalled Christ’s present command that we confess Him in our homes, our churches, and our civil communities. The preaching and confession of Christ Crucified includes the whole counsel of God, His commandments and statutes, His promises and blessings. All is summed up and has its head and source in Christ the Crucified.

God has blessed the Wyoming District with riches beyond measure. Our congregations are robust in their worship life and teaching. They have God's rare and precious treasure of His Word purely preached and His Sacraments administered according to His command. Our pastors meet regularly in their Winkels for the study of Scriptures and the Confessions and for doctrinal application to their pastoral concerns and opportunities. Pastoral conferences and the pastors' biannual continuing education courses are rich in content and well attended.

District youth events (summer camp, regular regional gatherings, and annual district-wide events) are characterized by excellent catechesis, sound Lutheran worship from our hymnals, and lasting relationships among the youth. The district evangelism conference that is held annually continues to draw a large gathering for worship, excellent speakers, and opportunities for building strong bonds of love among attendees.

Our classical Lutheran schools have grown to six, with three of them presently offering high school. These schools are marked by daily chapel, rich biblical content, strong Lutheran culture, instruction in Latin, and the restoration of the best of the history, literature, culture, and wisdom of Western civilization. The district now also supports the growing number of our homeschools with an annual summer conference. The district encourages and promotes classical Lutheran education in the conviction that this education equips the next generation to read, hear, and understand the Holy Scriptures and transmits to them the riches of Christian knowledge, works, and virtues.

In 2020, in response to a growing call for a Lutheran alternative to other classical colleges, some pastors, laymen, and congregations of the LCMS joined together to establish Luther Classical College (LCC) on the campus of Mount Hope Lutheran Church in Casper, Wyoming. The college, which will admit its first class in 2025, will offer a general education core curriculum along with tracks for preseminary, teaching, and parish music. The vision statement of LCC reads, "Luther Classical College offers A.A. and B.A. programs in which students learn the truth of the Christian faith as professed in the Lutheran Confessions; are encouraged in genuine Lutheran culture; and are prepared for life in the home, the church, and the community—cherishing the Western corpus of literature, philosophy, music, art, scientific discovery, and Christian theology, and preserving the use of classical languages." See lutherclassical.org for more information. Although LCC is not formally associated with the Wyoming District, the district president will provide ecclesiastical oversight and the district congregations will enjoy the benefits of the college in their midst.

The Wyoming District supports a strong campus outreach to the University of Wyoming in Laramie. We have continued to provide a missionary to the Wind River Indian Reservation, though that ministry has been severely reduced because of government-imposed health restrictions on the reservation. Our district has also been blessed with strong leadership in our interaction with civil government and communities regarding natural law issues of marriage, life, family, and morality, as well as defending the freedom of Christians and churches to live according to God's Word.

The challenges the Wyoming District faces are not new, but they continue to grow. Many of our communities are declining and aging, and so also are the congregations that serve them. Nevertheless, the members of our congregations demonstrate their deep commitment to God's Word with their attendance in church, their love for their pastors and for one another, and their financial support to their

congregations and to the district. In our smaller parishes, pastoral compensation is burdened by the fact that health insurance now comprises a full third of the congregation's financial outlay to care for the pastor and his family. This matter will demand more of our attention in the coming years. As finances become tighter, more congregations are considering or preparing to join in multi-point parishes. Our pastors are committed to doing the extra driving and time commitments required to provide full pastoral care to all our congregations. We thank God for our faithful congregations and their faithful pastors!

The Wyoming District response to COVID-19 varied from congregation to congregation. Most of them returned to full, in-person worship by May 2020, and many of them not only weathered the crisis but grew and strengthened. District events were continued as previously scheduled by early June and were very well attended. We observed with amusement that our Wyoming and Nebraska Panhandle congregations—located in rural, small town, and frontier communities—had always observed social distancing. But in fact, many of our members found that they loved gathering together as Christ commanded for worship and for encouraging and building one another up (Heb. 10:23–25).

We observe with deep concern that civil government has intruded so deeply into the worship life of Christ's Church and into the homes which God Himself created through marriage. Our district response included a meeting with the Wyoming governor. In light of these events, we are preparing ourselves against future transgressions against church and home, and for the intensification of the persecution of Christian homes and churches, by studying God's Word together and by strengthening our lives together as the Body of Christ.

We recognize that under the moral evils of our day is the rejection of the one true God and of the preaching of Christ Crucified. But this is no time to be sad or to complain. It is a time of great opportunity for the Church and all her members. "But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you" (1 Peter 3:14–15). It is the time for great joy, the time to rejoice. Jesus Christ, who was crucified, is risen again! "But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed" (1 Peter 4:13). Thanks be to God!

John E. Hill, *President*

R56

International Lutheran Laymen's League (Lutheran Hour Ministries)

The International Lutheran Laymen's League/Lutheran Hour Ministries serves as a grassroots auxiliary of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and Lutheran Church—Canada and is proud to extend the mission and ministry of these two church bodies by focusing our energies on a mission of *Bringing Christ to the Nations®—and the Nations to the Church*. The International Lutheran Laymen's League (Int'l LLL) is the corporate name under which the organization does business; Lutheran Hour Ministries (LHM) is the public identity under which we conduct worldwide Gospel outreach. In fulfilling this year's convention theme of "We Preach Christ Crucified," LHM is a trusted resource in Gospel

proclamation with a global network of partners. We work in areas where other Christian organizations are often not present and use local staff and volunteers who know the language and culture to create contextually relevant programs that most effectively share the Good News with individuals living in these regions.

God's Blessings upon LHM's Outreach in the Past Triennium

As we build upon LHM's 105-plus-year history and move forward into the mission field, great opportunities abound.

- More than three billion people have yet to hear the saving message of Christ.
- Technology allows us to engage with each other more efficiently and effectively than any other time in history, especially as people crave a relationship with God and each other.
- We can use our gifts to make a real difference right where we are, among people we know and see every day. Our faith, put into action on a local level, can make an immediate and personal impact in our neighborhoods and beyond.

The following strategic priorities support our vision for the future and Christ's call to reach the world with the Gospel.

Impacting People Globally

As we navigate a shifting world culture, we know the saving message of Christ does not change, but the way we share it does. LHM continues to assess and adapt current ministry approaches while developing new ones as needed to allow hurting people around the world to find answers and relief in the Gospel.

A global pandemic like COVID-19 presented enhanced opportunities for staff in our more than 30 ministry centers to expand radio and television broadcasts as well as digital approaches instead of focusing on traditional in-person ministry activities. These changes were made to not only conform with government regulations concerning quarantine and social distancing within each country or region but to also keep staff members, volunteers, and individuals reached through ministry safe. At a time when individuals around the world, both Christian and non-Christian, needed to hear Christ's messages of hope and comfort more than ever, these modified approaches through our unique global ministry model allowed us to continue sharing the Gospel without interruption. **Locally produced broadcasts** on topics of interest attract a variety of audiences and invite viewers or listeners to contact the local ministry center to receive resources that address the topic from a Christian perspective. Respondents also have opportunities to take a Bible Correspondence Course and connect with a local Christian community.

LHM continues our partnership with **SAT-7**, the first and largest Middle East and North African Christian satellite TV network, to share Christ's love throughout the region through satellite television programming. Broadcasting in this region potentially reaches millions of viewers in more than 20 countries. In addition to the three seasons of the *New Light* talk show that discusses pertinent issues related to youth and young adults on SAT-7's Arabic channel, LHM has expanded our program support on the SAT-7 PARS channel to reach Persian-speaking individuals of all ages in Central and South Asia. We also initiated a partnership with the **PAK7** media ministry to support new television programming as well as the production of videos and social media content.

Holistic outreach is an effective way of demonstrating to people the love of Christ. These programs have a comprehensive impact in reaching both body and soul as a ministry to the unchurched in word and deed where both physical and spiritual needs are addressed. In African nations like Cameroon, Ghana, Kenya, and Liberia, our successful holistic programs continue to reach at-risk young adults, especially women, through medical camps, prison ministry, vocational training, and spiritual guidance and fellowship.

Impacting People through Digital Engagement

In today's digital age, people increasingly go online to learn, connect, and build relationships. The launch of **THRED®** in the United States several years ago served as LHM's first significant move into this digital mission field, and our successful extension of digital engagement into places like Latin America, the Middle East, North Africa, and Asia confirms our belief that we can successfully foster similar digital strategies in other areas of the world. As the digital mission field continues to grow, emerging technologies will offer unique opportunities to communicate with audiences in a broad variety of ways, with content that is specific to the individual platforms on which people are engaging. Our continued focus on digital engagement worldwide will rapidly increase the capacity for the priesthood of all believers to connect more and more souls to the saving message of Christ.

Vivenciar.net continues to be an instrumental platform for reaching Portuguese- and Spanish-speaking individuals worldwide, including an increased focus on connecting with Hispanics living in the United States. More people than ever are searching online for guidance on topics like stress, anxiety, depression, fear, guilt, toxic relationships, and other relevant issues. *Vivenciar.net* assists these individuals through live chats, blog posts, articles, e-books, and courses. It also offers a safe space where trained volunteers can listen to what people have to say about specific situations in their lives and accompany them in these moments with biblically based support and guidance.

Our new **CPTLN app** (*Cristo Para Todas Las Naciones*) continues a "by Hispanics for Hispanics" approach to connect with growing Hispanic audiences in the most culturally effective way. The app serves as a mobile hub for all LHM Spanish resources, including sermons, sermon notes, daily devotions, booklets, Bible studies, reflections, *Vivenciar.net*, a Bible app, and a chat function.

Our successful Online Mission Trip transitioned to a new program called **Gospel Adventures™** beginning in 2019. Following up on our *Passport to Peru*, *Go Mongolia*, *Thailand Trek*, and *Zambia Bound* adventures, the 2023 program is focused on the Asian nation of India. This interactive virtual experience includes a five-day curriculum, videos, theme music, hands-on activities, and more—all working together to provide participants with a deeper understanding of the work of the Gospel in their own lives and how God is at work in people's lives in another part of the world. More than 40,000 elementary and middle school students typically participate each year, but the experience offers something for people of all ages.

The Lutheran Hour® continues to expand its reach through digital means beyond traditional radio stations in North America. While it currently airs each week on more than 1,800 stations as well as the American Forces Network, the program is also available as a podcast and on new media platforms like Amazon Alexa, Spotify, iHeartRadio, Google Home, and Sirius XM satellite radio.

Impacting People Right Where They Are

God has called all of us to share His love to those around us, which is why LHM tirelessly equips believers to live out and share their faith with boldness in everyday life. In 2018, LHM embarked in an ongoing partnership with **Barna Group**—an industry leader for research-based insights about faith and culture, leadership and vocation, and generational groups—for a critical study of faith in America. The resulting research findings helped form an outreach philosophy to guide our initiatives and produce thoughtful products, programs, services, and curriculum that LHM provides to our constituents at low or no cost.

- Evangelism has changed in the past 25 years. Technology and rapid cultural shifts, including the impact of social media, have redefined the ways we communicate. *Spiritual Conversations in the Digital Age* focuses on this shifting definition of evangelism and the perceptions of faith sharing from both sides of the conversation: the sharer and the hearer.
- Barna studies have revealed much about the state of religion and how faith is perceived and discussed in public. But what about how faith is being nurtured in private—with the spouses, children, parents, roommates, and even frequent visitors who spend time under our roofs? *Households of Faith* presents a vivid portrait of the domestic lives of practicing Christians.
- *Better Together* helped us learn more about the types of people who are taking initiative in their communities—those who gather, donate, serve, create, teach, mobilize, and innovate, alongside other passionate neighbors, to meet needs around them. Drawing from insights learned during this research, LHM established **The Hopeful Neighborhood Project™** in 2021 as a collaborative network committed to improving neighborhood well-being around the world. The resources and online network equip and encourage neighbors to work together, using their gifts and the gifts of their community, to pursue the common good of their neighborhood.
- Encouraging people to explore, strengthen, and share their gifts is a deeply spiritual endeavor—one that churches and faith leaders are primed to support. Yet Barna research suggests that pastors and the congregations they lead often have a narrow understanding of what gifts look like, how they grow, and where they can be used. *Gifted for More* provides crucial information to help today's church flourish and grow and help Christians understand and use their gifts well—inside and outside of church walls.

God has called all laypeople to be powerful witnesses for Christ with their families and communities. LHM continues to produce timely resources that offer convenient ways for people to connect with Jesus and share their faith with others. From the popular **Project Connect** booklet ministry with more than 50 titles to dozens of online **LHM Learn** courses under five faith-strengthening categories, and from **Daily** and **Seasonal Devotions** to online **video Bible studies**, LHM has numerous offerings to connect with people at any stage of their individual faith journeys.

The Results of God's Blessings

- By God's grace, LHM's programs and resources reach people around the world with the Gospel more than 163 million times each week.
- Outreach through LHM's global ministry programs has, by the power of the Holy Spirit, netted more than 1.25 million responses and nearly 120,000 individuals referred to churches and Christian communities this past year.
- More than 50,000 people participated for the first time in Bible Correspondence Courses last year that introduced them to Jesus and biblical principles of our faith.
- Individuals were equipped to share their faith more effectively more than 180,000 times last year.
- More than 225,000 constituents are currently engaged with our global ministry efforts through giving, volunteering, or using our resources.

Vision for the Future

Today, it is more important than ever to reach out in relevant ways to a broken world with Christ's message of hope. With billions of people still unreached with the Gospel message, our work is not done. LHM has established a bold vision to share the Good News worldwide; therefore, we will not rest until

- every person has the opportunity to hear the Gospel in an understandable way;
- those seeking are connected to a healthy Christian community where they can grow in their faith;
- every Christian is equipped to share the Gospel in word and deed; and
- engaged Christians advance this common mission as a global community.

We are called to act now! The Lord has given our ministry a unique understanding of how to reach, equip, and minister to individuals. Not only do LHM's tools and resources help grow and nurture faithful Christians by the power of the Holy Spirit, but also they allow us to share the Gospel message with individuals who have had little or no opportunity to hear it. They bring messages of forgiveness, love, and hope found only in Jesus Christ to a world that is hungry for the one thing that is sorely needed.

On behalf of all of us at LHM, thank you for your service. May God richly bless your work in the name and for the sake of Jesus!

Kurt S. Buchholz, *President & CEO*

R57

Lutheran Women's Missionary League

The Lutheran Women's Missionary League (LWML), also known as Lutheran Women in Mission, is an official auxiliary of the LCMS. We joyfully proclaim Christ, support missions, and equip women to honor God by serving others.

The LWML has met and exceeded its mission goal for both the 2019–2021 (\$2.1 million) and the 2021–2023 (\$2.15 million) biennia. By the grace of God, we have funded 49 mission grants on the national level and many more in each of the 40 LWML districts in the past four years. Lutheran Women in Mission across the country

support mission organizations in prayer, with needed funds, and in selfless volunteer service.

With great joy, 90 percent of LWML's mission goal now goes to fund mission grants. This increase of 20 percent was approved by the LWML board of directors in 2019. We trust our Father to continue to provide for the work accomplished in His name.

LWML holds to these core values:

- We are Christian women who live as redeemed children of the triune God.
- We are in God's Word and live in joyful response to the promises found in the Holy Scriptures.
- We are mission-focused, and we answer God's call to share His Gospel at home and abroad.
- We are sisters in Christ who value and benefit from each other.
- We are servant leaders, called and equipped by God to serve others.

LWML has developed a vast selection of doctrinally reviewed resources and programs to support our women and our church workers as they serve the Lord. Most resources are free to download and can be found on the LWML website at lwml.org.

The 39th biennial LWML convention was held in Lexington, Kentucky, in June 2021, with all COVID-19 precautions in place. The 40th biennial LWML convention will be held in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, in June 2023. Both were/are expected to be well attended. The business of our organization and the inspiration of Bible studies and mission speakers are always interspersed with fellowship and service projects.

The LWML has led sessions at the LCMS "Making Disciples for Life" conferences and continues to participate in programs that encourage and equip our members to boldly serve God.

Lutheran Women in Mission serve, give, pray, and meet together in response to His mercy and grace. The message of the cross, referenced in 1 Corinthians 1:18, is the power of God in His children. We give—we love—because He first loved us.

LWML will, by God's grace, continue to focus on our Savior and proclaim His love, support His mission, and equip His children to serve joyfully.

Debbie K. Larson, *President*

R58

2019 Res. 1-02 Report: Stories of New Mission Plants (ONM, Districts)

The fifth *resolved* of LCMS 2019 Convention Resolution 1-02 called for "the ONM [Office of National Mission], in partnership with the districts, [to] issue a report telling the stories of new mission plants prior to the 2022 Synod convention." As part of a larger Church Planting Initiative launched in 2022, the ONM has been conducting research into the history of church planting in the LCMS from the early 1900s until the present. This research has provided a great deal of information on church planting practices and church planting results during the past 100+ years.

In addition to researching church planting through data provided by LCMS Rosters and Statistics and the Concordia Historical

Society, the ONM conducted interviews with a number of district presidents, mission executives, and church planters to gather insights into the challenges, successes, and failures of contemporary church planting.

A synopsis of the data collected through this research and the findings resulting from the research will be published by the ONM in summer 2023 prior to the Synod convention in the first of a series of monographs on church planting history and practice. One of the planned monographs will pay special attention to church planting activities since 2000. The monographs will also feature the stories of new mission starts presented as case studies. These case studies will serve as examples of best practices in church planting and also provide lessons learned from church plants that were unsuccessful.

Mark A. Wood, *Managing Director*

R59

2019 Res. 1-03 Report: Shared Ministry Strategies for Small Congregations (ONM, COP)

The third and fourth *resolves* of LCMS 2019 Convention Resolution 1-03 directed "the Office of National Mission (ONM), in collaboration with the Council of Presidents (COP), to study the critical issues that threaten the sustainability of small congregations" and called for "ONM, in collaboration with the COP, [to] prepare a report to the 2022 convention that includes recommendations to assist small congregations in developing strategies related to shared ministry."

The study of the critical issues that threatened the sustainability of congregations is an ongoing work of ONM, especially through its Revitalization Initiative and Rural and Small Town Mission (RSTM) program unit.

A. Revitalization Resources

Resources developed by ONM that address issues of revitalization are available to LCMS congregations at no cost. These resources, which form the suite of resources with the title *re: Vitality*, include a self-assessment tool called CADDs (Congregational Assessment of Development/Decline Status). CADDs provides a benchmark for congregations in terms of their current development/decline status and guidance for addressing factors that are having a negative impact on vitality and viability.

Training modules that aim to equip congregation leaders and members to address the factors identified by the CADDs assessment include the following:

- Connect to Disciple: Engaging the Nonchurched People in Our Community (Outreach)
- Serving in God's Mission: Strategic Planning for Congregations
- Shepherding Our Strays: Actively Serving Our Inactive Members
- Members of One Body: Prospering in the Body of Christ (Assimilation and Incorporation)
- Beyond the Classroom: Outreach through Lutheran Schools

B. Partnership Resources

A collaborative effort between ONM and several districts, especially the Kansas District, produced resources for small congregations considering partnerships and mergers. These resources are available at no cost to LCMS congregations. They include the following:

- Bible studies
- Gathered Wisdom (Pros and Cons, Considerations, Partnership Models)
- Ministry Agreements (Items to Address, Formalizing the Agreement, Sample Agreement)

Mark A. Wood, *Managing Director*

R60

2019 Res. 6-02, 6-03A, and 6-04 Report: Evaluation of 2016 Res. 13-03 Task Force; SMP Program Review / Joint BOD Overture re: SMP Vicarage Timing; Certification of Post-Seminary Continuing Education Programs and Resources (Pastoral Formation Committee)

A. Pastoral Formation Committee

The roles and responsibilities of the Synod's Pastoral Formation Committee (PFC) are outlined in Bylaw 3.10.4. The PFC is comprised of three voting members: the Chief Mission Officer of the Synod (Rev. Kevin Robson), who serves as chair, and the presidents of the Synod's two seminaries (Rev. Dr. Thomas Egger and Rev. Dr. Lawrence Rast). The executive director of the LCMS Office of Pastoral Education (Rev. Dr. James Baneck) serves as the PFC's nonvoting advisory member. [1]

B. The LCMS Is Committed to a Well-Formed, Highly Educated Clergy

A robust program of preparatory and continuing education is integral to the effective formation of future pastors (Matt. 5:2; Luke 24:44–49; 1 Tim. 4:6–16; 2 Tim. 3:10–4:5; Titus 1:9), as well as for those who continue in service to the church in the Office of the Holy Ministry (OHM). On the surface, it may seem simple to forgive sin, teach the faith, baptize, and distribute the body and blood of Christ. However, these things are not mere functions to be carried out in a formulaic fashion; they are the very handling, application, and delivery of the holy things of God for the eternal salvation of souls, of which pastors are stewards (1 Cor. 4:1) and held accountable to God (Heb. 13:17). Men training for service in the OHM are taught to interpret the Word of God, preach and teach God's Word, and apply God's Word to the myriad conditions of the individual members of the flock to which the Lord has sent them by His divine call. Handling and applying God's eternal Word in Law and Gospel rightly distinguished is an awesome responsibility that is exercised in humility and wisdom. For instance, who rightly receives the Sacrament? How does one give pastoral care to a broken marriage? How does a faithful pastor apply God's Word

to issues of sexual identity? How does one minister God's Word to a person suffering crisis or grief? A pastor constantly draws on his formation—having learned and continuing to learn the Scriptures, doctrine, church history, the arts of preaching and teaching, pastoral care and practice, and the liturgical life of the church.

Pastoral formation in the LCMS comes from an entire body of believers that accepts without reservation the Holy Scriptures and the Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church. Pastoral formation in the LCMS comes from the church that will “conserve and promote the unity of the true faith . . . , work through its official structure toward fellowship with other Christian church bodies, and provide a united defense against schism, sectarianism . . . , and heresy” (Constitution Article III 1). Pastoral formation in the LCMS is undertaken by an assembly of sinner-saints who “join with one another in the Synod to support one another and to work together in carrying out their commonly adopted objectives” (Bylaw 1.1.1). Pastoral formation in the LCMS comes from those who have made a solemn covenant in love, that they “agree to uphold the confessional position of the Synod (Const. Art. II) and to assist in carrying out the objectives of the Synod (Const. Art. III), which are the objectives of the members themselves. While congregations of the Synod are self-governing (Const. 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 authority to adopt or amend through conventions” (Bylaw 1.3.4.1). [2]

C. 2019 Assignments to the Pastoral Formation Committee

The 67th Regular Convention of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, in July 2019 (Tampa, Florida), adopted the following resolutions, which assigned certain tasks to the Synod's Pastoral Formation Committee.

C.1. 2019 Resolution 6-02

“To Promote Residential Seminary Education as the Preferred Option for the Preparation of Men for Pastoral Ministry.” Its final *Resolved* reads: “That the recommendations of the 2016 Res. 13-03 Task Force be commended to the Pastoral Formation Committee for evaluation and appropriate follow up. The PFC will report their evaluation to the 2022 convention.” The 2016 Res. 13-03 Task Force's twelve recommendations included review, evaluation, and recommendations with respect to the vitality and use of the seminaries, accreditation, and fully financially supported seminary education for students. These topics are routinely addressed as a matter of the ongoing strategic and operational considerations at each seminary and are summarized in the seminaries' respective institutional reports (located elsewhere in this convention workbook), which address matters pertaining to pastoral formation, strategic planning, financial matters, and analysis and assessment of the Synod's various routes to ministry. Many of these topics have also been addressed by the PFC over the course of the last quadrennium. [3] The PFC here specifically highlights the following:

C.1.a. Vitality

Concordia Seminary, St. Louis (CSL), and Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne (CTSF), are both world-renowned seminaries and leaders in confessional Lutheran theology. These two seminaries are academically and financially sound institutions of pastoral, deaconess, and continuing-education formation. Col-

laborating with the Synod's *Set Apart to Serve* church work recruitment initiative, the LCMS Office of Pastoral Education and the two seminaries are exploring new ways to create a culture of recruitment for future pastors and other church workers in the LCMS.

C.1.b. Mutuality in the Relationship of Synod and Seminaries

The Synod supports its seminaries through disbursements of funds from corporate Synod to each seminary. (The term “corporate Synod” refers to the nonprofit legal entity headquartered at the LCMS International Center in St. Louis and incorporated in the state of Missouri.) Direct subsidies from corporate Synod and Forward in Remembrance earnings, combined with collaborative advancement efforts such as the Joint Seminary Fund and the Global Seminary Initiative, result in substantial support for the seminaries each year. At the same time, the seminaries support Synod through a substantial commitment of human resources in the implementation of various mission and ministry programs and initiatives, both domestic and international. The result is a strong, healthy, and mutually supportive relationship.

C.1.c. Alignment of Synod and Seminary Strategic Plans

In 2019, the Synod in convention again affirmed its seven mission priorities, the second of which speaks directly to the relationship of Synod and seminaries: “Support and expand theological education.”

The primary responsibility of the two seminaries is to supply the LCMS with faithful, well-formed pastors. Bylaws 3.10.5 and 3.10.5.1 state that “each seminary of the Synod, with its president and faculty, shall be governed by a board of regents, subject to general policies set by the Synod. . . . The board of regents of each theological seminary shall consider as one of its primary duties the defining and fulfilling of the mission of the seminary within the broad assignment of the Synod.” Within this framework, both seminaries have established strategic plans that pertain to the mission, vision, and core values of each institution.

C.1.d. Confessional Alignment

While the Synod and seminaries each have their own unique goals, emphases, and strategic plans, collaborative alignment exists between the three in our life together as Synod. As “agencies” (Bylaw 1.2.1 [a][1]) of Synod, the seminaries accept without reservation the Holy Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions (Const. Art. II). As a foundation of the seminaries’ plans, Synod’s confessional standard is reflected in the mission, vision, and core value statements of both seminaries. The strategic documents for CSL use the following language: “faithfulness to the Scriptures and Lutheran Confessions” and “to be faithfully Lutheran.” The documents for CTSFW use this language: “distinctively Lutheran teaching, practice, and worship.”

C.1.e. Recruitment and Training Alignment

Since the formation of the Synod in 1847, a primary purpose and priority of the LCMS has been “to support the establishment and maintenance of theological seminaries, colleges, universities, and other institutions of learning to train ministers of religion—ordained, ministers of religion—commissioned, and laity for service in the Evangelical Lutheran Church” (Articles of Incorporation, Article II d). Training pastors for the church continues to be of highest priority to the LCMS to this day.

One of the ten objectives of the Synod (Const. Art. III 3) is to recruit and train pastors and other professional church workers. Both seminaries are actively recruiting students for pastoral and deaconess ministry.

The Synod has resolved (2019 Res. 6-01) to support and participate in a comprehensive multiyear church worker recruitment initiative. Currently, the Synod, seminaries, and other Synod stakeholders are collaboratively aligned around this effort: *Set Apart to Serve* LCMS church worker recruitment. A full update on *Set Apart to Serve* is contained in the LCMS Office of Pastoral Education report (a subsection within the report of the LCMS Chief Mission Officer) in this convention workbook.

C.2. 2019 Resolution 6-03A

“To Enhance the Specific Ministry Pastor (SMP) Program.” Res. 6-03A’s second and fifth *Resolves* are of particular importance for this PFC report:

- “That the PFC work to enhance the curriculum and standards of the SMP program between the two seminaries, in light of the curriculum and standards of the residential seminaries, including instruction in biblical languages.”
- “That the Council of Presidents in coordination with the PFC draft guidelines and training to enhance the mentoring and supervision of specific ministry pastors, taking into account the wide variety of abilities of pastors and the contexts in which they serve, to assist district presidents, circuit visitors, and supervising pastors in supporting the SMP pastors under their care.”

C.2.a. Routes to Ordained (Pastoral) Ministry

Currently, there are seven Synod-authorized routes for men to serve in the OHM (that is, the pastoral office) as a rostered individual member of the LCMS under the category of “minister of religion—ordained.” For a complete description of each route, see **Appendix, “The Synod’s Routes to Ordained (Pastoral) Ministry.”**

The *residential* routes to ordination in the LCMS:

1. Master of Divinity (MDiv) at CSL and CTSFW
2. Residential Alternate Route (RAR) at CSL and CTSFW
3. General Pastor Certificate (GPC) at CSL, an option available to men who have completed the SMP program. (GPC is an extension of the SMP path. This can be completed as a residential route in two years or as a nonresidential program in four years.)

The *nonresidential* routes to ordination in the LCMS:

4. Specific Ministry Pastor (SMP) at CSL and CTSFW (CTSFW SMP EsE)
5. Ethnic Immigrant Institute of Theology (EIIT) at CSL
6. Center for Hispanic Studies (CHS) at CSL
7. Cross-Cultural Ministry Center (CMC) at Concordia University, Irvine, California, under the authorization of the CSL board of regents, using defined working roles, responsibilities, and protocols with CSL

A final route to ordained (pastoral) ministry in the LCMS:

8. Completion of an approved colloquy program (2019 Bylaws 2.7.2; 2.7.5).

Because the Synod's approved colloquy programs and related procedures and protocols do not pertain to the assignments given to the PFC, they are not specifically addressed in the PFC's current report and/or recommendations.

C.2.b. Qualification for First Call

"The Office of the Holy Ministry has been instituted by Christ Himself as a gift to His Church (John 20:19–23; Eph. 4:11–16). Through the Christian congregation, as the holder of all churchly authority, God calls qualified men to fill this divinely established office and sends them as His ministers to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ and to administer the Sacraments publicly in the stead of Christ and by His command, with accountability both to God and to the Church (Matt. 10:1–5; 28:18–20; Rom. 10:14–15; 1 Cor. 11:23–25; 1 Tim. 2:1–12)" (*LSB Agenda*, Holy Ministry, 155).

God instituted the OHM to forgive sins in the stead and by the command of our Lord Christ Jesus (John 20:21–23; Luke 24:45–47). Forgiveness of sin is given through the preaching and teaching of the Word, Holy Baptism, and the Lord's Supper. Publicly granting forgiveness in the Absolution (or withholding such forgiveness) is a great responsibility, properly wielded with diligently applied skill and care, because it pertains to the eternal salvation of God's people. With this responsibility necessarily comes the ability to correctly interpret God's Word, rightly apply Law and Gospel, exercise precision and love in orthodox doctrine, preach and teach in a sound manner, and consistently apply steadfast, faithful pastoral care. Because of this great responsibility in the stewardship of these holy gifts of God, the church strives to fully prepare and form her pastors with the best of her God-given strengths, capacities, and resources.

Through the preaching of the Word, the Holy Spirit creates saving faith and gives eternal salvation to His people (Rom. 10:14–17). Therefore, the LCMS collectively prescribes and maintains the standards by which a man is certified and called into the Holy Ministry according to the Holy Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions (AC V, XIV). Men receiving their first call into the Holy Ministry in the LCMS must satisfactorily complete a prescribed course of study within one of the Synod-authorized routes and both be declared qualified for a first call and recommended by the faculty of either CSL or CTSFW. They will have thus received a diploma or certificate from either CSL or CTSFW (or have fulfilled the requirements established by the colloquy committee of the Synod). The seminary faculties (or the colloquy committee) must declare each candidate qualified and recommended for pastoral ministry in the church (Bylaw 2.8.1–2.8.2). In our life together, all Synod members have agreed that every one of our rostered ordained ministers be formally certified for pastoral ministry, either by one of the Synod's two seminaries or the Synod's colloquy committee.

According to Bylaw 4.1.1, "The Synod 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," and Bylaw 4.1.1.1, "A district is the Synod itself performing the functions of the Synod. Resolutions of the Synod are binding upon the districts." It is inconsistent with the LCMS Constitution and Bylaws for an LCMS district to develop and/or promote new or amended routes to ministry apart from the procedures and approvals to which the Synod—in its bylaws, policies, and resolutions—has previously committed itself. The theological faculties of the Synod's universities and seminaries are intentionally and painstakingly vetted through a well-defined, nonoptional prior approval process (Bylaws 3.10.5.7.3 and 3.10.6.7.3). Districts offering *their*

own programs to prepare future professional church workers for service are not reflecting the mutual covenants established in the Synod's bylaws, policies, and prior resolutions. For instance, in situations such as these:

- Individuals are trained at the district level to carry out the distinctive functions of the OHM (whether ordained or not ordained) without having LCMS rostered ordained minister status, or as a preparatory step to being granted LCMS rostered ordained minister status.
- District-level training uses platforms and preparation programs not previously reviewed or approved under established Synod procedures.
- District-level training uses theological instructors who have not gone through the aforementioned prior approval process.

Life together as Synod suffers under such scenarios.

More specifically to the assignments given to the PFC and addressed in this report, districts developing and offering pastoral formation programs positioned as alternatives to Synod-authorized routes to the OHM are acting contrary to Bylaws 3.10.4–3.10.4.5 and the roles, responsibilities, and oversight of the PFC as defined therein. Bylaws 3.10.4–3.10.4.5 give the PFC the responsibility to review, assess, coordinate, support, make suggestions for improvement, and monitor all routes to ordained ministry in the LCMS, except for colloquy. (LCMS colloquy programs, including attendant policies, procedures, and protocols, are under the supervision of the office of the first vice-president of Synod.) Any new or amended routes to ordination in the Synod must first be reviewed and recommended by the PFC, followed by the PFC's consultation with the two seminary boards of regents. Before any new or amended route is enacted, it must then receive final approval by a convention resolution of Synod.

C.2.c. Route to Ordination as a Specific Ministry Pastor

Many of the assignments given to the PFC and addressed in this report are in consideration of various aspects of the Synod's SMP program.

The route to ordination as a specific ministry pastor was established by the Synod in convention upon its adoption of 2007 Res. 5-01B. In broad contrast to a "general ministry pastor" (GMP), the SMP was designated for men to be formed and educated for a specific ministry context through nonresidential (distance) education. SMP was designed to "combine a commitment to faithfulness to a Lutheran theological confession with a missionary perspective and that is tailored to the preparation of men for service in *specific kinds* of ministries." This resolution also states, "In addition to the original objective of the Distance Education Leading To Ordination (DELTO) program to provide pastoral ministry where full-time ministry cannot be maintained, such specific ministries will include such categories as church planter, staff pastor, and others as need arise."

Thus, in 2007, the SMP program was created with an expanded purpose beyond the former DELTO program. The use of SMP for purposes beyond the former DELTO purposes has subsequently raised significant concern and debate because of the limited scope of SMP formation. The 2013 Res. 5-04B requested the SMP Committee to assess the program and make recommendations, noted the concerns and debate, and resolved, "That district presidents not approve specific ministry sites that could reasonably be expected

to support a general [ministry] pastor or sites where a minister of religion—commissioned could fulfill the duties *pending reception of the recommendations of the SMP Committee.*” The 2019 convention assignments to the PFC Committee and this PFC report stand as further elaborations of this effort to come to grips with the strengths, weaknesses, and best use of SMP within the LCMS. The PFC continues to study, review, and seek conversation with the seminaries and the broader church regarding the SMP program and will make further recommendations accordingly.

Questions were raised by 2019 Res. 6-03 regarding certain aspects of the SMP route to ordination. It directed the PFC to address these questions and to make recommendations concerning them. The PFC here notes that it might be said that every route to ordination in the LCMS was designed and approved to meet a specific mission and ministry need. Yet, more narrowly speaking, “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” (Bylaw 2.13.1; emphasis added).

A specific ministry pastor remains under supervision throughout the entire course of his ministry. Because he remains under supervision and because he “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” (Bylaw 2.13.1[a]). Therefore, an SMP is not eligible to serve as a voting delegate to a national convention of the Synod, hold any elected or appointed office on the district or national level, supervise vicars or other pastors, or serve as a circuit visitor (Bylaw 2.13.1[b]).

By way of comparison in educational-course content, the CSL Master of Divinity (MDiv) curriculum is comprised of a total 98 semester hours. The CSL SMP curriculum stands at 32 credit hours (or 16 courses). The CSL SMP curriculum is comprised of 8 exegetical (English, not biblical language) credit hours, 2 historical credit hours, 12 practical credit hours, and 10 systematics credit hours. The CTSFW MDiv curriculum stands at 123 quarter hours. The CTSFW SMP curriculum stands at 48 quarter hours (or 16 courses). The CTSFW SMP curriculum includes 15 exegetical (English, not biblical language) quarter hours, 3 historical quarter hours, 15 practical quarter hours, and 15 systematics quarter hours. Each of the 16 courses in the CSL and CTSFW SMP programs is taught at a master’s degree level. Students receive grades and a transcript as in the seminaries’ other pastoral formation programs. This enables CSL and CTSFW to transfer SMP credits into their respective MDiv, GPC, or AR programs should an SMP student or SMP pastor desire to undertake additional education in order to achieve general pastor status.

SMP courses are taught mainly online, with a one-week required on-campus intensive experience each year. During the course of the SMP student’s studies, the student is supervised/mentored by a local LCMS pastor who is reviewed and approved by the seminary based upon the district president’s selection and recommendation. This supervisor/mentor is a rostered minister of religion—ordained

member of the LCMS, a general ministry pastor who ordinarily holds an MDiv degree or its equivalent.

SMP vicarage begins concurrently with the initiation of coursework at the seminary. When the SMP student successfully completes his eighth course, at the conclusion of his second year of studies, the student may be certified by the faculty for first call, and the first call and assignment process begins with the calling congregation, culminating in the assignment of first call by the LCMS Council of Presidents. When the SMP student successfully completes his ninth course (at the beginning of his third year of studies), ordination may be authorized. The student is then expected to complete a remaining seven SMP courses following ordination. When the SMP student completes the required total 16 courses, he receives a Certificate of Completion from the seminary.

As of January 2023, a cumulative total of 481 SMPs have been ordained since 2010 (first SMP cohorts having commenced studies in 2008), with distribution among the Synod’s 35 districts as follows:

- Michigan (56)
- Texas (47)
- Pacific Southwest (36)
- Southeastern (31)
- Northern Illinois (26)
- Florida-Georgia (24)
- Rocky Mountain (24)
- Northwest (23)
- California-Nevada-Hawaii (17)
- Missouri (16)
- Minnesota South (14)
- Ohio (14)
- South Wisconsin (14)
- English (13)
- Indiana (13)
- SELC (13)
- Atlantic (12)
- Southern (12)
- Eastern (11)
- Nebraska (10)
- Mid-South (8)
- North Wisconsin (8)
- Kansas (7)
- Iowa West (6)
- New England (5)
- New Jersey (5)
- South Dakota (4)
- Oklahoma (4)
- Minnesota North (3)
- Montana (2)
- Iowa East (2)

- Central Illinois (1)
- Southern Illinois (0)
- North Dakota (0)
- Wyoming (0)

Twelve of the 35 LCMS districts currently have 10 percent or more of their pastors rostered as SMP:

- SELC (19%)
- Southeastern (15%)
- Michigan (13%)
- Atlantic (12%)
- Eastern (12%)
- Florida-Georgia (12%)
- California-Nevada-Hawaii (11%)
- Northwestern (11%)
- Rocky Mountain (11%)
- New England (10%)
- Pacific Southwest (10%)
- Texas (10%)

There are currently 382 active SMPs in the LCMS, which is 7 percent of the total number of active ordained (5,653). Of those 382 active SMPs, 70 (18 percent) have had their first call end and then taken another “pastoral” call.

Table 1 summarizes the number of SMP students who either started or completed the SMP program and subsequently enrolled in or completed a route to LCMS general ministry pastor roster status.

Table 1: SMP to General Ministry Pastor Status

Seminary/Status	Academic Years	Completed Residential Alternate Route	Completed Distance Alternate Route	Completed General Pastor Certificate (CSL Online Alternate Route Program)	Completed Residential Master of Divinity
Concordia Seminary, St. Louis					
Completed SMP	2012–22	2		12	3
Started SMP	2012–22				2
Completed SMP	Currently enrolled			10	1
Started SMP	Currently enrolled				1
Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne					
Completed SMP	2012–22	3			
Started SMP	2012–22				
Completed SMP	Currently enrolled		2		1
Started SMP	Currently enrolled				1
TOTALS					
SMP to General Pastor Status		5	2	22	9

C.2.d. PFC Process to Address 2019 Res. 6-03A Assignment

In fulfillment of the PFC’s aforementioned assignments, the PFC reviewed each current route to ordination in the LCMS, including its intended purpose, curriculum, and various data with respect to enrollment trends and outcomes. Input was requested and received on several occasions from (1) the Joint Seminary Advisory Committee, which includes representatives from the Boards of Regents of both seminaries, (2) the LCMS Council of Presidents,

(3) program directors from both seminaries for each route to ordination, and (4) the faculties of both seminaries in conversation with the seminaries’ administrative leadership.

C.2.e. Observations

1. Over the course of the Synod’s history, the LCMS has continually developed and refined its residential and nonresidential routes to ordination in order to address the needs of the church as they have arisen and dynamically changed through time. At any given point in time, it is incumbent upon the Synod in her life together fully to utilize each route to accomplish that route’s intended outcome(s), as mutually agreed and communicated (with intention toward clarity) in the Synod’s Bylaws, policies, and protocols. Where clarity of any route’s intended outcome(s) is lacking, the PFC should take corrective measures toward resolving such ambiguity.
2. The Synod’s nonresidential pastoral formation programs are aimed at limited specific contexts and intended outcome(s). They are not intended to become “easier” paths to eventually achieving general ministry pastor roster status.
3. The Synod developed its residential and nonresidential routes to ordination prayerfully and carefully. The Synod continually assesses and evaluates each route for possible improvements. These reviews periodically result in recommended curriculum adjustments and revisions made by the seminaries’ faculties. The standard for such adjustments and revisions continues to be fidelity to the Synod’s confessional standard (Const. Art. II), a commitment to thoroughly form students for a high degree of excellence in service to God’s people from the Office of the Holy Ministry, in the context of church and world and for the conveyance of the faith to the generations of God’s saints. [4]

C.2.f. Conclusions

1. The PFC and seminaries maintain that there is great value in residential formation and continue to encourage all prospective students considering preparation for the pastoral office to enroll in full-time theological study and pastoral formation in community at our seminaries. The benefits of residential formation include being formed by a daily liturgical life of the Word, living and learning within an incarnational

face-to-face relational culture, immediate access to professors and peers, and personal investment in the continued fostering of a Synod culture that extends far beyond limited years in direct seminary studies.

2. The PFC and seminaries affirm the proposition that “the most complete means of preparing a man for the general responsibilities of the pastoral office and a lifetime of service is the residential master of divinity route at the Synod’s seminaries” (2013 Res. 5-14A Task Force and 2016 Res. 6-03). And furthermore, “that residential seminary education is the preferred option for the preparation of men for pastoral ministry” (2019 Res. 6-02).
3. The PFC intends to pursue further study, evaluation, and where appropriate, action with respect to the formation of the Synod’s pastors. In the establishment of the Specific Ministry Pastor program, 2007 Res. 5-01B states, “[The] theological education [of an SMP] is formed within the context of their specific ministry and does not represent the breadth and depth of theology and ecclesiology that forms a basis for pastoral oversight beyond the local level.” Also, the SMP “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” (Bylaw 2.13.1). In view of these statements and in consideration of the wider scope of the universal church, the PFC intends to explore the following concepts:
 - a. Means to assist congregations in overcoming the financial barriers that prohibit them from supporting pastoral candidates from within their congregation to complete a residential MDiv degree.
 - b. Means to call associate MDiv pastors who are equipped with a “breadth and depth of theology and ecclesiology” (2007 Res. 5-01B).
 - c. Benefits of preparing men not only for one limited place or context but also for a lifetime of ministry in which God may call them to new places and contexts.
 - d. Ways to foster an appreciation for the formative benefits of a pastoral ministry student stepping away from a current local life context, studying at a residential seminary, heeding the call to go and serve, relocating when God extends a divine call, and serving within the wider context of church and Synod.
 - e. Pros and cons of determining a minimum age requirement for the SMP program, while encouraging young men to pursue an MDiv, considering the many years that they might serve in the pastoral ministry without any restrictions.

C.2.g. Recommendations

1. The PFC recommends that the Synod explore, develop, and implement means to encourage and assist men of every ethnicity toward residential formation through the MDiv program.
2. The PFC recommends that the Synod direct it to prepare a report to the 2026 Synod convention that evaluates and makes recommendations pertaining to non-LCMS seminary, district, and local congregational programs of ministerial formation that have surfaced within the LCMS in recent years.

This evaluation should also include a thorough assessment of the benefits of residential (in-person) pastoral formation over against nonresidential (distance learning) methods of training those who carry out the distinctive functions of the Office of the Holy Ministry.

3. The PFC recommends continuation of the guaranteed tuition support for the residential MDiv program offered by the seminaries that began in the 2018–2019 academic year.
4. The PFC recommends that the SMP route be understood and positioned as the “exception” and not become the “principal rule” with respect to the Synod’s available routes for the preparation and ordination of her pastors. The residential MDiv route should continue to be positioned and understood as the Synod’s strongly preferred route to ordination, supplying LCMS congregations with men who are rostered as general ministry pastors, men who are formally and thoroughly equipped under the MDiv route of in-depth foundational seminary formation in exegetical acumen with biblical languages, systematic theology and apologetics, historical knowledge, and extensive pastoral and practical training and experience from a consortium of approved expert faculty and theologians. The SMP route, with its less-rigorous program of pastoral formation, was conceived and accordingly designed and authorized by the Synod in convention to address exceptional, tightly defined individual contexts in which a called and ordained pastor is urgently needed in order to establish, maintain, and/or strengthen the church’s mission and ministry, while also allowing that in many instances it is not practically feasible for a congregation to call, install (with ordination in the case of candidates recently graduated from seminary), and adequately provide support (compensation, benefits, housing, etc.) for a general ministry pastor to carry out the duties of the Office of the Holy Ministry in certain circumstances. A closely related (even overlapping) causal factor driving the creation of the SMP route was the Synod’s desire to be responsive to dynamically emerging congregational mission opportunities in the U.S. Acknowledging all of the foregoing, the Synod, in view of its commitment to and appreciation of a thoroughgoing program of pastoral formation, intentionally specified that every SMP pastor, even while serving in such exceptional, tightly defined individual contexts, is to work under the permanent, direct supervision of a general ministry pastor and thus is never to carry out his duties in the pastoral office in an independent manner. Men who are formed, called, and ordained under the SMP route are to serve in exceptional, tightly defined contexts, but after a 16-year history of experience with the SMP program, the PFC is of the opinion that the Synod would now benefit greatly from far better clarity with respect to exactly what constitutes such contexts *today*. Generally speaking, such contexts *should be thoughtfully identified and assessed by the congregation in careful consultation with the district (especially the district president)*. The determination to use the SMP route should *not* be a “choice made among route-to-ordination alternatives” *by a man only desiring to serve somewhere, even in his local context, in the pastoral office*. In creating the SMP route and acknowledging the role that distance learning would play in its implementation, the Synod’s objective was not simply to offer a nonresidential distance learning alternative to the residential MDiv route. Some argue that the SMP route offers significant “pluses”

to student participants (e.g., preservation of secular employment opportunities, flexibility and convenience, elimination of relocation hassles and expense, and asynchronous instructional environments) that might increase the likelihood of a man enrolling in the program. Arguments for the expansion of the SMP route based on these presumed advantages to the individual student, however, fall flat when the aforementioned churchwide considerations are taken into account. According to the Synod's intentional design and authorization, the SMP route neither has been nor should be the "typical" LCMS route to service as an ordained minister. Going forward, the Synod will most faithfully maintain the integrity of her confessional commitment to the Office of the Holy Ministry by remaining steadfastly alert to any emerging trend indicating inappropriate displacement of general ministry pastorates by SMP pastorates, and take proactive, timely steps (both systemwide and in local individual contexts) to prevent such a drift.

5. In keeping with the aforementioned desire to achieve greatly improved clarity within the Synod's congregations and among congregation members and church workers with respect to a firm, comprehensive definition of appropriate contexts for the service of SMP pastors, the PFC recommends that the Synod direct it to thoroughly identify and evaluate options and rationales and prepare a report to the 2026 Synod convention that proposes such a definition.
6. Only under the premise of the Synod's concurrence on the understanding set forth in the preceding Recommendation 4, the PFC recommends that there be no change to the timing of SMP vicarage and ordination as currently practiced in the Synod. Valid, yet differing, opinions and arguments were expressed by the faculty of both seminaries concerning the timing of SMP vicarage and ordination. These arguments include the integrity of the call according to AC V and XIV, varying practices through LCMS history, qualification and fitness for the pastoral ministry, and the consciences of God's people. While a man is to be personally and theologically qualified for the office (1 Tim. 3:1–7; 2 Tim. 2:24–26; Titus 1:5–9; 1 Peter 5:1–4), he is also to have a rightly ordered call to publicly teach in the church or administer the Sacraments (AC XIV). The PFC also notes that in the Synod's history and life together, there have been and continue to be instances in which MDiv vicars serve in Word and Sacrament ministry roles under limited, tightly defined pre-authorizations and coordinative oversight between district presidents and seminary representatives.
7. Under the same premise of the Synod's concurrence on the understanding set forth in the preceding Recommendation 4, the PFC also recommends the following:
 - a. That biblical languages not be made a mandatory part of the SMP curriculum. To add biblical languages to the SMP program would extend the SMP program of studies from a current four years to six. There is historical precedent in the LCMS for not requiring prior training in biblical languages for candidacy and ordination in every case.
 - b. That SMP students during their service as vicars—that is, in the first two years of SMP study—be consistently addressed and referenced as "vicar" and not as "pastor." Words count. Consistent use of nomenclature lends increased clarity of understanding to the Synod and her con-

gregations' members about the SMP formation program and its distinctiveness from the Synod's general pastoral ministry route. Such clarity and distinctiveness is maintained when congregations and congregation members acknowledge the difference between the roles and responsibilities of those who have been publicly called and ordained in the church and those who have not.

- c. That seminaries, districts, congregations, and pastors should consistently encourage and strive to make provisions for prospective SMP students to consider entering instead into an MDiv or Residential Alternate Route program.
8. The PFC recommends that all nonresidential routes to pastoral ministry *not* be consolidated under the SMP program. The Appendix describes the purpose and distinction of each route toward ordination. Because of the distinct purposes of each route, it would not be strategically prudent or operationally feasible to place all routes under SMP.
9. The PFC endorses the Specific Ministry Pastor Supervision Plan adopted by the Council of Presidents in response to Resolution 6-03A, authored and modeled by the LCMS Pacific Southwest District. This plan includes the following:
 - a. Consistent, timely identification of the supervising pastor for every SMP. Each SMP will work with his district president to establish and implement a continuous working relationship with an SMP supervising pastor. The SMP supervising pastor may or may not be the pastor who served as the SMP's mentor during the course of SMP studies. Should a change in the SMP supervising pastor be necessary at any point, a new SMP Supervision Information Form is to be submitted to the district president for prompt action (Bylaw 2.13.1 and COP Policy).
 - b. Completion of an annual SMP Supervision Information Form and timely submission of the same to the district president.
 - c. Annual submission of an SMP Supervision Plan to the district president. The SMP supervising pastor must review and sign off on this plan. The written SMP Supervision Plan will include the following:
 - i. Regular meetings with the supervising pastor to discuss sermon writing and delivery, ministry challenges, leadership and polity, and doctrine and practice.
 - ii. Faithful participation in circuit winkles, district pastors conferences, and annual meetings with the district president for all district SMP and colloquy pastors and supervising pastors.
 - iii. A written Spiritual and Personal Growth Plan, which includes Bible and devotional reading, theological and doctrinal readings (Book of Concord, *Law and Gospel*, etc.), conference and seminar attendance, continuing-education podcasts, and online sermon studies (i.e., those offered by the seminaries).
 - iv. Congregational Mission and Ministry Plan, which includes objectives, outcomes, methods, timeline, and collaboration with supervisor and congregation.

C.3. 2019 Resolution 6-04

"To Support, Encourage, and Expect Continuing Education for

all Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod Pastors.” Res. 6-04’s sixth *Resolved* reads: “That the Pastoral Formation Committee consider the establishment of a method to certify post-seminary continuing education programs and resources offered by organizations, institutions, and individuals outside of the Synod, her seminaries and Concordia University System institutions, or by other organizations not owned or under the supervision or oversight of the Synod, and the committee deliver its evaluation and accompanying recommendations in its report and, if appropriate, enable overtures to the 2022 Synod convention.”

Pastors in the LCMS are encouraged and expected to engage in continuing education throughout their pastoral ministry. Congregations are encouraged to support their pastors’ continuing education financially and provide the time needed for such opportunities. Every pastor has a document on file at his district office called a Self-Evaluation Tool (SET), in which he reports his continuing-education experiences.

The SET lists continuing education in four categories: courses offered by Post-Seminary Applied Learning and Support (PALS), courses offered by LCMS seminaries, courses offered by other higher education institutions, and other qualified educational experiences. Within these categories, the pastor is asked to identify course title, institution, dates, number of Continuing Education Units (CEUs), and degree (if applicable). He is also asked to identify what skills were developed or what areas of continuing education these experiences offered: exegetical, historical, systematic, preaching, teaching, outreach, pastoral care, administration, worship, leadership, or ministerial well-being.

C.3.1. Recommendations

The Pastoral Formation Committee recommends and endorses the following practices concerning the method to certify post-seminary continuing-education programs, resources, and participation:

1. All qualified CEUs are self-reported on the pastor’s SET form. Pastors are responsible for obtaining their own CEU certificates and awarded CEUs.
2. SET forms are annually reviewed and managed by the district office.
3. All LCMS pastors begin their continuing education experience with PALS; CEUs for self-reporting are provided by the PALS office.
4. Pastors are encouraged to consider LCMS seminaries and universities as their first choices for continuing education opportunities.
5. Pastors are encouraged to participate in continuing-education experiences offered by the LCMS International Center, agencies, RSOs, and other LCMS-sanctioned entities, which include the following:
 - a. *Making Disciples for Life* conferences, LERT training, Life Ministry, *Every One His Witness*, short-term missions, etc., as offered by the LCMS Office of National Mission, LCMS Office of International Mission, and LCMS Office of Pastoral Education.
 - b. District workshops and conferences; Concordia Plan Services, LCEF, LWML, LHM, and CPH educational offerings.
 - c. RSO educational offerings from such organizations as Doxology, Ambassadors of Reconciliation, Concordia

Lutheran Ministries, Confessional Lutherans for Christ’s Commission, Lutheran Counseling Services, Lutheran Senior Services, Lutheran Special Education Ministries, and The Lutheran Home for the Aged Association.

6. Qualification for CEUs not obtained through an LCMS-related institution or entity is granted by the district president and listed under “Other qualified education experiences” on the pastor’s SET form.

D. Conclusion

The Pastoral Formation Committee remains committed to fulfilling its duties as prescribed in Bylaw 3.10.4 and warmly welcomes all questions and inquiries concerning its responsibilities and assignments. “And I will give you shepherds after my own heart, who will feed you with knowledge and understanding” (Jer. 3:15).

Kevin D. Robson, *Chairman*

End Notes

1. A number of other subject matter experts were consulted in preparations leading up to the issuance of this report, including Rev. Dr. Daniel Preus (former interim president of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis [CSL]), Rev. Dr. W. Mart Thompson (CSL Specific Ministry [SMP] Program Director), Rev. Dr. Joel Okamoto (former CSL Exegetical Theology Department Chairman), Rev. Dr. Carl Fickenscher II (Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne [CTSFW] Director of Pastoral Formation Programs), Rev. Dr. John Sias (the Secretary of Synod), the seminary joint Boards of Regents, the Joint Seminary Advisory Committee (Rev. Dr. Todd Peperkorn, Mr. Mark Stern, Rev. Max Mons, Dr. Ron Garwood, Mr. Leo MacKay, and Rev. William Cwirla), seminary faculties, and the LCMS Council of Presidents Designated Committee (LCMS Ohio District President Rev. Dr. Kevin Wilson, LCMS Kansas District President Rev. Justin Panzer, and LCMS Pacific Southwest District President Rev. Dr. Mike Gibson).

2. For a brief history of pastoral formation, see Part III of 13-03 Task Force Report, 2019 Workbook, 377–81.

3. For the full report of the 2016 13-03 Task Force, see *Convention Workbook 2019*, 375–84.

4. The following are examples of curriculum review, adjustments, and revisions. EIIT at CSL went through major revision and was approved by the CSL faculty on May 10, 2019, and CSL Board of Regents on May 16, 2019. SMP has also gone through several updates at CSL. In 2017–2018, on-campus intensives were standardized as a part of the program. In 2019–2020, Counseling and Listening Skills were added to PRA411 (Intro to PMin), Law/Gospel Counseling Approaches were added to SYS413 (Lutheran Distinctions), Church Administration Formation was added to PRA416 (Pastor as Leader and Theologian), and Lutheran Service Book was added as a required purchase for PRA412 (Worship). Further assessment and revision is currently underway based on CSL residential Outcomes and Performance Indicators for SMP certification.

Appendix: The Synod’s Routes to Ordained (Pastoral) Ministry

A. Residential Routes

A.1. Master of Divinity (MDiv)

Residential Route

Purpose

Program Goal: Forming general pastors; breadth and depth of theology for general pastoral ministry

Year Program Began: Thousands of pastors have been formed in the LCMS since 1839. The Master of Divinity degree began in 1971.

Statistics

Roster Status: General

Total Number of Pastors Produced: Est. 20,000–25,000 between both seminaries

Attrition Rates: Not known

Requirements

Educational Prerequisite: A bachelor's degree with liberal arts criteria, though a limited number of students may be admitted without a bachelor's, based on other rigorous criteria.

Age Requirements: No age requirement

Experiential Prerequisite: Basic spiritual formation; sense of commitment to pastoral candidacy

Language and Level: English

Academics

Degree or Certificate: MDiv

Biblical Languages: Greek/Hebrew

Region: Nationwide

Financial Assistance: Full tuition agreement via the seminary's partnership covenant. Funding from several sources, including academic scholarships.

Residential and Contextual Learning: All education is residential in a classroom setting.

Curriculum Length: CSL: 98 semester credits plus formation and language labs; CTSFW: 139 quarter credits plus field education

Program Length: Four years

Vicarage: One-year full-time vicarage

Location: Residential

Call

Call and Ordination: At conclusion

Ministry Context: Generalist, upon final placement

Supervising Pastor Required? If So, How Selected? No supervising pastor required while students complete coursework. Faculty advisors assigned. There is a field work pastor supervising assigned field work in a parish.

Continuation Path (Besides Normal C.Ed.): Many stay for STM

A.2. Alternate Route

Residential Route

Purpose

Program Goal: Forming general pastors

Year Program Began: Fall quarter of the 1996–1997 academic year. Previously, this was under the auspices of the colloquy program. Colloquy was listed under 1992 Bylaw 6.87–6.99 as listed in the 1995–1996 academic catalog.

Special Church Needs That Prompted the Program: Residential alternate route closely parallels the MDiv, but is for men

who are 35 years or older, commissioned ministers, or have significant experience in parish life.

Specific Needs Not Addressed in Other Programs: The residential AR provides a comprehensive theological education with extensive grounding in both theology and practice, exegetical skills based on the Greek language, and ministerial formation leading to certification as a general pastor for those with significant church experience.

Statistics

Roster Status: General

Total Number of Pastors Produced: CTSFW (residential): 127; CSL: 85 since 1996

Program Completion Rates (Past Five Years): Not available

Attrition Rates: Not known

Requirements

Educational Prerequisite: Ability to work at master's level; two years college minimum; ordinarily will possess a bachelor's degree, though some do not

Age Requirements: Ordinarily at least 35 years of age

Experiential Prerequisite: Mature, "second career." Need at least 10 years of significant experience directly related to Word and Sacrament ministry (elder, lector, evangelism calls, Bible class teacher, etc.) in an LCMS setting. May also be a graduate of a Synod college or university, on the Synod roster of commissioned ministers, and have at least eight years of experience as a commissioned minister of the LCMS.

Language and Level: English

Academics

Degree or Certificate: Certificate or MA

Biblical Languages: Greek

Region: Nationwide

Financial Assistance: Full tuition agreement via the seminary's partnership covenant. Funding from several sources, including academic scholarships.

Residential and Contextual Learning: Residential AR education is residential in a classroom setting. Students who have completed the SMP program may earn AR certification either residentially or by taking the same MDiv-level courses via online streaming of classes.

Curriculum Length: CSL: 77 semester credits, additional formation and language labs, Greek, and vicarage year; CTSFW: 93 quarter credits, plus Greek and vicarage year

Program Length: Three years

Vicarage: One-year full-time vicarage after all coursework has been completed

Location: Residential

Call

Call and Ordination: At conclusion

Ministry Context: Generalist, upon final placement

Supervising Pastor Required? If So, How Selected? No supervising pastor required while students complete coursework.

Faculty advisors assigned. There is a field work pastor supervising assigned field work in a parish.

Continuation Path (besides normal C.Ed.): MDiv

B. Nonresidential Routes

B.1. Specific Ministry Pastor (SMP) Program

Nonresidential Route

Purpose

Program Goal:: Specific ministry pastor prepared for specific ministry contexts defined by congregations and districts

Year Program Began: Fall quarter of the 2008–2009 academic year. Previous program was DELTO (Distance Education Leading to Ordination). SMP was authorized by 2007 Res. 5-01B.

Special Church Needs That Prompted the Program: Provide training in context for pastors where the fiscal situation or ministry context prevents the calling of a general ministry pastor. As successor to (and improvement over) DELTO, the SMP program meets the Synod's needs for contextual, in-ministry pastoral formation with improved curriculum and updated instructional technology. Program design seeks to be faithful to AC XIV, so that men who are given the task of preaching, teaching, and administering the Sacraments are ordained and recognized as pastors. When compared with the MDiv or AR programs, the SMP curriculum is intentionally designed to require fewer courses, yet there is intensive in-ministry formation under a mentor/supervising pastor. Men who complete this route are therefore certified by a seminary faculty for call and placement as pastors, but to a distinct roster status category with accompanying limitations for service in the pastoral ministry.

Specific Needs Not Addressed in Other Programs: The SMP program allows a route to ordination when the typical seminary formation experience is not possible. This meets the needs of situations where a called worker is needed but the congregation is not able to call a general ministry pastor. The SMP program provides contextual training for a specific ministry as identified by the congregation and allows for the candidate to provide ordained ministry where otherwise not provided. Although a candidate is identified locally (and already meets many of the spiritual and personal qualifications), the ministry context prevents him from coming into a residential program and provides advantages for ministerial formation within the context of service.

Statistics

Roster Status: Specific Ministry Pastor is always under the supervision of a general pastor, even after completing the program.

Total Number of Pastors Produced: CTSFW: 64 completed, 7 ordained and completing program; CSL: 217 completed, 24 ordained and completing program; 2 have died; 2 have been ordained but did not complete the program (one resigned from the ministerium and one is awaiting action from the DP).

Attrition Rates: Not known

Requirements

Educational Prerequisite: Entry-level competencies; ability

to work at master's level. Core competencies necessary for admission: (1) Entry-level competence in OT and NT content and Christian doctrine will be demonstrated by passing entry-level competence examinations administered by the seminary. (2) Entry-level competency in worship, preaching, spiritual life and Christian witness, and teaching the faith will be demonstrated by portfolio submissions and the recommendation of the district president.

Age Requirements: No age requirement listed in academic catalog. The applicant must be "mature in faith and life."

Experiential Prerequisite: Demonstrated pastoral fit; no length of time stated but "must be committed to the Lutheran Confessions" and "willing to uphold the doctrinal positions of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod." Also must meet the "personal and spiritual qualifications as expressed in 1 Timothy 3:1–7." Should be involved "in an existing congregation, ministry or district-approved planned mission start" and "be in possession of the characteristics ordinarily and biblically expected of the pastoral office." Must have spent two years in an LCMS parish.

Unique Admission Requirements: (1) Presence necessary to support ongoing ministry; (2) nomination of district president and placement as vicar

Language and Level: English

Academics

Degree or Certificate: Certificate; no degree. However, courses can be applied to an MA or MDiv.

Biblical Languages: None, but Greek is required for the SMP AR or GPC continuation track.

Region: Nationwide

Financial Assistance: Some SMP students may receive assistance from their LCMS district. Some receive assistance from their congregation or ministry. Currently, they do not receive financial assistance from the seminary.

Residential and Contextual Learning: Distance learning primarily. Several residential seminars or on-campus intensive courses. Significant learning comes from student's local congregation or ministry-setting experiences.

Curriculum Length: CTSFW: 16 courses, 32 semester credits, concurrent vicarage and specific ministry seminars; CSL: 16 courses, 32 semester credits, concurrent vicarage and specific ministry seminars.

Program Length: Four years

Vicarage: Vicarage requires two years, beginning already during the first year of the program. The vicarage grade appears on the transcript before ordination. No credit hours granted.

Other: The SMP–Español/English (SMP–EsE) program at CTSFW began in 2016 as a Spanish-language SMP-format program to prepare men in the Spanish language for ethnic and bilingual Hispanic/Latino ministry contexts. (A prior program using the same curriculum—Bilingual Pastoral Formation for Latinos [BPFL]—was subsumed into the SMP–EsE program.) The curriculum provides the necessary entry-level Lutheran doctrine, Old Testament, and New Testament courses to ensure that basic competencies

are equally met by all participants. The curriculum was developed and is maintained by a collaborative of international theologians from the LCMS and sister church bodies throughout Latin America in conjunction with Concordia Seminary of the Reformer in the Dominican Republic. The typical student will be a Latino (or other fluent Spanish-speaking male) selected by the congregation and approved by the district and seminary using the SMP application process. Upon completion of the program, graduates will serve as SMP pastors in the districts that supported them in the program. Courses are taught in the same manner as other SMP courses. Just as in the regular SMP program, SMP-EsE Program students may be ordained after successfully completing 8 of the 16 courses and a two-year vicarage with appropriate COP approval. They are then placed on the roster of the Synod as SMP pastors because this is not a separate program but a track now folded into the SMP effort at Fort Wayne. To date, there is one ordained man from the program and two currently participating in the program (but not yet ordained).

Location: Distance education with required residential seminars or on-campus intensive courses

Call

Call and Ordination: Vicarage normally leads to call and ordination in the same congregation. CSL: after 9 courses and successful completion of the SMP vicarage, with commitment to finish; CTSFW: after 8 courses and successful completion of SMP vicarage, with requirement to finish

Ministry Context: Open; specific contexts defined by the district and the congregation. Synod resolution describes SMP as providing pastoral ministry in specific and specialized situations where a traditionally prepared seminary candidate or pastor is not available.

Supervising Pastor Required? If So, How Selected? SMP students are assigned a pastor who mentors them while they are completing the program. After completion of SMP program, SMP pastor must still be supervised by a general ministry pastor.

Continuation Path (Besides Normal C.Ed.): May take additional courses for an MA and/or general pastor certification

B.2. Cross-Cultural Ministry Center (CMC) (CSL)

Nonresidential Route

Purpose

Program Goal: New, sustainable, urban, culture-crossing mission planter, following plan and plant developed within program

Year Program Began: 1995

Special Church Needs That Prompted the Program: The need for a master's-level missionary/pastoral formation program for those embedded in their ministerial/cultural context (who otherwise could not come to seminary) to start new ministries in non-Anglo or multiethnic contexts

Specific Needs Not Addressed in Other Programs: CMC provides a comprehensive theological education leading to a general pastoral certification, with an emphasis on cross-cultural mission planting and the goal of a new, sustainable,

urban, cross-cultural plant and new mission start developed within the program.

Statistics

Roster Status: General

Program Completion Rates (Past Five Years): ca. 95 percent

Attrition Rates: Not known

Program Size: 30 (for now)

Requirements

Educational Prerequisite: A bachelor's degree with liberal arts criteria; must simultaneously enter CUI's MA in Theology (theology and culture)

Age Requirements: No age requirement is listed in the academic catalog

Experiential Prerequisite: Language and cultural fit; must be an LCMS member for at least two years

Unique Admission Requirements: (1) Presence necessary to support ongoing ministry; (2) more appropriate than residential program due to language and/or (cross-)cultural context

Language and Level: English competence to work at a master's theological level. All nonnative English speakers are assessed and take English prerequisite classes if needed.

Academics

Degree or Certificate: Certificate from CSL. MA in Theology (theology and culture) from CUI

Biblical Languages: Greek

Region: Region 5 (West-Southwest)

Financial Assistance: No scholarships from CSL. CUI provides a one-third tuition grant to all students and an additional one-third tuition scholarship for about half of the students. Students can apply for additional scholarships or grants from external partners (e.g., churches, districts) to help cover the remaining tuition.

Residential and Contextual Learning: Two courses per year taught via three-week residential intensives (these equal about 30 percent of the courses); the remaining courses are taught by synchronous live-feed video conferences.

Curriculum Length: 89 semester credits, includes 26 theology courses (77 semester credits), 6 semester credits of Greek, and 6 semester credits of modern language; concurrent vicarage

Program Length: Four years

Vicarage: Four years of concurrent vicarage, during which the vicar starts a new culture-crossing ministry under the supervision of an ordained pastor

Location: Hybrid (minimum of 8 courses face-to-face, with the remaining as synchronous video conferences)

Call

Call and Ordination: At conclusion

Ministry Context: New ministries in non-Anglo context (bilingual as needed), usually within West-Southwest Region

Supervising Pastor Required? If So, How Selected? Supervising

pastor is chosen in collaboration with the district, interviewed by the director of CMC, and approved by CSL.

Continuation Path (Besides Normal C.Ed.): None

B.3. Center for Hispanic Studies (CHS) (CSL)

Nonresidential Route

Purpose

Program Goal: General Hispanic pastor (for mission and ministry where the Spanish language predominates)

Year Program Began: 1987 as the Hispanic Institute of Theology on Concordia University Chicago's campus; certification under the auspices of CSL. In 2006, program moved to CSL campus, with name change to CHS, and became fully integrated into CSL's campus, mission, planning, and administrative functions.

Special Church Needs That Prompted the Program: CHS serves as a resource for research and education regarding cultural and ecclesial realities that seek to relate to the distinctive needs of Hispanic mission and ministry within the LCMS. Mandate is to form Hispanic pastors and deaconesses for the LCMS.

Specific Needs Not Addressed in Other Programs: Pastoral and deaconess formation for U.S. Hispanics (primarily immigrants) whose first or primary language is Spanish and are serving in U.S. Hispanic missions where Spanish is a major component.

Statistics

Roster Status: General, usually where Spanish language is needed for U.S. Hispanic mission and ministry

Total Number of Pastors Produced: Since 2006, 77 total: 54 pastors and 23 deaconesses

Program Completion Rates (Past Five Years): The completion rate for pastoral students admitted is 81 percent. The completion rate for deaconess students admitted is 81 percent.

Attrition Rates: Not known

Requirements

Educational Prerequisite: Ability to work at college level. Needs basic proficiency in OT and NT content and Christian doctrine. Must show potential for pastoral ministry to the satisfaction of his district president. Applicants who intend to complete a master's degree should possess an undergraduate degree.

Age Requirements: Ordinarily not less than 30 years of age. Pastoral students serving in a Spanish-language missions and ministry where their presence and ministry are expected during and after the completion of the program. Deaconess students serving in or about to enter into an internship where they are under the supervision of an ordained pastor.

Experiential Prerequisite: Language and cultural fit. Actively involved as a communicant member in an LCMS parish for at least two years prior to enrollment; usually is already involved in some kind of active ministry, often church planting.

Unique Admission Requirements: (1) Presence necessary to support ongoing mission and ministry; (2) more appropriate than residential program due to language or educational

background and socioeconomics

Language and Level: Spanish, but English is encouraged in the classroom and optional for some class assignments.

Academics

Degree or Certificate: Certificate with MA option

Biblical Languages: None

Region: Nationwide

Financial Assistance: A one-third tuition grant is provided by the seminary, with the expectation that the district will cover one-third and the local ministry will cover one-third. Additional financial assistance from the seminary can be applied for.

Residential and Contextual Learning: Distance education provided via virtual classroom.

Curriculum Length: 18 courses, includes 36 semester credits and a concurrent vicarage.

Program Length: Four years

Vicarage: Concurrent vicarage begins during the first year of studies and ends before the fourth year of studies is completed. No credit hours are granted.

Location: Distance education through virtual classroom

Call

Call and Ordination: At conclusion; rostered as LCMS pastors and deaconesses

Ministry Context: Spanish-language Hispanic mission and ministry in the U.S.

Supervising Pastor Required? If So, How Selected? Applicants must be paired with an ordained pastor of the LCMS who will serve as their mentor/vicarage supervisor throughout the course of study.

Continuation Path (Besides Normal C.Ed.): None; may pursue MA

B.4. Ethnic Immigrant Institute of Theology (EIIT) (CSL)

Nonresidential Route

Purpose

Program Goal: First-generation ethnic pastor for ethnic ministry (service where traditional grad unable or unlikely to function)

Year Program Began: 2003–2004

Special Church Needs That Prompted the Program: Provides a specialized program leading to ordination for men engaged in pastoral missionary contexts in ethnic immigrant and other ethnic specific ministry contexts. Offers program for women in mission and ministry contexts, which leads to commissioning as an LCMS deaconess. Also provides for preparation and certification for students who are deaf or hard of hearing.

Specific Needs Not Addressed in Other Programs: EIIT provides a basic understanding of Lutheran theology and practice within the context of first-generation, non-Anglo cultures, leading to certification as a rostered pastor or deaconess of the LCMS.

Statistics

Roster Status: General

Program Completion Rates (Past Five Years): Pastoral students ca. 80 percent; deaconess students ca. 84 percent

Attrition Rates: Not known

Program Size: ca. 40–60

Requirements

Educational Prerequisite: Ability to work at college level. Must demonstrate basic proficiency in OT and NT content and Christian doctrine. Must show potential for pastoral ministry to the satisfaction of his district president.

Age Requirements: Ordinarily not less than 30 years of age. Pastoral students serving in a first-generation culture-specific or non-English-language ministry where no seminary-prepared pastor is available, and where their presence and ministry are expected during and after the completion of the program. Deaconess students serving in or about to enter into an internship, where they are under the supervision of an ordained pastor.

Experiential Prerequisite: Language and cultural fit. Must have been actively involved as a communicant member in an LCMS parish for at least two years prior to enrollment.

Unique Admission Requirements: (1) Presence necessary to support ongoing ministry; (2) more appropriate than residential program due to language or educational background

Language and Level: English as a foreign language

Academics

Degree or Certificate: Certificate

Biblical Languages: None

Region: Nationwide

Financial Assistance: A one-third tuition grant is provided by the seminary, with the expectation that the district will cover one-third and the local ministry will cover one-third. Additional financial assistance from the seminary can be applied for.

Residential and Contextual Learning: Distance education

Curriculum length: 24 courses, equivalent to 32 semester credits, with a concurrent vicarage

Program Length: Four years

Vicarage: Concurrent vicarage

Location: Distance education

Call

Call and Ordination: At conclusion

Ministry Context: First-generation immigrant ministry

Supervising Pastor Required? If So, How Selected? Applicants must be paired with an ordained pastor of the LCMS who will serve as their mentor/vicarage supervisor throughout the course of study.

Continuation Path (Besides Normal C.Ed.): None; may pursue MA

B.5. Colloquy*Nonresidential Route***Purpose**

Program Goal: Route to ministry in the LCMS for pastors trained outside of the LCMS.

Special Church Needs That Prompted the Program: Historically always part of the LCMS structure and culture

Specific Needs Not Addressed in Other Programs: Provides a means for pastors trained outside of the LCMS to be examined and certified for call and placement in the LCMS. In some cases, the pastors are also able to bring their congregations into the Synod.

Statistics

Roster Status: General

Total Number of Pastors Produced: Average of 21.3 general pastors per year since 2006; 131 Licensed Lay Deacons (LLDs) certified for the SMP roster since 2016; total number since 1847 unknown; in 2021, 8 percent of all active pastors had come through colloquy.

Program Completion Rates (Past Five Years): From January 2016 to the present, 156 have applied for general colloquy, 114 have been certified, 34 were declined, 2 have withdrawn, and 20 are still in process.

Attrition Rates: Not known

Requirements

Educational Prerequisite: Must be a graduate “of a program of study that leads to ordination, from an accredited institution, with no fewer than 60 semester hours (90 quarter hours) of academic credit” (Colloquy Policy Manual). Limited exceptions can be granted by the committee.

Age Requirements: No minimum age requirement

Experiential Prerequisite: Must have served “at least three years in a recognized ministry of [his] church body” (Colloquy Policy Manual) or have been a member of the LCMS for at least two years immediately prior to applying.

Unique Admission Requirements: Qualifications laid out in Scripture.

Language and Level: Mostly English, though we do provide interpreters for those more comfortable in other languages.

Academics

Degree or Certificate: Certificate

Region: Nationwide

Financial Assistance: None

Residential and Contextual Learning: Seminary courses (most often online) may be required. Reading under a mentor may be required.

Curriculum Length: Colloquy is very tailored to the applicant, depending on his strengths and weaknesses. Coursework, reading, and/or a vicarage are sometimes assigned and required.

Program Length: One-half to two years, including the application process

Vicarage: A formal vicarage in an LCMS congregation is often

but not always required. Sometimes a shorter, less formal internship is assigned.

Call

Call and Ordination: Almost all applicants for colloquy to the general pastor roster are ordained when they apply. We do not reordain them, but we do install them according to our Lutheran Church orders. LLDs are ordained at the conclusion of the colloquy process, after they have been certified, called, and placed.

Ministry Context: Generalist, upon final placement (the window of time for LLDs to apply for colloquy to the SMP roster has closed).

Supervising Pastor Required? If So, How Selected? Supervising pastor or mentors may be required, depending on the needs of the candidate.

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2019 Res. 7-03 Committee to Propose a New Governance Plan for the Colleges and Universities of the Synod

The 2019 Synod convention adopted Res. 7-03, “To Direct a Collaborative Process to Propose a New Governance Plan” (*Proceedings*, 171) with the following objectives:

- strengthen all Concordia University System (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
- review the overall governance of CUS and the Board of Regents of the CUS institutions.

2019 Res. 7-03 also instructed a review of the financial models for the institutions.

2019 Res. 7-03 requires the Synod Board of Directors to propose a new governance plan for consideration by the 2022 (now 2023) Synod convention that fulfills the stated objectives. This new governance plan is to be prepared with the active involvement of the President of the Synod, the CUS Advisory Council, the CUS Board of Directors, the president of CUS, and the CUS institutions’ boards of regents and with the concurrence of the CUS Advisory Council and the CUS Board of Directors.

The assignment given by 2019 Res. 7-03 involves work that has been ongoing for more than a decade, including action by two previous LCMS conventions. It involves critical governance issues that affect CUS, the LCMS Concordia institutions, and other LCMS entities. The 2013 LCMS convention adopted Res. 5-01A, which directed the Synod President to appoint a task force that would report to the 2016 LCMS convention addressing the same objectives as 2019 Res. 7-03, as well as studying and reporting on confessional Lutheran identity. The 2013 Res. 5-01A Task Force, along with CUS and the institution presidents, made progress in preparing written Lutheran Identity Statements that were adopted

by the CUS institutions. The Lutheran Identity Statement for CUS institutions was formally adopted by the 2016 LCMS convention in Res. 7-01A. The 2013 Res. 5-01A Task Force also recommended some relatively minor changes to LCMS bylaws relating to the composition of each CUS institution’s board of regents, the term of the president of each CUS institution, and other matters. These recommendations, with some amendments, were adopted by the 2016 LCMS convention.

But the 2013 Res. 5-01A Task Force did not complete its assignment. The 2016 LCMS convention accordingly adopted Res. 7-02B, which directed the Synod President to renew the appointment of the task force members and instructed them to continue their work toward accomplishing the objectives of 2013 Res. 5-01A. The 2016 Res. 7-02B Task Force was directed to report to the 2019 LCMS convention.

The 2016 Res. 7-02B Task Force made progress, but it also did not complete its assignment. It recommended changes to certain bylaws governing CUS and the boards of regents. The recommended changes, with some amendments, were adopted by the 2019 LCMS convention in resolutions 7-01A, 7-03, and 7-04A. These bylaw changes, although addressing and resolving issues relating to the prior approval process in the selection of CUS institution presidents, were otherwise relatively minor considering the overall broad task that had been assigned to the 2016 Res. 7-02B Task Force and previously to the 2013 Res. 5-01A Task Force.

The consistent focus of 2013 Res. 5-01A, 2016 Res. 7-02B, and 2019 Res. 7-03 helps define the scope of Res. 7-03. It is important to consider this consistency and the specific items addressed in order to emphasize what is and what is not included within Res. 7-03.

Under Res. 7-03, it is the responsibility of the Synod Board of Directors to propose a new governance plan for consideration by the 2023 convention. Thus, ultimately, it is the Synod in convention that must adopt a new governance plan. No other body in the Synod has this authority. And the responsibility to propose a new governance plan for consideration by the 2023 Synod convention is appropriately given to the Synod’s Board of Directors, with active participation of others within the Synod with extensive knowledge, experience, and interest in strengthening the CUS institutions’ connection to Synod and confessional Lutheran fidelity, and the corresponding governance issues.

Thus, the new governance structure directs the Board of Directors to propose a new governance structure that will effectuate an overall governance change to CUS and the Concordia institutions. The new governance structure *must* strengthen the connection of the institutions to the Synod and strengthen the confessional Lutheran identity of the institutions. When preparing and proposing a new structure, *consideration* is to be given to the selection of boards of regents, the selection of the CUS institution presidents, the relationship between CUS and the universities, the relationship between the boards of regents and the presidents, and the authority and responsibility of all involved.

2019 Res. 7-03 does not direct consideration of administration, management, or operations. However, these factors have been considered in detail and influenced preparation of a proposed new governance structure. 2019 Res. 7-03 also does not direct the preparation of a plan to execute bylaw and other governance changes that might be adopted by the 2023 Synod convention. But what will be involved in the execution also has been considered in detail

in connection with the preparation of a proposed new governance proposal.

To help carry out the directive of the 2019 Synod convention to develop a new governance structure to be considered by the 2023 Synod convention, a committee was formed to assist in preparing a draft overture that proposes the new governance structure. Consistent with 2019 Res. 7-03 requirements, the committee was comprised of representatives of the Synod Board of Directors, CUS Advisory Council, CUS Board of Directors, board of regents members, the President of the Synod, and the CUS president. Others also were invited and involved as the 2019 Res. 7-03 Committee proceeded with its work. Specifically, current Synod Secretary John Sias assisted throughout the process, former Synod Secretary Ray Hartwig assisted with drafting, Dr. Paul Philp of CUS assisted with research and analysis, and Synod Chief Administrative Officer Frank Simek assisted with financial analysis and research.

In addition to the specific direction given in 2019 Res. 7-03, the 7-03 Committee, as was necessary, also considered other factors as prescribed in the LCMS Constitution and Bylaws. Any proposal to the 2023 convention must be consistent with the Confession in Art. II and the Objectives of Art. III of the Constitution. It also is important to emphasize the relationship that all involved have to the Synod. The Synod Board of Directors, the CUS board of directors, every board of regents, every CUS institution president, the Synod President, and the CUS president all owe a duty of loyalty and faithfulness to the Synod and its congregations. The boards also have separate legal fiduciary duties: the Board of Directors to corporate Synod, the CUS board to CUS, the boards of regents to their respective university, the CUS presidents to their respective university, and the Synod President and CUS president to their respective institutions. But they all also have a paramount responsibility to the Synod.

Failing to execute this responsibility to the Synod necessarily constitutes a failure to execute their responsibilities to their respective entity. In other words, it is a fundamental duty of the Board of Directors, the CUS board, each board of regents, each CUS institution president, the Synod President, and the CUS president to carry out their responsibilities and duties in a fashion that is faithful to the Confession, the Objectives, and the interests of the Synod. This is emphasized in 2013 Res. 5-01A, 2016 Res. 7-02B, and 2019 Res. 7-03.

In Nov. 2019, the 2019 Res. 7-03 Committee held its first meeting and also held a joint meeting with the CUS institution presidents and boards of regents chairs. Following these initial meetings, the 2019 Res. 7-03 Committee met on a monthly basis from Jan. 2020 until Feb. 2021. The committee made steady progress at each of these meetings. A partial list of the work of the committee included the following:

- regular review of the requirements of 2019 Res. 7-03;
- consideration of the accomplishments of, as well as the work not completed by, the task forces appointed in conjunction with 2013 Res. 5-01A and 2016 Res. 7-02B;
- solicitation and receipt of input from all members of the committee and all parties listed in 2019 Res. 7-03, among others;
- consideration of an extensive focus groups study and report of each of the CUS institutions conducted by an outside consultant that detailed the attitudes and opinions of the board of regents members regarding the current LCMS governance and proposed changes to the governance structure;
- extensive research into the history of CUS, the unique history and circumstances of each CUS institution, historical funding and long-term trends affecting funding and enrollment of CUS institutions, recent enrollment and funding trends, demographics and finances affecting private colleges and universities throughout the United States, among various other factors affecting the CUS institutions;
- consideration of what has caused private colleges and universities initially established by Christian church bodies to fail to continue to fulfill the original Christian mission of the schools;
- consideration of the impact of separation of a college or university from the governance structure of a Christian church body on the Christian mission of the school;
- consideration of information provided by the Higher Education Consortium describing various higher education governance systems;
- preparing detailed meeting notes after every committee meeting that were forwarded to committee members and CUS institution presidents and board of regents chairs;
- continual input from CUS institution presidents and board of regents chairs;
- extensive input from CUS and the CUS board of directors, particularly with respect to the initial preparation of proposed Lutheran Identity and Mission Outcome Standards (“LIMOS”) and the relationship of these standards to the committee-proposed draft resolution;
- drafting of a proposed resolution that was updated regularly, with the updated draft circulated among the committee members and the CUS presidents and board of regents chairs;
- consultation with Synod’s legal counsel; and
- submission of draft overtures to the Commission on Constitutional Matters and the Commission on Handbook for their review and consideration.

At the outset of its work, the committee decided to consider a two kingdoms approach to a proposed new governance structure, recognizing, of course, that this is often challenging. The committee frequently recognized and discussed these challenges when proceeding with preparing a proposed new governance structure. Generally, the committee concluded that it was preferable for CUS to be given primarily right-hand kingdom responsibilities and that the boards of regents be given more streamlined left-hand kingdom authority and responsibilities. This effort to distinguish the two kingdoms with respect to which institutions exercise what specific authority and responsibilities is reflected in many of the recommendations ultimately made by the committee.

In Feb. 2021, the committee submitted to the Synod Board of Directors a draft preliminary overture for consideration. The Board of Directors considered the draft overture and gave it preliminary approval. As required by 2019 Res. 7-03, the Board of Directors then circulated the draft preliminary overture to the Synod at large for comment and input.

The committee received over 55 pages of comments expressing a variety of perspectives regarding the draft preliminary overture circulated by the Board of Directors from individuals across the

Synod. The committee then received further input from the Synod Board of Directors, CUS board of directors, the CUS institutions presidents, CUS institutions board of regents chairs, the Synod President, synodwide corporate entities, and others regarding the draft overture and comments received. Under the direction of the Board of Directors, the committee then proceeded to make changes to the draft overture to take into consideration the comments and input that had been received.

By Feb. 2022, the committee was prepared to submit to the Synod Board of Directors a revised proposed overture that took into consideration the comments received during the previous year. The decision to delay the 2022 Synod convention to July 2023 provided additional time to consider the draft preliminary overture and the best approach to take for a new governance structure for CUS and the CUS institutions. The Board of Directors requested the committee continue to consider the proposed draft overture and further input. During the summer of 2022, the committee incorporated additional changes into the draft proposed overture to take into consideration further input that had been received during the previous several months.

The committee prepared a final proposed draft overture that was submitted to the Board of Directors for its consideration and possible approval at its Nov. 2022 meeting. Before the Board of Directors meeting, the CUS institution presidents requested the Board of Directors to consider further modifications to the draft overture. Based on this request, the Board of Directors postponed action on the final proposed draft overture. In Feb. 2023, the Board of Directors received the CUS institutions presidents' proposed modifications and requested the of the 2019 Res. 7-03 drafting sub-committee and Board of Directors 2019 Res. 7-03 sub-committee to continue to discuss further possible changes to the proposed overture, in particular those being proposed by the CUS institution presidents.

The most recent draft from the 2019 Res. 7-03 Committee is attached, with the understanding that there are ongoing discussions regarding further proposed changes before a final proposed overture is submitted for consideration by the 2023 Synod convention. This draft overture includes an extensive preamble as well as a separate rationale for each of the eight sections. The preamble and rationale explain the intent and purpose of the proposed overture and answer many questions raised.

The ongoing discussion includes further consideration of the current proposal to change each CUS institution from an *agency* of the Synod to an *affiliated* entity. The current proposal makes the suggested change to recognize the reality of the financial circumstances facing the institutions, CUS, and the Synod. There has been a decades-long trend of reduced funding from congregations to the districts and, in turn, from the districts to the Synod. This impacts the funding of the Synod and accordingly the funding of CUS and the CUS institutions. There also have been frequent tensions between CUS and some CUS institution presidents and boards of regents since the inception of CUS. The current proposal reflects efforts to minimize such tensions.

Ongoing discussions will address questions and concerns raised regarding the current proposed change from "agency" to "affiliated." This discussion also will continue to take into consideration the financial and governance realities facing CUS, CUS institutions, and other Synod entities impacted. In addition, other questions and issues raised concerning the current draft proposal and the need to fulfill the objectives of 2019 Res. 7-03 will be consid-

ered. An updated draft then will be submitted to the Synod Board of Directors for its consideration. The Synod Board of Directors will then make the decision regarding a proposed new governance structure for consideration by the 2023 convention.

Christian A. Preus, *Chairman*

Appendix: Current Committee Draft

To Revise Bylaws to Revisit and Renew the Relationship of Colleges and Universities with the Synod

Preamble

The following proposed convention action, having to do with the Concordia University System, would fundamentally renovate the relationship of the Synod with the Concordia colleges and universities. It aims to respond effectively—with realism, faithfulness, and hopefulness—to decades of higher education change.

Long gone are the days:

- when the Synod's higher education institutions were supported largely by the local faithful, often in donations of kind (volunteer help, farm and garden produce); or
- when Synod-related colleges existed largely or even solely for Lutheran teacher and preseminary education, with a large proportion of Synod's seminary students blessed by six or more years of formal, comprehensive preseminary pastoral formation.

Gone also are the more recent days:

- when the Synod's congregations regularly supplied students (whether in church work or general liberal arts), faculty, or, through the Synod, financial subsidy sufficient to dominate the operating scale of Concordia colleges and universities. Today—far along in a gradual but profound transformation that began in the 1970s—church work (4 percent) and member-congregation students (11 percent) are a small minority and tuition and fees (especially from profitable, largely graduate, almost exclusively nonchurch-work programs), grants, and gifts from the faithful, from alumni, and from surrounding communities have replaced a Synod subsidy as principal financial means. Only approximately 5–6 percent of graduates of Synod parochial and high schools attend a Concordia University;
- when the Synod's Concordias served only traditional, residential undergraduate students studying in a limited number of academic programs on campuses oriented principally or exclusively toward church work or final pastoral formation at seminary. Today, the colleges and universities offer, to a confessionally diverse student population, dozens of online and on-ground undergraduate and master's, doctoral, and professional degrees and programs in a wide variety of disciplines, including health care, education, criminal justice, etc.;
- when individual Concordias could get by with simply a sufficient "captive audience" of Synod students. Today they operate at present scale by offering attractive campuses and programs that compete successfully for the investment of considerable time and money of a sufficient number of prospective students from outside sources;

- when public schools advocated basic Judeo-Christian morality and moral principles, and secular society willingly supported Christian churches and schools and maintained Christian pro-life and sexuality standards. Today, churches and schools are left to contend with government and society increasingly antagonistic to Christianity, and the church's colleges and universities exist not only in competition with but in contradiction of mainstream higher education;
- when resources either deposited by other Concordias or granted by the Synod sufficed to manage the schools' cash flow and other needs. Today the Concordia University System is no longer able to offer lines of credit to the schools. Instead, the Lutheran Church Extension Fund finances the borrowing by schools based on their individual financial circumstances. The Synod, likewise, cannot take on the scale of liabilities that could be expected to arise in connection with colleges and universities experiencing severe financial straits;
- when it would have been realistic to contemplate empowering any single Synod board to coordinate the business and financial operations of the universities as they presently exist and operate as a unitary whole. Even the few existing layers of authorization in left-hand kingdom matters (e.g., administration, finance, real estate, budget, information technology) have engendered uncertainty regarding the relative roles of CUS, the LCMS board of directors, and the boards of regents, although the latter are clearly intended to be the schools' "governing bodies corporate" (Bylaw 3.10.6.4 [i][6]). With the size of the schools' operating budgets (by 2022, collectively, approximately 23 times the total unrestricted budget of corporate Synod), expanding endowments, and potential liabilities vastly outweighing the value of the schools' properties, present Synod bylaw mechanisms, e.g., Bylaw 3.6.6.4, have not proven practically usable;
- when anything less than the utmost performance by highly skilled and qualified governing bodies and administrations could suffice to enable the Concordias to succeed in the increasingly challenging world of higher education; and
- when the Concordia University System as heretofore structured (or its predecessor, the Board for Higher / University Education), and the institutions' obligatory relationships to it, along with Synod subsidy and sizeable flows of member congregations' students and faculty, were able to keep all of its institutions economically viable (institutions in Selma, Portland, and Bronxville having been lost to the Synod in the last five years), to insulate them from the theological drift characteristic of religious colleges and universities across the country, or to sustain through them a flow of church vocation graduates meeting the church's needs.

Not gone, however, are the days for The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod to continue vigorously in common confession and mission with her colleges and universities by:

- providing opportunities for members of the Synod's congregations to attend quality and attractive schools that, both in teaching and campus life, faithfully adhere to and advocate the Holy Scripture and its central Christian teachings, as expressed in LCMS Constitution Article II;
- providing opportunity and freedom for the Concordias to discern and pursue their own visions for campuses and academic life while enjoying and putting into practice their affiliation with the LCMS and its doctrinal foundation, as articulated in Article II of its Constitution, and while pursuing with both initiative and cooperation many of the objectives of the Synod listed in Article III;
- fundamentally renovating the Synod's approach to overseeing and influencing the curricular fidelity and comprehensive spiritual life of the Concordias under the Lutheran Identity Statement (2016 Res. 7-01A, *Proc.* 171) and subsequent standards for identity and mission outcomes, using a thorough and transparent process of ecclesiastical accreditation, rooted in Synod's theological and pedagogical strengths, that not only evaluates performance but also fosters and strengthens plans for improvement;
- reiterating clearly the role of the Concordia boards of regents as the directly and ultimately responsible and accountable stewards of the resources committed to them for the mission of the church, and providing enhanced means for regent selection, training, assessment, and development;
- continuing to empower and expect boards of regents to exercise their duty to the congregations of the Synod, as the governing bodies corporate of the several institutions (Bylaw 3.10.6.4 [i][1, 6]), to do the work for which Synod has established the schools, including training professional church workers (Const. Art. III 3) and laity for service in the Evangelical Lutheran Church (Art. of Inc. II d), and thoroughly educating and nurturing "others desiring a Christian liberal arts education" (Bylaw 3.6.6.1); and
- continuing thereby the Synod's efforts to uphold the relationship—as mutually voluntary and mutually valued—of the schools with its congregations and commending them to their students, while guiding participating schools to build on the strength that differentiates them from every other university—the full and pure confession of a Jesus who is never for them "in the way" but in every sense "the Way."

Thus the institutions will be guided to thrive in precisely that way that will sustain and increase their unique and indispensable contributions to the common mission of the Synod.

The proposed transition to a new model of organization reflecting all these realities and hopes has emerged from a series of recent Synod convention actions (2013 Res. 5-01A; 2016 Res. 7-02B; and 2019 Res. 7-03). The culminating 2019 convention action directed the Synod's Board of Directors—with active involvement of the President of the Synod; the Concordia University System Board, Advisory Council, and President; the institutions' boards of regents; and others as needed—to propose a new governance plan for consideration and adoption by the 2023 convention. The process directed by 2019 Res. 7-03 required the concurrence of the CUS Advisory Council and the CUS Board of Directors and a period of review and comment by the entire Synod, which took place between March and Sept. 2021. The following new governance plan is presented in pursuit of a realistic, sustainable, and transparent framework, satisfying and acting upon the following objectives of the aforementioned resolutions, as summarized in 2019 Res. 7-03, 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;
- review the overall governance of the CUS and the boards of regents of CUS institutions; and
- review the financial models for the institutions.

At the same time, responding to the rationale for 2019 Res. 7-03, to the collective desire expressed by the several boards of regents, and to practical necessity, the following proposal aims, so far as an appropriate governance structure can, to foster and facilitate the coordination and collaboration that will help the institutions to succeed, individually and together—as schools strongly affiliated with the church and her mission—in an increasingly challenging higher education environment.

Each of the following eight sections (A–H) of the proposed governance plan (as well as any additional separate but related proposed convention actions) is prefaced by a *rationale* section briefly relating the proposed changes to the above objectives. In response especially to the thrice-expressed (2013 Res. 5-01A; 2016 Res. 7-02B; 2019 Res. 7-03) desire of the convention for materially *strengthened* connections with the Synod’s colleges and universities, detailed bylaws provide an accountable, principally elected commission and concrete associated mechanisms for continued evaluation and improvement where the Synod’s strength most lies and where it most matters: confessional Lutheran identity and mission focus. Further background material will be provided in the reports of the Concordia University System and of the several colleges and universities in the 2023 *Workbook*.

A. TO REPLACE THE CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY SYSTEM, THE SYNODWIDE CORPORATE ENTITY, WITH THE COMMISSION FOR UNIVERSITY EDUCATION

Rationale

In keeping with the charge of 2019 Res. 7-03 to “review the overall governance of the Concordia University System (CUS) and the boards of regents of the CUS institutions,” the primary mechanism of the Synod’s relation to the schools is reconceived along the lines of a “two-kingdom model.” To be clear, the intention is not at all to divorce the business operation of the institutions or any so-called “secular” aspects of their operations from their essentially religious purpose and approach, but to be clear about who is responsible for which aspects of the schools’ governance and in what manner. As a Christian lives *in two kingdoms* but *as one* subject—entrusted at once with material gifts and human relationships, on the one hand, but also with the Word of God, on the other—so these two spheres meet in the board of regents of a college or university, which will continue to be composed of members of member congregations of the Synod. These regents are entrusted with certain obligations and duties, on the one hand, with regard to the worldly means and relationships of their particular institution, but at the same time—and preeminently—to Christ and the Church, with regard to His Word and their institution’s unique share of the Church’s mission (2019 Bylaws 3.10.6.1; 3.10.6.4 [i][1]). The final responsibility and authority, logically and legally, to marshal their institution’s means to

achieve Christ’s ends lie with these regents (2019 Bylaw 3.10.6.4 [i][6]).

With each institution facing unique and complex challenges and opportunities, boards of regents, to respond with agility, must possess full “left-hand kingdom” authority and responsibility in business matters. As explained above, this is the current-day practical reality and necessity, which state of affairs Synod’s bylaws must clearly reflect. At the same time, the Synod must retain and take concrete steps to strengthen its effective cooperation with the boards of regents and school administrations, always striving to sustain and advance the church’s “right-hand” mission. This means change for what we now know as CUS, *not* to introduce or enhance mechanisms by which it directs the universities or to involve it in their kingdom of the left business decisions, but to *focus and enhance* the Synod’s effort in the guidance, encouragement, and provision of accountability for the schools’ accomplishment of their churchly purpose.

Mechanisms for what were always the chief aims of CUS must be sustained and strengthened, namely, for setting forth a vision for the schools’ role in the mission of the Synod, in pursuit of which CUS has worked with them to establish Lutheran Identity Standards (2016 Res. 7-01A, *Proc.* 171) and to advocate the schools’ provision of church workers and preeminently and pervasively *Lutheran* higher education programs and campuses. Such purposes—which are the Synod’s motivating objectives in connection with the schools—do not require maintenance of a synodwide corporate entity with significant “left-hand kingdom” responsibility. The schools and the Synod will benefit from the replacement of CUS with the *Commission* for University Education (CUE; *commission* as defined in Bylaw 1.2.1 [c]), a commission being suited to cultivate the mission-and-ministry connection of the schools with the Synod’s congregations and other ministries, with the focus on advancing Lutheran identity and mission in curriculum and campus culture and on effectively training church workers.

It will be the commission’s responsibility, aided by its staff, for which corporate Synod will bear primary budgetary responsibility, to help guide the colleges and universities in the way of faithful service of and on behalf of the Synod’s congregations, and to hold the boards of regents and presidents of the various colleges and universities accountable before the Synod for, in their governance and administration of all aspects of college and university operations, effectively assisting these institutions and all their parts along this way as institutions of the Synod. For governing the comprehensive business and legal affairs of the colleges and universities in the way that best serves their *fundamental purpose*, (see proposed Bylaw 3.10.6.1 [a] under section F below) it is the boards of regents that are ultimately responsible; for this the present proposal makes them ultimately accountable, in a more structured, intentional, and formative way through the work of the proposed CUE, to the congregations of the Synod.

Section C, below, elaborates the accreditation process by which, chiefly, the commission will guide institutions in the way of expressing *Lutheran identity* in all spheres of university life and accomplishing the Synod’s *mission outcomes*, including bold confession (Const. Art. III 1–2), quality Christian education (Art. III 5), and preparation of church workers (Art. III 3) and others (Articles of Incorporation II d) for exemplary service in family, church, and state. This accreditation process, while it adopts forms common to the world of higher education, operates substantially within the

churchly tradition of *visitation* and *ecclesiastical supervision* (Cf. Bylaws 3.3.1.1.1, 3.3.1.2; 1.2.1 [j], Const. Art. XII 7) as a means of accountability of the Synod's colleges and universities, under the Scriptures and Lutheran Confessions, to the whole Synod. CUE, acting in concert with the existing Committee for Convention Nominations, will also have an active role in commending highly qualified potential regents for election and appointment to the affiliated schools' boards. The boards of regents themselves are dealt with in section F, further below.

Therefore be it

Resolved, That, with thanks given to God and to those who have served ably in various related capacities in the interest of furthering the Synod's mission through her colleges and universities, and for the good the Lord has done through such service, Concordia University System (CUS), a synodwide corporate entity, be dissolved, such dissolution to be effected by the board of directors of CUS and the board of directors of the Synod when appropriate, taking into consideration CUS' remaining left-hand kingdom obligations, if any, and transferring any continuing common enterprises of the several colleges and universities, as presently conducted through CUS, to the several colleges and universities, to an entity or entities created by the schools to further their common endeavors (section E), or to other service providers; and be it further

Resolved, That Bylaws 3.6.6–3.6.6.2 and 3.6.6.4–3.6.6.8, dealing with the corporate structure of CUS, be deleted; and be it further

Resolved, That, with fervent prayer to God for His blessing in and through a structure better suited to a new season of the Synod's relation to her schools, those functions formerly of CUS that coordinate the schools in vital relation to the confession, mission, and ministry of the Synod be assigned to a new Commission for University Education (CUE), as defined in a new Bylaw 3.9.6 and following, with the existing Bylaw 3.6.6.3 adapted as indicated, as follows:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

Commission for University Education

3.9.6 The Commission for University Education coordinates the Synod's relationship with its affiliated colleges and universities (Bylaws 1.2.1 [a]; 3.10.6f.) to further their effective and accountable:

- preparation of commissioned ministers for service in the Synod and of preseminary students for study at a Synod seminary;
- preparation of Lutheran laypersons for lifelong, faithful service to Christ and the neighbor; and
- robust, intentional engagement of all students with the faith taught and practiced, with application to their vocations in family, church, and state.

3.9.6.1 In keeping with the objectives of the Constitution, Bylaws, and resolutions of the Synod, and in consultation with its Institution Advisory Council, the Commission for University Education shall:

- (a) define and adopt the Lutheran Identity and Mission Outcome Standards ("Standards"), on the basis of which affiliated colleges and universities and each of their church worker preparation programs shall undergo Synod accreditation; and maintain policies governing, and supervise the performance of, such Synod accreditation (Bylaws 3.9.6.4f.);

Oversight roles:

- (b) monitor, inquire into, report to the President of the Synod regarding, and promote the ongoing faithfulness of affiliated colleges and universities to Article II of the Constitution of the Synod;
- (c) monitor—in consultation with the Office of National Mission; the Department of Rosters, Statistics, and Research Services; the Council of Presidents; and the Synod's seminaries—and report to the Synod on the enrollment, graduation, placement, and retention rates in programs leading to candidacy for commissioned ministry or to seminary enrollment and advise the schools on the Synod's worker needs and opportunities for coordination;
- (d) receive, revise, and recommend to conventions of the Synod for approval any proposals for creating, essentially revising, or renaming programs of study and certification for commissioned ministry;
- (e) facilitate, together with respective boards of regents, the process of president selection (Bylaw 3.10.6.8.2) and prior approval for appointments to theology faculties of affiliated colleges and universities (Bylaw 3.10.6.9.2); [bylaws as re-numbered pursuant to below amendments]
- (f) establish in policies expectations for boards of regents' handling of faculty and staff complaints in matters of doctrine and practice, to include notification of any relevant ecclesiastical supervisor, and monitor compliance with such policies;
- (g) in addition to providing its own report, review and respond in each Synod convention Workbook to a detailed triennial strategic report prepared by the Institution Advisory Council, summarizing the state of and outlook for church worker preparation, confessional Lutheran lay education, campus ethos, and campus viability in affiliated schools;

Assistive and coordinative roles:

- (h) assist the Synod and its affiliated colleges and universities in articulating and advancing the schools' unified public confession and application of the church's doctrine and practice, and, in coordination with the Board of Directors of the Synod, in advancing the common defense of their rights to the free exercise of our confession under the Constitution of the United States;
- (i) serve as a point of coordination for financial resources designated to assist the schools in their pursuit of the Standards and strengthening of churchly identity; in their achievement of mission outcomes, including, especially, church worker training; and in their coordination, cooperation, and consolidation of operations, in part or in whole, wherever prudent and practically feasible, and facilitate a synodwide effort to raise funds in support of the same;
- (j) serve, in consultation with the President and Secretary of the Synod, the Institution Advisory Council, and the boards of regents of affiliated colleges and universities, as a resource for the recruitment of highly and variously qualified potential regents, offering in nomination (Bylaw 3.12.3.4 [c]) and suggesting for appointment those suitably qualified;
- (k) serve as a resource for regents' development of and mandatory training in governance skills, especially as they relate to the carrying out of the mission of the affiliated colleges and universities within the mission of the church, and foster regents' growth in aspects of governance related to the ex-

pectations of the Standards;

- (l) serve as a resource for the development of lists of potential teaching and administrative personnel; and
- (m) together with districts, congregations, local boards of regents, and national efforts, promote student recruitment for both professional church work and lay higher education.

3.6.6.39.6.2 The Board of Directors of Concordia University System Commission for University Education shall be composed of nine ten voting members and five six nonvoting members (no more than two members elected by the Synod shall be from the same district, and no voting member shall be a regent, executive, faculty, or staff, as defined in Bylaw 1.5.1.1, of an affiliated college or university, 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~~ Four laypersons appointed by the ~~delegates of the members of Concordia University System elected members~~ listed above, after consultation with the President of the Synod and the Institution Advisory Council; at least two of the four must have background experience in higher education administration or accreditation
5. The President of the Synod or his representative

Nonvoting Advisory Members:

1. A district president appointed by the Council of Presidents
2. ~~Up to two persons appointed by One representative designated by the Board of Directors of the Synod~~
3. One representative designated by the Commission on Theology and Church Relations
34. The Chief Mission Officer of the Synod or his representative
45. ~~One university president appointed by the Concordia University System Advisory Council, who is designated by, and is a member of, the Institution Advisory Council~~
6. One university board of regents chair who is designated by the Institution Advisory Council and whose institution is an affiliated college or university presently accredited by the Synod.

The advisory university president and university board of regents chair shall be drawn from different institutions. Neither the advisory university president nor the advisory board of regents chair shall participate in the work or sessions of the commission as they relate to the accreditation or affiliation of any individual college or university.

3.9.6.2.1 Persons elected or appointed to the Concordia University System Board of Directors commission should have demonstrated familiarity with and support of the institutions affiliated colleges and universities, and shall strongly and demonstrably articulate and support the confession and doctrinal positions of the Synod, and shall possess have demonstrated a high degree of two or more of the following qualifications or background experiences: theological acumen, an advanced degree, experience in higher education administration, higher education accreditation, professional church worker education, administration of com-

plex organizations, finance, religious nonprofit law, higher education law, investments, technology, human resources, facilities management, or fund development or the strengthening of the mission of the Synod's congregations and schools. The Chief Administrative Officer President 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.

3.9.6.2.2 The Institution Advisory Council shall, as specified elsewhere in these bylaws and upon request, advise the commission in its responsibilities, providing expert consultation and access to information as necessary to facilitate the commission's oversight, on the Synod's behalf, of the schools' Lutheran identity and mission outcomes under the Standards (Bylaw 3.9.6.1). It shall also, as bylaws elsewhere specify and upon request, advise the commission in its responsibilities as they relate to programs leading to candidacy for commissioned ministry and to seminary enrollment.

(a) It shall comprise the presidents (including interim presidents) of affiliated colleges and universities currently accredited by the Synod.

(b) It may, as necessary for its work and subject to the commission's approval, create committees consisting of its own members or others, and, while retaining supervision and accountability, delegate to them certain of its responsibilities.

3.9.6.3 The commission shall create an executive director position and fill it in accordance with the Bylaws of the Synod and the human resource policies of corporate Synod, as in Bylaw 3.9.5.3.1 (a–c), and may, subject to budgetary approval of the Board of Directors, likewise create and fill other staff positions, as in Bylaw 3.9.5.3.1 (d).

And be it further

Resolved, That the references to CUS and/or its board of directors in Bylaws 1.2.1 (w); 3.2.2; and 3.6.1 be removed; that the reference to the CUS board of directors in Bylaws 3.3.4.6 (e) and 3.10.6.3 (c) be revised to refer to the CUE; that Bylaw 3.3.4.6 (e) be amended to reflect the composition of the CUE; and that references to the CUE be added to Bylaws 1.2.1 (c) and 3.9.1; and be it further

Resolved, That Bylaws 3.12.3.5 (e–f) and 3.12.3.7 (c) be amended as follows:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

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.

(e) In the case of the boards of regents of educational institutions of the Synod affiliated colleges and universities, the committee shall consult with the President of the Synod or the Board of Directors of Concordia University System, the Commission for University Education, and the presidents and chairs of the institutions' boards of regents and receive their input for the committee's consideration. The President of Concordia University System (or a designee) and the Secretary of the Synod (or a designee) shall review and verify that nominees are qualified as stated in Bylaw 3.10.6.2 (8). Only those nominees whose qualifications have been verified as described in Bylaw 3.10.6.2.1 shall be considered to be eligible for selection as candidates for subsequent election.

(f) The Committee for Convention Nominations Secretary of the Synod shall establish and maintain a procedure to

generate and publish in advance of the convention a-lists of names from all who have been nominated for Synod boards and commissions who meet the qualifications (as certified under Bylaws 3.10.6.2-~~8~~1 and ~~3.6.6.3~~ 3.9.6.2.1) to serve (1) on a ~~Concordia University System~~ board of regents of an affiliated college or university or (2) on the ~~Concordia University System Board of Directors Commission for University Education~~. Information on such nominees shall be shared with the Commission for University Education for use throughout the following triennium as it appoints further members and assists the districts and affiliated colleges and universities, respectively, in identifying potential regents for election and appointment.

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) Such floor nominations may only be made from the list of names that have previously been offered to the Committee for Convention Nominations prior to the final deadline for the submission of nominations, unless the convention shall otherwise order by a simple majority vote. ~~The President of Concordia University System (or a designee) and the Secretary of the Synod (or a designee) shall verify that all floor nominees to serve as a member of a Concordia University System board of regents possess qualifications as stated in Bylaw 3.10.6.2 (8). The qualifications of floor nominees for boards of regents of affiliated colleges and universities shall be verified as provided in Bylaw 3.10.6.2.1. The Chief Administrative Officer President of the Synod (or a designee) and the Secretary of the Synod (or a designee) shall review and verify that all floor nominees to serve as a member of the Concordia University System Board of Directors Commission for University Education possess qualifications as stated in Bylaw 3.6.6.3 3.9.6.2.1.~~

And be it finally

Resolved, That those now standing for election or elected to new terms on the CUS Board of Directors be regarded as standing for or elected to terms on the CUE in the corresponding membership positions thereon, and that those presently in office on the CUS Board of Directors complete their present terms as members of the CUE in the corresponding membership positions thereon, with service on either body constituting contiguous terms of service for purpose of term limitation.

B. TO RELATE TO COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES AS AFFILIATES OF THE SYNOD

In keeping with the charge of 2019 Res. 7-03 to “review the overall governance of CUS and the boards of regents of the CUS institutions,” to “strengthen all CUS institutions’ connection to the Synod,” and to “strengthen the confessional Lutheran identity of all CUS institutions,” and with the intention of fulfilling more effectively, in the present context, the objective of the Synod to “support the establishment and maintenance of . . . colleges [and] universities . . . to train ministers of religion . . . and laity for service in the Evangelical Lutheran Church” (Articles of Incorporation II [d]), a new type of corporate relationship between the Synod and its colleges and universities is enacted.

The proposed affiliate model recognizes a “coming of age” of the Concordia universities, reflecting decades of increasing university

responsibility for business models; operations; funding in gifts, tuition, and revenue; increased scope of programs offered; and intensified regulatory demands, all in the context of significant changes in higher education in the country as a whole. The term *affiliate*, naturally and as herein defined, accurately reflects the development of the present reality toward a realistic, sustainable, and productive relationship, and underscores the crucial role of boards of regents as trustees on behalf of the institution but also of Christ, the Synod, and their common mission. The schools’ confessional and mission connection with the Synod is maintained so that the schools’ heritage and rights to the free exercise of our confession as guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution are, to the best of the Synod’s ability, secured. The Synod’s connection to the confession and mission of the schools is, through the above-described commission (section A) and the below-described accreditation (section C) rendered more tangible and more transparent to the membership of the Synod so that the Synod’s connection with its schools is—where it is most achievable and most important, that is, with regard to their fidelity and fulfillment of their churchly purpose—enhanced. With the relationship being regularly evaluated and refined through the accreditation process and in an ongoing affiliation that is not merely to be assumed, the responsibilities and accountability of boards of regents, administrations, and faculties to the Synod will be emphasized in a new way. Finally, explicitly stating the schools’ ability to carry out their own business affairs, apart from any suggestion of directive control, enhances the ability of schools to react and to respond nimbly and responsibly to business opportunities and threats, while maintaining their accountability to the Synod for the impact operational decisions have on their ability faithfully to fulfill their part of the church’s mission.

Therefore be it

Resolved, That, in Bylaw 1.2.1, the definition of *agency* be amended; a new definition of *affiliated college or university* be added, with subsequent subparagraphs being incrementally relettered; and the definition of *ecclesiastical supervision* be amended, as follows:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

1.2 Definition of Terms

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) ***Affiliated college or university (“affiliate”)***: A college or university, separately incorporated and governed, recognized by the Synod and electing:

- to state expressly in its governing documents its full commitment to the Synod’s confession (Const. Art. II) and objectives (Const. Art. III, insofar as these pertain to the role of a confessional Lutheran college or university);
- to submit to such bylaws as apply to affiliated colleges and universities; and
- to undergo regular accreditation by the Commission for University Education under the Lutheran Identity and Mission Outcome Standards (Bylaw 3.9.6.4f.).

Affiliates are not agencies of the Synod, and their property is not property of the Synod, provided, however, that the foregoing shall not invalidate any reversionary interest or right of reentry granted or directed by convention resolution or other

action by or on behalf of Synod in the property of an affiliate. They expressly state in their governing documents that the Word and will of God call them to common mission with the congregations and other ministries of their confession, including their sister affiliated schools, so that the diversity of gifts may serve for the common good (Const. Preface), and they act accordingly. They respect, uphold, confess, and propagate the doctrine and practice of the Synod, foster and extend the mission and ministry of the Synod, and conduct themselves in harmony with the programs of the Synod. In this connection, they each may use the common name, permitted through and contingent upon Synod affiliation, *Concordia*.

(ab) **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.~~ Neither affiliated nor ~~disaffiliated colleges and universities are agencies of the Synod.~~

(2) The term "agency of the Synod" does not describe or imply the existence of principal and agency arrangements as defined under civil law.

...

(jk) **Ecclesiastical supervision:** 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, and affiliated colleges and universities.~~ 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.

...

And be it further

Resolved, That Bylaws 3.10.6.4–7 be added as follows, to specify the benefits of affiliation and how the affiliation of a college or university with the Synod may be established or withdrawn, with existing Bylaws 3.10.6.6–3.10.6.7.5.2 renumbered as Bylaws 3.10.6.8–3.10.6.9.5.2:

3.10.6.4 Affiliation with the Synod affords a college or university: (1) access to the services of the various synodwide corporate and trust entities of the Synod; (2) participation in the Synod's life together, through continued affiliation and accreditation by the Commission for University Education, as specified in these Bylaws; (3) acknowledgement and endorsement by

the Synod, through the same accreditation, as an institution of higher education effectively serving the mission of the Synod's member congregations and, therefore, worthy of their full utilization and support; and (4) opportunity to collaborate with the other affiliated colleges and universities, united by their common confession and engaging in synergetic pursuits.

3.10.6.4.1 The Board of Directors of the Synod may, in consultation with the Commission for University Education, adopt, modify, or rescind additional benefits of affiliation or accreditation.

3.10.6.4.2 Each affiliated institution shall acknowledge in a written agreement, supplied by the Board of Directors of the Synod, the paramount right, title, and interest of the Synod in the name *Concordia*, agreeing that in the case of disaffiliation it shall immediately cease to represent itself as a college or university in any sense affiliated with The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and shall within one year permanently cease using, and transfer and assign to the Synod any rights involving, any name including the word *Concordia* or any derivation thereof.

3.10.6.5 Upon a college or university's proposal of affiliation with the Synod, the Commission for University Education may by its two-thirds vote recommend, and either the convention of the Synod, by a majority vote, or the Board of Directors of the Synod, by a two-thirds vote, may grant, such affiliation, subject to all the requirements and privileges pertaining to affiliated colleges and universities, except that the initial composition of the board of regents may deviate from that specified in Bylaw 3.10.6.2. Such proposal must indicate a definite plan of no more than 12 years' duration to bring the composition of the board of regents of the institution into compliance with Bylaw 3.10.6.2, and continued affiliation shall be contingent on execution of said plan.

3.10.6.5.1 The affiliation of a college or university resulting from the consolidation of an affiliated school with a nonaffiliated school, if the governance structure of the resulting school differs from that of the affiliated school, shall be subject to the requirements of Bylaw 3.10.6.5.

3.10.6.6 Affiliated colleges and universities are free and are encouraged to pursue among themselves efficient collaboration; sharing of administrative and educational resources; and consolidation of operations, academic programs, or institutions, as opportunities present themselves to their respective boards of regents and in consultation with the Commission for University Education. In the event of a proposed consolidation of two or more affiliated colleges or universities:

(a) Prior to effecting a proposed consolidation, the boards of regents of consolidating schools shall jointly present the Commission for University Education and Board of Directors of the Synod with their consolidation plan. Such a plan shall be consistent with the requirements of these Bylaws for an affiliated college or university, except that it may involve a consolidated board of regents deviating from the composition specified in Bylaw 3.10.6.2, provided that the ratio of elected to appointed regents is not decreased and that all members of the resulting board of regents are members of member congregations of the Synod. Such plan must indicate a definite plan of no more than 12 years' duration to bring the composition of the board of regents of the institution into compliance with Bylaw 3.10.6.2, and continued affiliation shall be contingent on execution of said plan.

(b) The consolidated college or university shall, upon approval of the Commission for University Education and Board of Directors of the Synod, be regarded as an affiliated college or university.

3.10.6.7 A college or university's ("institution's") affiliation with the Synod may, as follows, be terminated either by such institution's board of regents or by the Synod, rendering the institution no longer affiliated with the Synod and terminating all the institution's rights and obligations under these bylaws, including all requirements related to its governing documents and board of regents, except that all provisions imposing obligations on a disaffiliating university shall survive.

(a) The board of regents may, subject to the following process and by a three-fourths vote, terminate the institution's affiliation with the Synod.

(1) The board of regents shall, by the vote required for disaffiliation, initiate a period of mutual evaluation with the Commission for University Education and the Board of Directors of the Synod.

(2) The board of regents shall supply the Commission and Board of Directors with a detailed disaffiliation plan indicating reasons for the proposed disaffiliation, proposed disposition of university assets previously devoted to the fulfillment of Synod's objectives and handling of rostered workers employed by the university and of church work programs and their students, as well as any additional aspects requested by the Commission and/or Board of Directors.

(3) Delivery of the detailed disaffiliation plan shall initiate the period of mutual evaluation, to last at least six months, during which the board of regents shall at least twice meet jointly with delegations of the Commission and of Board of Directors to discuss the proposed disaffiliation.

(4) In consultation with the Commission, the Board of Directors shall be empowered to negotiate terms of disaffiliation with the board of regents, which may include a monetary payment to the Synod approved by the board of regents, in view of the Synod's historical contribution to and ongoing interest in the affiliated school, to the Synod to be used in the ongoing pursuit of its educational objectives.

(5) Only upon conclusion of the above and with the approval, by the Board of Directors of the Synod and effected by its two-thirds affirmative vote, of the final disaffiliation plan, may the board of regents vote to execute the final, approved disaffiliation plan.

(b) The Commission for University Education, upon its written report and finding that an institution is in breach of the Synod's requirements for affiliation and upon its determination that all negotiations and admonitions to repair the breach have failed, or upon the withdrawal of accreditation of such college or university under Bylaw 3.9.6.4.2 (c), may by a two-thirds vote recommend to the Board of Directors or Convention of the Synod that the affiliation of the institution with the Synod be revoked.

(1) Upon such recommendation and with six months' notice given to the respective board of regents, either the convention of the Synod by a majority vote or the Board of Directors of the Synod by a two-thirds vote may terminate the school's affiliation with, and any related accreditation by, the Synod.

(c) Upon any disaffiliation, the institution shall take all measures required under the disaffiliation agreement described in Bylaw 3.10.6.4.2.

And be it further

Resolved, That Bylaw 1.10.2, dealing with the dispute resolution process of the Synod, be amended as follows to provide access to dispute resolution for colleges and universities affiliated with the Synod:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

Purpose

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) affiliated colleges and universities; (34) members of congregations challenging the procedure used in their excommunications; (45) auxiliaries and recognized service organizations that have agreed to address call-related disputes through the dispute resolution system, in regard to such disputes; or (56) 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, or affiliate~~ to whom or to which the provisions of this dispute resolution process are applicable because of their membership in or affiliation with the Synod may render this procedure inapplicable by terminating that membership or affiliation during the course of the dispute resolution process.

And be it further

Resolved, That Bylaws 1.5.1.1–3; 1.5.7–1.5.7.1; 1.6.2 (b)(1–2); 1.9.1; 1.9.1.1 (d); 2.11.1 (g); 3.1.4; 3.1.4.2 and its subparagraph (a); 3.1.6.2; 3.3.1.1.1 and its subparagraph (c); and 3.10.5.7.2 (d)(1) be amended as follows:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

1.5.1.1 Unless otherwise specified or permitted by the Bylaws, chief executives and executive directors, faculty, staff, and all other employees on either the national or district level shall not be members of the board of the agency or affiliated college or university under which they serve, nor shall any such executives or staff be members of the board of any other agency of the Synod or of an affiliated college or university. For purposes of this bylaw only, *staff* shall mean:

- (a) Employees, other than faculty, rostered as ministers of religion—ordained or ministers of religion—commissioned, whether or not serving in such capacity; or
- (b) Employees of corporate Synod ~~or, of an agency of Synod, or of an affiliated college or university~~, other than faculty, who are responsible for the development and/or implementation of policies, goals, and programs; or
- (c) Employees of corporate Synod ~~or, of an agency of the Synod, or of an affiliated college or university~~ who assist chief executives, executive directors and faculty in their work and are supervised by these individuals directly or through a line of supervision.

1.5.1.2 No one, either in the Synod or a district, or between the Synod and a district, shall hold more than one elective office; or hold more than two offices, although one or both be appointive; or ever hold two offices of which one is directly responsible for the work done by the other.

(a) An office shall be regarded as elective only if it is an office filled through election by a national or a district convention, even though a vacancy in such an office may be filled by appointment.

(b) Elected and appointed positions on boards of regents of affiliated colleges and universities are regarded as offices for the purposes of this bylaw.

(b)c) Doubtful cases shall be decided by the President of the Synod.

1.5.1.3 Every board or commission member, officer, and all staff of corporate Synod ~~and of every agency of the Synod, and of every affiliated college and university~~ 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.

1.5.7 Individual members of the Synod's commissions and the boards of its agencies and of boards of regents of affiliated colleges and universities, 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:

...

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, or of an elected member of an affiliated college or university board of regents, except for those persons subject to Bylaw sections 2.15 and 2.16, shall be as follows:

1.6.2 The Synod, in seeking to clarify its witness or to settle doctrinal controversy, so that all who seek to participate in the relationships that exist within and through the Synod may benefit and may act to benefit others, shall have the right to adopt doctrinal resolutions and statements which are in harmony with Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions.

(b) Doctrinal statements set forth in greater detail the position of the Synod especially in controverted matters. A proposed statement or a proposal for the development of such a statement shall be

(1) submitted by the Commission on Theology and Church Relations or submitted to the Commission on Theology and Church Relations by a convention of the Synod (including that of a district), a seminary faculty of the Synod, the faculty of an affiliated college or university (with only the voting or full-time faculty who are in good standing as individual members of the Synod or are members in good standing of a member congregation of the Synod participating), or an official district conference of ordained and/or commissioned ministers for evaluation, refinement, development, or recommendation, as the case may be;

(2) submitted by the commission, if it acts favorably, to the ~~colleges, universities, seminaries, congregations, and other members of the Synod, as well as to the faculties of affiliated colleges and universities~~ (with only the voting or full-time faculty who are in good standing as individual

members of the Synod or are members in good standing of a member congregation of the Synod participating) for study and suggestions for no more than one year (failure by the commission to submit a proposed doctrinal statement within a year may be appealed to the Synod in convention through a proper overture);

Definition

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', and affiliates'~~ materials is in accord with the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions.

Material Subject to Doctrinal Review

1.9.1.1 The following materials are subject to doctrinal review:

(d) Each of the Synod's ~~schools, seminaries and affiliated colleges and universities~~ 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 (Bylaw 3.4.3.7). The editorial boards of such publications shall serve as their own doctrinal reviewers.

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 that is a member of the Synod (except as provided in paragraph [c] below) and be regularly performing the duties of one of the following:

(g) A person serving on the faculty or professional staff of an educational institution of the Synod or of an affiliated college or university.

3.1.4 Officers of the Synod, district presidents, and representatives of the Synod's boards, commissions, ~~educational institutions, seminaries, affiliated colleges and universities~~, mission areas, chaplains, and district boards of directors shall also serve as advisory representatives to the convention of the Synod.

3.1.4.2 Each ~~educational institution, seminary~~ of the Synod and each affiliated college and university shall be represented at conventions of the Synod.

(a) ~~Educational institutions of the Synod~~ Such institutions 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.

3.1.6.2 Overtures to a convention of the Synod may be submitted only by a member congregation of the Synod, a convention or board of directors of a district, an official district conference of ordained and/or commissioned ministers, the faculty of ~~an educational institution, a seminary~~ of the Synod, the Board of Directors of the Synod, a board or commission of the Synod listed in Bylaws 3.2.2, 3.2.2.1, 3.2.3, and 3.2.3.1, a board of regents or faculty (with only the voting or full-time faculty who are in good standing as individual members of the Synod or are members in good standing of a member congregation of the Synod participating) of an affiliated college or university, a committee established by a prior convention, or a forum of a circuit.

...

3.3.1.1.1 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, and all affiliated colleges and universities.~~

(c) He shall at regular intervals officially visit or cause to be visited all the educational institutions of the Synod and all affiliated colleges and universities to exercise supervision over the doctrine taught and practiced in those institutions. He shall call up for review any action by the respective board of regents, administration, faculty, or institution that, in his view, may be contrary to the doctrine and practice of the Synod and, if he deems appropriate, he shall request that such action be altered or reversed.

3.10.5.7.2 Each theological seminary shall have established policies and procedures related to appointments. There shall be two levels of faculty appointments: (1) Initial level, where the appointment can be terminated with no formal requirement for a show of cause; (2) continuing level, where termination requires a formal show of cause.

(d) Standards or qualifications for moving a faculty member from initial-level appointment to continuing-level appointment shall be the following:

(1) The faculty member shall ordinarily have completed four to six years of creditable service (periods of leave are not included) as a member of the faculty of one or more educational institutions of the Synod or affiliated colleges or universities, at least the last two years of which shall have been in the seminary currently served.

And be it further

Resolved, That Bylaws 1.5.3.6 (b)(1); 3.2.2 [6]; 3.3.1.2 (a); 3.3.4.5 (e); and 3.3.4.6 (b)(2) be amended to reflect the nonagency status of the colleges and universities by removing references to the colleges and universities, whether explicit or implicit as among the “educational institutions of the Synod,” leaving, however, references to the seminaries of the Synod, which remain agencies; and be it further

Resolved, That references to *Synod* colleges and universities in Bylaws 3.6.2.2.3, including its subparagraph (b), regarding Concordia Historical Institute and 3.8.3, regarding liaison by the Board for International Mission, be amended to refer to *affiliated* colleges and universities; that Bylaws 3.6.5 and 3.6.5.2 be amended to include “affiliated colleges and universities” among the entities served and members of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod Foundation; that Bylaw 3.6.5.3 be amended to strike “colleges” and add “affiliated colleges and universities”; that Bylaw 3.7.1.1 (f), dealing with availability of the Concordia Plans, Bylaw 3.9.2.2, dealing with access to the Commission on Constitutional Matters (CCM) and its review of governing documents, Bylaw 3.9.3, dealing with the scope of review of the Commission on Doctrinal Review, and Bylaws 3.12.2.8 (a–b) and 3.12.3.4 (a–c), dealing with convention nominations, be amended to add the same; and that Bylaw 3.9.2.2.3, dealing with the CCM’s review of documents, be amended to add subparagraph (d), to read, “(d) The commission shall, at the request of the Board of Directors or Commission for University Education, review governing documents of affiliated colleges and universities and their related organizations as to whether they are in harmony with the requirements of affiliate status under the Constitution, Bylaws, and resolutions of the Synod”; and be it further

Resolved, That Bylaws 2.5.1–2 and 2.10.3, dealing with the call, ordination, and installation of ministers of religion, be amended

to add to each instance of *agency(ies)* also a reference to *affiliated college(s) and university(ies)*; and be it further

Resolved, That such colleges and universities presently existing as *agencies* of the Synod be hereby and henceforth designated to be *affiliated* with the Synod, with the Board of Directors and the several boards of regents taking any necessary actions to effect this change, unless and until such affiliation should be rescinded, consistent with the bylaws here adopted; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod, in reclassifying the Concordia colleges and universities from agency to affiliate status, nevertheless asserts its primary interest in the historical use of the name *Concordia* to denote those colleges, universities, and seminaries serving the Synod’s confession, for and on behalf of Synod’s congregations. The name having been bestowed in this long-standing tradition, the Synod asserts that the name *Concordia*, in connection with its use by its colleges and universities, along with all its derivatives, is and remains property of the Synod. The Synod expects the colleges and universities to honor the name’s purpose and intent and, should they no longer serve these ends through continued affiliation with the Synod, to forfeit and forgo the use of the name *Concordia* and all its derivations, and to assign any rights thereto to the Synod. The Synod moreover directs and requires each college or university transitioning from agency to affiliate status to provide the instrument required by Bylaw 3.10.6.7 (d), above; and be it finally

Resolved, That the existing claim on the property of the colleges and universities insofar as they have been regarded as “property of the Synod,” except for any existing reversionary interests and rights of reentry granted or directed by convention resolution or other action by or on behalf of Synod in affiliate properties and except for the Synod’s primary interest in the name *Concordia*, is hereby directed to be released in favor of the respective colleges and universities upon their acceptance of affiliate status in accordance with the above, and that existing agreements governing said property as “property of the Synod,” explicitly excluding any existing reversionary interests and rights of reentry granted in affiliate properties and the Synod’s interest in the name *Concordia*, are, effective at that time, hereby superseded.

C. TO ESTABLISH INITIAL CRITERIA AND PROCESS FOR AFFILIATED UNIVERSITY ACCREDITATION

In keeping with the charge of 2019 Res. 7-03 to “strengthen all CUS institutions’ connection to the Synod” and to “strengthen the confessional Lutheran identity of all CUS institutions,” the Commission for University Education (CUE) is to accredit affiliated colleges and universities on the basis of their Lutheran Identity and Mission Outcomes (that is, their effective preparation of church workers, thorough preparation of Lutheran laity for service and leadership in the church, and immersion of all students in a faithful and forthright Lutheran context and curriculum).

2016 Res. 7-01A, “To Adopt Lutheran Identity Statements for CUS Institutions as Prepared by CUS Presidents” (*Proc.*, 171), already adopted by the convention and the several boards of regents, provides an initial framework for the Lutheran Identity and Mission Outcome Standards (“the Standards”); the process of accreditation is modeled on that already familiar to the institutions, already regularly performed by the various accrediting bodies to which they are responsible in the secular sphere. This Synod accreditation is to be both likened to and distinguished from secular accreditation,

which deals with secular expectations for governance, responsible operation, educational quality, institutional viability, and the like. The two accreditations share similar processes and pursue complementary aims; on the one hand, ethical administration, effective teaching, and institutional viability; on the other, the advancing of the confession and nonseminary higher education mission of the Synod. Synod accreditation, operating substantially within the churchly tradition of *visitation* and *ecclesiastical supervision* (Cf. Bylaws 3.3.1.1.1, 3.3.1.2; 1.2.1 [j], Const. Art. XII 7), holds boards of regents (and through them, presidents, faculties, and staffs) of affiliated colleges and universities accountable to the Synod for the governance, administration, and implementation of programs and campus life consistently faithful to the confession of and oriented toward the mission of the church—not as imposition of an external compulsion but as “iron sharpening iron” in pursuit of each college or university’s own all-encompassing, sacred purpose.

Accreditation is *formative*, in that it engages institutions in self-study and outside evaluation, relative to the expectations of the Standards. Every institution will be engaged, no matter its present degree of success in pursuing the ideals of the Standards, and challenged to demonstrate concrete plans for such pursuits. While CUS has in the past aimed to state ideals and to work with institutions with identified deficiencies, this model provides a definite process intended accountably and transparently to advance *all* affiliated institutions in their pursuit of the Standards and, therefore, in their service in support of and on behalf of the member congregations of the Synod.

Accreditation is also finally *summative*; that is, it can reach the conclusion that the standards expected have not and cannot reasonably be expected to be reached. While no one desires this outcome, its definite possibility is intended to strengthen the intentional working of all affiliated schools with CUE in pursuit of the Synod’s objectives. An institution or program losing *accreditation* loses its ability to prepare and declare qualified church workers for rostered service in the Synod as well as some of its rights to participate more broadly in the life of the Synod; it is put on public notice that it is not adequately fulfilling its churchly mission. Loss of *accreditation*, when its restoration is no longer being sought (as is obligatory under proposed Bylaw 1.2.1 [a]) or realistically to be expected, leads to loss of *affiliation* with the Synod.

This model recognizes the responsibility, initiative, and creative capacity of local boards of regents and administrations to pursue the high expectations the Synod rightfully has of affiliated colleges and universities, and provides not only for minimum expectations but for individualized, measurable, and reproducible plans for continuous improvement—the development of organic but intentional processes for improvement of each campus, with prescriptions and progress visible to the Synod. It provides for CUE to work transparently with institutions that need to achieve, and are working to achieve, positive change, or alternatively, for CUE to place on notice or probation, and ultimately to disaccredit those that do not work to achieve positive change. It provides a framework for monitoring of and accountability for confessional fidelity, directed and supervised by CUE and carried out with peer input, that can be shared regularly with the members of the Synod, to guide their support and utilization of the institutions.

Therefore be it

Resolved, That a program of affiliated college and university accreditation be established by the adoption of the following bylaws:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

Lutheran Identity and Mission Outcome Standards, Accreditation

3.9.6.4 The Commission for University Education shall, in consultation with its Institution Advisory Council, define and adopt the Lutheran Identity and Mission Outcome Standards (“Standards”), a regularly published policy document containing standards for accreditation of institutions and of programs leading to candidacy for commissioned ministry or to preparedness for seminary study.

- (a) The Standards shall express the Synod’s expectations for a confessional Lutheran college or university affiliated with the Synod, including fidelity of campus curriculum and culture intended to propagate the faith, strong theology and campus ministry programs having positive and intentional interaction with the entire faculty and student population and with all curricular programs, and success in preparation of church workers for the Synod and of Lutheran laypeople for distinctively faithful lives of service to church and neighbor and in conveying to all students a clear understanding of the essentials of the faith, generally and in specific relation to their particular vocations.
- (b) The Standards shall be elaborated to support both formative and summative functions. They shall engender local development and provide for outside monitoring of formative processes, engaging all institutions, even the strongest, fully in intentional and measurable programs intended to advance them in richer expression of their Lutheran identity and more expansive and efficient accomplishment of mission outcomes. They shall also enable the drawing of summative conclusions, concretely identifying strengths and weaknesses in institutions and programs, ultimately to provide clear rationale for decisions about continuation or termination of accreditation.
- (c) As a means of implementing the above two functions, each institution-level criterion of the Standards describes succinctly one summary expectation for a college or university accredited by the Synod. Within each criterion, core components describe the necessary aspects involved in satisfying each criterion. Each core component further provides several measurable factors useful in internal and external assessment of performance and planning relative to the criteria. Criteria, core components, and measurable factors provide not only a minimum compliance level but a framework for continuous improvement.
- (d) In addition to the standards with institution-wide applicability, the commission shall develop and maintain supplemental program standards specific to each type of program intended to result in candidacy for one of the Synod’s categories of commissioned ministry or in preparedness for seminary study. Such program standards shall specify, for example, the instructional and practical curricular requirements expected to be satisfactorily completed prior to qualification for first call or for granting of credit by a seminary for preseminary studies. The commission shall develop preseminary curricular standards in consultation with the seminaries of the Synod.
- (e) The Standards shall be made publicly available on the Synod’s website and as otherwise determined by the commission.

3.9.6.4.1 Affiliated colleges and universities shall undergo accreditation with respect to the Lutheran Identity and Mission Outcome Standards, both comprehensively as institutions and with regard to the specific requirements of each implemented program intended to result in candidacy for one of the Synod's categories of commissioned ministry or in preparedness for seminary study.

- (a) The ordinary, nominal period of institution and program accreditation shall be six years. Ordinary accreditation reviews shall attend to both summative and formative elements, evaluating present performance relative to the Standards but also fostering, monitoring, and advancing initiatives in pursuit of the Standards. A focused review of a specific alleged breach of the Standards, however, may be initiated by the commission at any time.
- (b) The commission may, if an accreditation or focused review finds that an institution or program is at risk of not fulfilling the Standards, place the institution or program under a notice of concern, which may, at the commission's option, be made public. The commission may lift notice at any time it determines the risk has been satisfactorily addressed.
- (c) The commission may, upon finding an accredited institution to be in breach of the Standards, either on the basis of a regular accreditation report or of a focused review, place the institution on probation for up to a two-year period, which may be extended once for two years and once for one year, but to no more than five years total, if the commission determines that substantial progress has been made and that verifiable plans and resources are in place to bring the institution into compliance. Probation may be lifted earlier by the commission. An institution not in compliance at the conclusion of the probationary period is no longer accredited or entitled to benefits of accreditation, can no longer declare graduates qualified for placement, and is no longer commended by the commission to the church.
- (d) The commission may, upon finding an accredited church work preparation program to be in breach of the Standards, either on the basis of a regular accreditation report or of a focused review, place the program on probation for up to a one-year period, which may be extended twice, each extension by up to one year, but to no more than three years total, if the commission determines that substantial progress has been made and that verifiable plans and resources are in place to bring the institution into compliance. Probation may be lifted earlier by the commission. A program not in compliance at the conclusion of the probationary period is no longer accredited and therefore cannot certify graduates as qualified for initial placement or be commended and acknowledged as a suitable program of preseminary preparation, as the case may be.
- (e) An institution or program under probationary accreditation is not "in good accreditation standing" for purposes of these Bylaws.

3.9.6.4.2 In consultation with its Institution Advisory Council, the Commission for University Education shall implement and maintain policies governing, and shall supervise, the process of accreditation for the affiliated colleges and universities on the basis of the Lutheran Identity and Mission Outcome Standards.

- (a) In preparation for accreditation, each institution and church work program shall provide, on the basis of a thorough self-

study, a written report evidencing compliance with the criteria and core components of the Standards, as evaluated by the stated measurable factors, as well as indicating any relevant explanatory factors and initiated or planned efforts to improve specific aspects of performance relative to the Standards. It shall especially address any issues noted in previous reviews or specifically requested by the commission. The self-study shall be delivered to and reviewed by the commission.

- (b) An accreditation team, assembled by the commission upon review of the self-study report or recommendation of its Institution Advisory Council, shall itself review the self-study report and then visit the institution, interacting with its board of regents, administration, faculty, campus ministry staff, and students. An effective visitation, with broad and unimpeded access to campus program information, policies, and personnel, shall be facilitated by the institution. Each implemented or proposed church work and preseminary program shall receive specific attention.
- (c) The accreditation team shall compile a report of its visit and associated findings, which shall be shared with the commission and the institution. After allowing 60 days for the institution to respond in writing to the team's report, the commission shall, with regard to the institution and each of its implemented or proposed church work programs: (1) grant or extend accreditation without concerns; or (2) grant or extend accreditation with concerns (notice); or (3) place the institution or program on probation; or (4) deny, in the case of an initial application, or initiate withdrawal of accreditation; or (5) initiate further investigation, with the same or a new accreditation team.
- (d) The institution reviewed may within 30 days of being notified of the commission's accreditation determination(s) submit a written appeal and/or response to the commission's determination. Once the commission has, within 30 days of its receipt, considered and acted upon any such appeal, its determination is final and not subject to further appeal.
- (e) Within the above 30-day period for request of an appeal or within 7 days of receipt of the commission's negative action on a requested appeal, an institution may state a corrective action plan and request the commission, acting in its sole discretion, to grant a delay of up to 6 months in the publication of a negative accreditation result to allow initiation of the plan. The commission may at its option require a summary of the action plan, composed by the institution and approved by the commission, to be published with any revised accreditation outcome.
- (f) At the conclusion of the above, the accreditation status of each institution and its programs, together with summary reports of accreditation reviews, any imposition(s) of notice or probation, and any withdrawal(s) of accreditation, shall be timely made available to the Synod through a publicly accessible website. The information presented shall be of a depth and character that would allow members of the Synod to evaluate the churchly character, relative value, and mission effectiveness of each institution and program, and to understand concretely the steps being taken to improve the same.
- (g) Accreditation teams, composed of members of member congregations of the Synod and assembled and organized by the commission, shall include representation from peer boards of regents, administrations, and faculties, and a district presi-

dent having ecclesiastical supervision of peer institution faculty, all with demonstrated excellence in advancing and achieving the Standards. It shall also include representation drawn from the member congregations and ministerium of the Synod and representative of their interests in the institutions. The Institution Advisory Council, the Council of Presidents, the Board for National Mission, and the Board of Directors and President of the Synod may nominate accreditors, as may members of the commission.

- (h) An institution receiving an accreditation team shall be notified in advance of the membership of the team. Either the institution or any member of such a team may challenge the participation of any member on the basis of actual partiality or the appearance thereof. The commission shall have in place a procedure for responding to any such challenge within 30 days. A finding by the commission of actual partiality or the appearance thereof shall disqualify the member from participating in the accreditation. The commission may as its option replace any member so disqualified or continue with the reduced accreditation team.
- (i) The commission, with the assistance of its council, shall provide training for members of accreditation teams, according to policies established by the commission.
- (j) Direct costs of the accreditation process shall be borne by the institution accredited.

And be it further

Resolved, That the Commission for University Education (CUE) shall, no later than Sept. 1, 2024, on the basis of the Lutheran Identity Statement adopted in 2016 Res. 7-01A and draft materials presented to the convention and in consultation with its Institution Advisory Council, release the first operational edition of the institutional Lutheran Identity and Mission Outcome Standards; and be it further

Resolved, That the CUE shall, no later than Sept. 1, 2024, in consultation with its Institution Advisory Council, release the first edition of uniform standards for the commissioned ministry and preseminary programs offered by affiliated colleges and universities accredited by the Synod; and be it further

Resolved, That accreditation be granted herewith to the colleges and universities presently assuming affiliated status and to the ministry programs currently approved, with the report of the first reaffirmation process for each institution and program scheduled for accreditation review in the upcoming triennium to be prepared and available to the Synod no later than 20 weeks prior to its 2026 convention, together with a report of the scheduling of, and process made toward, accreditation review for the other institutions in the subsequent triennium; and be it finally

Resolved, That the CUE and affiliated colleges and universities be instructed to make every effort to complete the process of development, reaffirmation, and reporting as scheduled, with the understanding that the initial implementation is the first step in a developmental process.

D. TO PROVIDE FURTHER FOR CHURCH WORKER EDUCATION THROUGH ACCREDITED, AFFILIATED SCHOOLS

In keeping with the charge of 2019 Res. 7-03 to “strengthen all CUS institutions’ connection to the Synod” and to “strengthen the confessional Lutheran identity of all CUS institutions,” the follow-

ing clarifies that affiliated institutions’ ability to declare graduates or those undergoing colloquy qualified for placement as ministers of religion—commissioned depends upon continued accreditation of such programs, and revises the minister of religion—commissioned colloquy process to reflect the affiliate relationship of the schools with the Synod. The accreditation program, as established above, will provide a transparent, structured, and accountable framework within which the affiliated colleges and universities and their individual church worker training programs, operating on campuses with strong Lutheran identity, will grow in their accomplishment of a higher education mission outcome critical to the Synod: the thorough preparation and ample provision of church workers for Synod’s congregations, schools, and other ministries. The authority of the Colloquy Committee for Commissioned Ministry to establish standards for the colloquy processes it oversees, relative to the programs offered for this purpose by the several schools, is also clarified. Therefore be it

Resolved, That Bylaws 2.5.3, 2.7.1, 2.7.3–4, 2.8.1 (a), 2.8.2, and 2.9.1 be amended as follows (including the division of existing Bylaw 2.8.2 into Bylaws 2.8.2–2.8.3), and Bylaw 2.8.4 be added, to clarify that only LCMS faculty of affiliated colleges and universities currently accredited by the Synod have the authority to declare church workers qualified for rostered service within the Synod, and then only within programs so accredited:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

2.5.3 Congregations that are members of the Synod, association schools, agencies, affiliated colleges and universities, 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 of ~~LCMS-affiliated~~ colleges and universities accredited by the Synod 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.

2.7.1 A graduate of an ~~authorized educational institution seminary~~ of the Synod ~~or of a Synod-accredited program of an affiliated college or university~~ must be declared qualified for a first call and recommended by the ~~respective faculty of the respective educational institution~~ before the effective date of the first call to service in the church, as assigned by the Council of Presidents acting as the Board of Assignments as provided in Bylaw section 2.9.

2.7.3 Candidates who have satisfactorily completed an approved educational program of the Synod for the ordained or commissioned ministry involving extensive use of distance learning and/or a mentoring system must be declared qualified for a first call and recommended by the ~~respective faculty of one of the seminaries, colleges, or universities of the Synod~~ before the effective date of the first call to service in the church, as assigned by the Board of Assignments as provided in Bylaw section 2.9.

2.7.4 Graduates of one of the ~~colleges, universities, or seminaries of the Synod~~ or of a Synod-accredited program of an affiliated college or university who desire to continue their

professional studies after they have completed the prescribed ~~undergraduate~~ curriculum, or who for any other valid reason are not ready for first calls to service in the church, shall continue to be eligible for unqualified recommendation for first calls as long as they can be recommended by the faculty of the educational institution ~~of the Synod~~ from which they have graduated. The respective faculty shall annually ascertain through personal interviews with the candidate or through satisfactory testimonials that each candidate so classified is still qualified for recommendation for a first call to serve in the church.

2.8.1 Candidates shall be declared qualified for first calls.

(a) They are those who before the effective date of the first calls will have satisfactorily completed the prescribed courses of studies and will have received diplomas from their respective ~~educational institutions~~ seminaries of the Synod or in Synod-accredited programs of affiliated colleges or universities, or have fulfilled the requisites of a colloquy or other approved education program of the Synod (Bylaws 2.7.2 and 2.7.3).

2.8.2 It shall be the responsibility of ~~Synod's~~ colloquy committees or, subject to the policies of the Colloquy Committee for Commissioned Ministry and within programs for which their respective institutions are currently accredited by the Synod, the faculties of educational institutions of the Synod Synod-affiliated colleges and universities to declare colloquy candidates qualified for first calls.

2.8.3 ~~For purposes of declaring candidates qualified for placement and recommending them for membership in the Synod, the Synod considers the such a "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) Affiliated 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 of a member congregation of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

2.8.4 Only faculties of such affiliated colleges and universities as are currently accredited by the Commission for University Education may declare qualified and recommend candidates for first calls, and each of these, only with regard to programs leading to candidacy for commissioned ministry (Bylaw 2.6.1.1) for which it is specifically and currently accredited by the commission.

2.8.4.1 A graduate of such a program that was accredited by the Commission for University Education at the time of matriculation but no longer accredited at the time of qualification for a first call may apply to the Colloquy Committee for Commissioned Ministry for examination, any necessary remediation, and certification. The institution offering such a program shall share records with the Colloquy Committee as necessary to assess the candidate's preparation and fitness for commissioned ministry.

2.9.1 The Council of Presidents, acting as the Board of Assignments, shall regularly assign to qualified graduates of ~~educational institutions of the Synod~~ seminaries and Synod-accredited programs of affiliated colleges and universities, and to workers available from colloquy programs, as "first calls" those calls that have been duly extended to fill active member positions as identified in Bylaw 2.11.1 for ordained and commissioned ministers if positions for which candidates are qualified are available.

...And be it further

Resolved, That Bylaws 3.10.3.1–2, establishing the membership and function of the Colloquy Committee for Commissioned Ministry, be amended as follows, to reflect the new relation of the Synod and the schools:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

3.10.3.1 The Colloquy Committee for Commissioned Ministry shall consist of the First Vice-President of the Synod as chairman; ~~—, a representative of Concordia University System the Commission for University Education, designated by the commission, and;~~ two college/university presidents of affiliated colleges or universities that are in good accreditation standing and that operate a program or programs qualifying graduates for commissioned ministry, appointed by the President of the Synod; ~~and two-three Concordia University System faculty of the same, who are involved in colloquy and appointed by the president of Concordia University System chair of the Commission for University Education, and one representative from CUEnet.~~

3.10.3.2 The committee shall direct the Synod's activity in matters of colloquies for commissioned ministers.

(a) The committee shall ~~oversee~~ maintain policies specifying, for each category of commissioned ministry ~~at each college and university of the Synod,~~ the prerequisites for colloquy application, required courses of study, and internship expectations.

(b) The committee shall also establish and monitor academic and theological standards for each of the colloquy programs. The committee shall consult the ~~directors of the programs at the Synod's colleges and universities~~ Commission for University Education and its Institution Advisory Council when establishing or reviewing the standards.

(c) The committee shall render a report on the commissioned ministry colloquy activities to each convention of the Synod.

3.10.3.3 The committee shall additionally facilitate the examination, remediation, and qualification for first call of suitable candidates from discredited programs applying under Bylaw 2.8.4.1.

E. TO ENCOURAGE AND FACILITATE AFFILIATED COLLEGES' AND UNIVERSITIES' BUSINESS CONSULTATION AND EFFICIENT COORDINATION AND COLLABORATION IN SHARED PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

In the impression of the 2019 Res. 7-03 committee, the institutions' success in the present environment—certainly their thriving, as tuition-dependent schools with relatively limited endowments—requires not only the sort of shared values advanced by the accreditation program developed above but also efficient coordination and collaboration or organic consolidation. To address this issue, the first *whereas* of 2019 Res. 7-03 acknowledged the college and university presidents' conclusion that "greater integration and collaboration would strengthen the individual institutions and the system as a whole." Given the natural inertia and independence of every individual human institution, however, broad success in such synergistic efforts will likely require strong leadership.

Concordia University System has in the past facilitated some common efforts of the colleges and universities, including the employment of staff and the maintenance of finances, principally in the

area of information technology, accounting software, and common efforts toward distance education in support of commissioned minister colloquy. Its successor, the Commission for University Education, is for good reason not charged with such business coordination. Its focus must be on confession and mission rather than on administration and operations, areas that demand, instead, the focused attention of the several boards of regents and their executives. The Synod's imposition of coordinative or collaborative efforts would be incongruent with the present approach and, based on the schools' experience with limited previous attempts to do so, ultimately unproductive. The institutions cannot afford to be saddled with shared solutions that may not fit; the mechanisms the schools devise together to lend efficiency to their operations simply must be immediately responsive and clearly accountable to the institutions served. In recognition of the value such shared endeavors may have in preserving and extending the schools' mission capacity, the Synod Board of Directors is to be permitted to extend to them the same benefits available to the several schools.

Therefore be it

Resolved, That the Synod in convention implore the boards of regents and presidents of affiliated colleges and universities that, being mindful of their common confession and mission, of the Synod's vast historical investment in and present and future reliance on the schools, and of the great responsibility incumbent on them as wise stewards—for the church's sake—of limited resources, they seek diligently and urgently opportunities for coordination, cooperation, and consolidation of operations, in part or in whole, that will reduce unnecessary duplication, share best-in-class resources and leadership, strengthen the institutions' ability to weather challenges, and enhance their ability together to deliver effectively on their mission objectives; and be it further

Resolved, That Bylaws 3.10.6.10–3.10.6.10.1 be added as follows:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

Common endeavor(s) of affiliated schools

3.10.6.10 Affiliated colleges and universities of the Synod are urged to conduct themselves materially in accordance with "our Lord's will that the diversities of gifts should be for the common profit (1 Cor 12:4–31; Constitution Preface)," strengthening one another through coordination, collaboration, consultation, and efficient consolidation of operations, wherever prudent and practically feasible.

3.10.6.10.1 Any number of affiliated colleges and universities may together incorporate an entity or entities to provide for common services, with governance to be vested in the participating schools. Such an entity is neither an agency nor an affiliate of the Synod. The Board of Directors of the Synod may extend or withdraw recognition of such an entity as a common endeavor of affiliated schools, eligible, for example, for purposes of employment, financing, granting, and endowment to the same benefits as its constituent affiliated schools.

F. TO REVISE BYLAWS RELATED TO GOVERNING BOARDS OF AFFILIATED COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

In keeping with the charge of 2019 Res. 7-03 to "review the composition, size, and selection of boards of regents" and to "review the financial models for the institutions," the committee reviewed the composition and charge of boards of regents as the "governing

bodies corporate" of the several schools. Existing bylaws dictate excessively detailed governance and even management details for the boards of regents, some of which are severely outdated, and would be even more so upon recognition of college and university *affiliate* status. New bylaws are needed to express simply and directly the relationship of affiliation between the Synod and the schools, keeping at the forefront the regents' responsibility and authority to act in the interest of our common confession and mission, while allowing the schools freedom to manage their own business affairs and to seek such cooperative endeavors and organic unions as may be beneficial.

While a variety of approaches have been proposed for restructuring the boards of regents, the present structure of the boards, with strong representation elected by the congregational members of the Synod, aligns with the furtherance of Synod's confession and mission objectives through the schools. Continuity of governance is also important at this time of transition from *agency* to *affiliate* relationships, together with the introduction of CUE accreditation. While the screening of regents for basic qualifications has aided the selection of qualified regents, specific training regarding responsibilities to the Synod and the task of governance will be useful to enhancing the function of the boards of regents as effective governing boards. Structurally, only minimal changes have been made.

With regard to the nomination and election/appointment of regents, many new process ideas were discussed. While it was generally affirmed that the present model, combining local and national election and board and ecclesiastical supervisory appointment, does provide a helpful diversity of impressions and of gifts on the boards of regents, it was also generally acknowledged that the model is certainly not uniformly effective or efficient. While certainly possible that an alternative model could be integrated relatively easily with the other changes here presented, no clearly superior model presented itself in the committee's work, and it was felt that this proposal already gave the present convention enough to consider and that changes to appointment and/or election of regents should only be undertaken after further careful study and consideration.

More important at present, it was felt, was to emphasize the above role of each board of regents as a unified whole, and to develop boards for and to hold boards accountable to this purpose. Regents do not serve disjoint constituencies with disjoint interests, some representing the district, some the Synod, some appointees, the institution itself or other key stakeholders; rather, an effective board of regents brings a diversity of highly developed individual abilities together as a unified, self-regulating, and responsible actor, intent on and successful at governing the institution in coherent pursuit of its essential purpose. Attention has therefore been given to the *governance task* committed to these boards, and to equipping the boards for this task. These institutions, though they will no longer be agencies of the Synod, remain institutions of the church, responsible and accountable to the congregations of the Synod for their fidelity to the church's confession and their execution of the church's mission. As this is not only Synod's interest but the reason for being of each institution, the primary responsibility of each board—for which it is held accountable through accreditation—is to govern its president, faculty, and staff, its overall and individual programs, consistently in this direction.

The present model of accepting nominations from every agency, college and university, congregation, and, indeed, member of

member congregation in the Synod can hardly be made more open, although it is at present underutilized. Responsibility for vetting potential regents has been transferred to CUE, with appropriate consultation, reflecting CUE's expanded role in assisting those who elect and appoint regents in identifying the most qualified and capable candidates. Information on Synod convention nominees will, in a significant change, be shared with CUE for use throughout the following triennium in recommending highly qualified regents for district election or board appointment. This increases the importance and economy of a triennial, synodwide drive for submission of exceptionally qualified nominees.

Therefore be it

Resolved, that Bylaws 3.10.6–3.10.6.3 be revised, and Bylaws 3.10.6.4–5 be removed, as follows:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

F. Concordia University System Synod-Affiliated College and University Boards of Regents

3.10.6 Each affiliated college and university (“institution”) of the Synod, with its president and faculty, shall be governed by a board of regents, autonomous to make decisions in the best interest of the institution, while electing to be subject to general policies set by the Synod, including those established by the Concordia University System the following expectations as a condition of affiliation with the Synod.

3.10.6.1 In exercising its relationship to the Synod ~~and to the Concordia University System as set forth elsewhere under Bylaw 3.6.6 and following~~, the board of regents of each institution shall consider as one of its primary duties the defining and fulfilling of the mission of the institution within the ~~broad assignment of the Synod~~ common confession and mission it shares with the Synod and its congregations (Bylaw 1.2.1 [a]). The board, in addition to its commonly understood fiduciary and governance responsibilities, shall:

- (a) as a whole and as individual members, as stewards of the institution on behalf of the congregations of the Synod, embrace and advance with administration, faculty, staff, and students the institution's fundamental purpose as inculcating the faith, as taught in the Scriptures and Lutheran Confessions (Constitution Art. II), preparing students to live in this faith toward God and by this faith, in their various vocations, in love toward the neighbor;
- (b) govern the institution with consistent 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 in concert with the objectives of the Synod (Constitution Art. III), intentionally seeking continual growth as a board in such governance;
- (c) actively foster and expect curricula and policies for student life and behavior consistent with the doctrine and practice of the Synod, and commit the institution to the principles of Christian discipline, an evangelical manner, and good order;
- (d) ensure that all faculty receive appropriate formal, ongoing training in the doctrines of Holy Scripture as rightly taught in the Lutheran Confessions as they relate to their academic disciplines, to enable faculty to engage in responsible exercise of their academic freedom within the confession of the institution and the Synod (Const. Art. II);
- (e) ensure that its institution and constituent parts strive to ex-

cel in the Lutheran Identity and Mission Outcome Standards, and to cooperate fully with processes for accreditation by the Commission for University Education and for appointment of the institution's president;

- (f) review and approve academic programs recommended by the administration and faculty, giving due consideration to the Standards and coordination with other affiliated colleges and universities. It shall participate fully in the procedures for the selection and regular review of the president, and shall approve the appointment of faculty members;
- (g) ensure that its institution and constituent parts support the proper authorities of the Synod in their roles of ecclesiastical supervision of called workers, placement of graduates, and doctrinal review status appeals, and submit to the Synod's expectations for handling of faculty complaints and dispute resolution, insofar as they apply;
- (h) exercise its unique fiduciary duty of institutional governance without abdicating its authority to, or commingling its authority with, that of others;
- (i) duly consider the common confession, mission, interest, and cooperative strength of the Synod, with its congregations, agencies, and other affiliates, as it makes decisions with impact beyond its campus, especially as it plans new programs, cooperates and consolidates operations with other affiliated schools, operates in a worldwide online marketplace, cooperates with the Synod Board of Directors in the legal defense of the right to the free exercise of our confession, and interacts with the ministries and partners of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, domestically and internationally, in harmony with its programs and consistent with its protocol agreements;
- (j) govern transparently, in a timely manner sharing with the Commission for University Education minutes of board meetings and with both the commission and the Synod Board of Directors revisions of institutional governing documents and policies, and responsively, understanding inquiries and suggestions offered by the commission to be offered on behalf of the congregations with which their institution shares a confession and mission;
- (k) operate with financial transparency, annually providing, within 30 days of audit completion, audited financial statements and other information as determined in the commission's accreditation standards to the Commission for University Education and to the Synod Board of Directors and to congregations of the Synod upon request;
- (l) effectively and intentionally govern administration and faculty so that they carry out their management and educational responsibilities in a manner consistent with the foregoing; and
- (m) affirm in writing submission to those Bylaws of the Synod applicable to an affiliated college or university, and as may from time to time be adopted, so long as the institution remains affiliated with the Synod.

3.10.6.2 The board of regents of each college and university shall consist of no more than 18 members, all voting.

1. One ordained minister, one commissioned minister, and two laypersons shall be elected by the conventions of the Synod.
2. One ordained minister, one commissioned minister, and two laypersons shall be elected by the geographical district

in which the institution is located. If any board is required by its governing documents to include one or more persons holding residence or church membership in a specific locality, the institution is responsible for ensuring (including by appointment, if necessary) that individual(s) meeting such requirements are included among those persons serving on such board, and no such geographic restriction shall apply to Synod-elected regents.

3. No fewer than four and no more than eight members shall be appointed as members by the board of regents according to a process determined by the individual institution. An appointed member shall not vote on his or her own reappointment.
4. The president of the district in which the college or university is located or a district vice-president as his standing representative shall serve as an *ex officio* member.
5. One member, who may be an ordained minister, a commissioned minister, or a layperson, shall be appointed by the Praesidium of the Synod after consultation with the President of the respective institution and the Board of Directors of the Synod.
6. College and university board of regents members may be elected or appointed to serve a maximum of three consecutive three-year terms and must hold membership in a member congregation of the Synod.
7. Not more than two of the elected members shall be members of the same congregation.

3.10.6.2.1 8—Persons elected or appointed to a board of regents 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 possess two or more of the following qualifications or background experiences: 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 a specific instructional or operational domain designated by the college or university (e.g., “health care” or “marketing”). Demonstrated familiarity with and willingness to advocate for and financially support of the institution is a desired quality. Qualities 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.

- (a) Qualification of nominees for appointment or election as regents, according to the standard indicated above, shall be reviewed and verified by the Commission for University Education, which duty may be delegated to a committee composed of its members or others.
- (b) The commission shall also ensure that it is prepared to review and verify qualifications of floor nominees at each district and Synod convention, as well as those of regents appointed by a board or in the case of a vacancy, in a timely manner.
- (c) Assessment of qualification for service shall be performed on the basis of information submitted by nominees on a regu-

lar instrument maintained by the Secretary of the Synod for this purpose.

- (d) Approximately 18 months prior to each convention of the Synod the commission shall consult with the President and Secretary of the Synod and the chairs of the boards of regents of affiliated colleges and universities regarding its application of the qualification standards, and upon this consultation review and revise its related policies and procedures.
 - (e) The commission shall maintain in its public policies a rubric for consistent evaluation of qualification for regent service.
- 3.10.6.2.2 Persons elected or appointed to a board of regents shall undergo training for such service.
- (a) The Commission for University Education shall provide for training of newly elected or appointed regents concerning their responsibility to advance the Synod’s confession and mission objectives and to advance their respective institutions in service of the church through the commission’s accreditation program.
 - (b) Each board of regents shall, subject to guidelines prepared by the CUE Institution Advisory Council in consultation with CUE, provide training of newly elected or appointed regents in the task of governance and in their business and legal duties as directors.
 - (c) Failure to complete such training within the first year after election or appointment renders the regent ineligible to continue in office. Upon such failure, the respective board of regents shall declare the position vacant.
 - (d) The several boards of regents are encouraged to implement regular programs of continuing education for regents in both aspects of training.
 - (e) Training programs, initial and continuing, may allow for electronic or remote participation.
 - (f) The Commission for University Education, in collaboration with its Institution Advisory Council, shall prepare and make available an online introduction to the demands and expectations of service as a college or university regent, which shall be reviewed by nominees before they consent to serve if elected or appointed.
 - (g) The cost of initial regent training shall be assessed on an equitable basis to the affiliated schools.

3.10.6.3 Vacancies that occur on a board of regents shall be filled in the following manner:

- (a) If the vacancy occurs in a position that was previously filled by the board of regents, the board of regents shall be the appointing body.
- (b) If the vacancy occurs in a position that was previously filled at a district convention, the district board of directors shall be the appointing body.
- (c) If the vacancy occurs in a position that had been filled by a national convention of the Synod, the Board of Directors of Concordia University System Commission for University Education shall be the appointing body and shall follow the nomination procedure provided for filling vacancies in elected positions on boards and commissions of the Synod as outlined in Bylaw 3.2.5.

Note: Existing Bylaws 3.10.6.4–5 are removed in their entirety, relevant portions of their content having been incorporated into new Bylaw 3.10.6.1, above.

G. TO REVISE BYLAWS RELATED TO THE ADMINISTRATION OF AFFILIATED COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

In keeping with the charge of 2019 Res. 7-03 to “review the process for selecting presidents of institutions” and to “review the financial models for the institutions,” the following bylaws are revised. As with bylaws dealing with the boards of regents, bylaws dealing with institution presidents have attempted to provide a relatively detailed description even of the customary duties of any university president, which have changed over time, and which might erroneously suggest to some that the Synod asserts authority over “left-hand” matters that are exclusively under the governance of the institution’s board of regents. The president of the college or university, as the spiritual head of the institution, remains an absolutely essential leader in advancing the confessional identity and mission effectiveness of the institution as an affiliate of the Synod. The Synod therefore rightly retains definite expectations for the presidency of affiliated institutions. After a significant amount of input from boards of regents, the 2019 convention of the Synod already made significant changes to the presidential selection process, moving the work of Synod’s prior approval panel earlier in the process to allow for more effective communication of the panel with the board of regents and to reduce opportunities for disappointment or misunderstanding formerly associated with the process. These changes have aided presidential appointment processes conducted since and remain in place in the following. While many processes might be proposed for the appointment of a president, the significant change from *agency* to *affiliate* relationships and the introduction of CUE accreditation suggest continuity as presently the better approach where this subject is concerned. Therefore be it

Resolved, that Bylaws 3.10.6.6–3.10.6.6.2 be revised as follows:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

Concordia University System Synod-Affiliated College and University Presidents

3.10.6.68 The president of the institution shall be the executive officer of the board of regents. ~~He~~ As a foremost duty, in addition to the customary executive management duties of a college or university president, and in regard specifically to the relation of his affiliated institution to the Synod, he shall serve as the spiritual, academic, and administrative head of the institution and carry out the following responsibilities:

- (a) He shall represent the institution in its relations to the Synod and its officers and boards.
- (b) He shall supervise, direct, and administer the affairs of the institution and all its departments, pursuant to the rules and regulations of the Synod and its boards and agencies and the policies of the board of regents.
- (c) ~~He shall bring to the attention of the board of regents matters that require consideration or decision and make pertinent recommendations.~~
- (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 colleges and 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.~~
- (e) He shall periodically visit or cause to be visited the classes of professors and instructors, and in general secure conformity in teaching efficiency and subject matter to the stan-

dards and policies prescribed by the board of regents ~~and by the Synod through the Board of Directors of Concordia University System and to the confession and mission that the institution shares with the Synod and its congregations, and in intentional and pervasive pursuit of the Lutheran Identity and Mission Outcome Standards.~~

- (f) ~~He shall advise and admonish in a fraternal spirit any member of the faculty found dilatory, neglectful, or exhibiting problems in his teaching. Should this action prove ineffective, he shall request selected members of the faculty privately to engage their colleague in further fraternal discussion. If this results in failure to correct or improve the situation, the president shall report the matter to the board of regents with his recommendation for action.~~
- (g) ~~He shall delegate or reassign one or more of his functions to a member of the faculty or staff, although standing administrative assignments shall be made by the board of regents upon his recommendation.~~
- (h) ~~He shall be responsible for the provision of spiritual care and nurture for, and, to the extent possible through each mode of instruction, the comprehensive moral formation of, every student.~~
- (i) ~~He shall carefully watch over the spiritual welfare, personal life, conduct, educational progress, and physical condition of the students, and shall in general exercise such Christian discipline, instruction, and supervision as may be expected at a Christian educational institution.~~
- (j) ~~He shall diligently manage the institution subject to, and effectively support the exercise of, the governance of the institution by the board of regents, consistent with the expectations of Bylaw 3.10.6.1.~~
- (k) ~~He shall be responsible for the employment, direction, and supervision of all employees of the institution.~~
- (l) ~~He shall be responsible for the business management of the school and for the proper operation and maintenance of grounds, buildings, and equipment.~~
- (m) ~~He shall make periodic and special financial reports to the board of regents.~~
- (n) ~~He shall represent the institution, if currently accredited, on the Concordia University System Institution Advisory Council.~~

3.10.6.68.1 The president of each college or university shall serve a five-year renewable term of office under the terms set forth herewith under Bylaw 3.10.6.6.1 (c), beginning with the date of his assumption of his responsibilities as president.

- (a) Each president shall relinquish academic tenure upon assumption of the presidency, and shall not be granted academic tenure during the time of presidential service.
- (b) The president and board of regents shall develop mutually agreed upon institutional goals and priorities that give direction to the individual as he carries out the duties of the office of the presidency. The board of regents will annually evaluate presidential effectiveness based on these goals and priorities.
- (c) Nine months prior to the end of each five-year term, the board of regents will conduct a formal review of the president’s effectiveness in the current term of office, evaluating his leadership, both of the administration of the institution and of the institution’s advancement of Synod’s confession and pursuit of Synod’s mission objectives. ~~The president~~

~~shall then be eligible for another five-year term by major action of the board of regents, voting with a ballot containing only the current president's name. Upon completion of the review and using a ballot containing only the current president's name, the board of regents shall vote, the major action of the board of regents being required to extend the president's term for an additional five years.~~

- (1) In addition to considering the evaluation report, the board of regents shall as part of its review consult with the President of the Synod and the chairman of the Board of Directors of Concordia University System Commission for University Education.
 - (2) The regents may consult with other boards, commissions, and councils of the Synod as they deem wise.
 - (d) In the event that a president's term is not renewed, the office of the president shall be considered vacant as of the end of the term of the incumbent.
 - (e) A president who is on a roster of the Synod is under the ecclesiastical supervision of the Synod. In the event a member is removed from membership in the Synod pursuant to procedure established in these Bylaws, then that member is also considered removed from the position held and shall be terminated forthwith by the board of regents.
- 3.10.6.68.2 The following process shall govern the selection of a college/university president.
- (a) When a vacancy or an impending vacancy in the office of president is known, the board of regents shall inform the campus constituencies, ~~the Board of Directors of Concordia University System~~ Commission for University Education (CUE), the President of the Synod, an official periodical of the Synod, and other parties as appropriate. If a vacancy in a presidency occurs, the board of regents shall appoint an interim president, who shall meet the qualifications established for the office of president. He shall bear the title "interim president" and may not serve more than 18 months without the concurrence of the President of the Synod. Such interim appointee shall be ineligible to serve on a permanent basis without the concurrence of the President of the Synod.
 - (21) ~~The board of regents shall request that the Board of Directors of Concordia University System schedule~~ initiate a transition review of the campus, which shall include consultation with CUE on the basis of the Lutheran Identity and Mission Outcome Standards and the institution's current accreditation report. The review is to provide a report on the state of the campus for use by the search committee, the board of regents, and the candidates.
 - (+2) ~~The board of regents shall request that the Board of Directors of Concordia University System, on the basis of the above consultation, compose and, with the concurrence of CUE, authorize the institution to publish a request for nominations for the position of 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.
 - (1) A search committee shall be formed that represents the board of regents, the faculty, and the staff. Faculty members and staff members on the committee shall be members of LCMS congregations.
 - (2) The search committee shall prepare a description of the

needs of the institution based on listening forums, the findings of the transition review, and other relevant information. Before publishing a call for nominations, ~~the President of Concordia University System~~ the chair of the Commission for University Education 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 selection, search, and prior approval criteria.

- (3) The search committee shall develop written criteria that will be utilized by the committee to screen the candidates and will be utilized by the board of regents to guide the presidential election.
- (4) A person designated by the board of regents shall act as its agent to issue a request for the nomination of candidates for the presidency of the institution. The request for nominations shall be submitted to the parties who are authorized to nominate. Candidates may be nominated by congregations of the Synod, ~~the Board of Directors of Concordia University System~~ Commission for University Education, the board of regents, and the faculty of the institution. The request for nominations shall state when the nominating period closes.
- (5) After the nomination period has closed, the agent of the board of regents shall contact each nominee to notify him of his nomination and to determine whether such nominee will allow his name to stand for election. Nominees who wish to be considered must furnish written consent, along with such documentation as the board of regents has requested from candidates in its call for nominations, to the agent by a date set by the board of regents, which date shall be not less than 15 days after the last nominee is notified.
- (6) After the due date set by the board of regents for nominee responses, the agent of the board of regents shall forward the list of nominees who have agreed to let their names stand, together with all materials received from such candidates, to ~~the President of Concordia University System~~ chair of the Commission for University Education to enable him to convene a prior approval panel consisting of the President of the Synod, the district president serving on the institution's board of regents, and ~~the chair of the Board of Concordia University System himself or his designee.~~ The names of the nominees shall not otherwise be disclosed outside the board of regents.
- (7) The prior approval panel shall meet to consider the nominees. The panel may choose to remove names from the list by its two-thirds majority vote. The panel shall complete its work within 60 days after receipt of the list of nominees.
- (8) After the prior approval panel has completed its work, ~~the President of Concordia University System~~ chair of the Commission for University Education shall transmit the finalized list back to the agent of the board of regents within 15 days and shall cause such list to be published in an official periodical of the Synod. The board of regents shall then announce the list of names of nominees who have received approval but shall not publicize the names of those not receiving approval. The announcement shall contain contact information to submit correspondence

regarding the nominees and provide a reasonable deadline for receiving correspondence. The board of regents shall establish a procedure for processing correspondence regarding nominees.

- (c) The board of regents shall utilize the work of the search committee to continue its search process.
 - (1) The search committee shall provide a report to the board of regents regarding the qualifications of the candidates with its observations and recommendations.
 - (2) The board of regents shall provide the candidates with a report containing full disclosure of the condition of the institution.
- (d) The board of regents may suspend, terminate, or restart its search at any time, but it may only elect a president of the college or university from a slate it submitted that received prior approval as described above. The ~~President of Concordia University System~~ chair of the Commission on University Education (or a designee) shall attend the board of regents meeting at which an election occurs as a guest and advisor. The board of regents may require the president-elect to accept or decline within 15 days.
- (e) If the president-elect declines the position, the board of regents is responsible for resuming the effort to fill the vacancy. Candidates from the approved slate shall remain eligible to be elected until a president has been elected and accepted the position.

H. TO REVISE BYLAWS RELATED TO THE FACULTY OF AFFILIATED COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

In keeping with the charge of 2019 Res. 7-03 to “strengthen all CUS institutions’ connection to the Synod” and in light of other changes made above, minor revisions to bylaws dealing with the college and university faculties are required. Changes in higher education and in the role of the faculties in the broader work of the Synod have reduced the degree to which the Bylaws of the Synod should or can direct specifics of what are ordinarily internal personnel matters of colleges and universities. In keeping with the general philosophy of the proposal, detailed specifications have been eliminated in favor of allowing boards of regents more flexibility while maintaining Synod’s specific interests through the oversight and accreditation process of the Commission for University Education. Therefore be it

Resolved, that Bylaws 3.10.6.7–3.10.6.7.5.2 be revised as follows:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

Concordia University System Synod-Affiliated College and University Faculties

- 3.10.6.79 The faculty of each affiliated 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) Only the voting or full-time faculty who are in good standing as individual members of the Synod or are members in good standing of a member congregation of the Synod shall participate in faculty decisions regarding the qualification of

graduates or colloquy program participants for rostered service.

- ~~3.10.6.7.1 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.~~

3.10.6.79.21 Except as otherwise provided in these bylaws, the board of regents on recommendation of the president of the institution shall appoint all full-time members of the faculty. The terms and conditions of every appointment shall be stated in writing and be in the possession of both the institution and the prospective faculty member before the appointment is consummated. Limitations of academic freedom because of the religious and confessional nature and aims of the institution shall be stated in writing at the time of the appointment and conveyed to the person being appointed. Faculty members, full- and part-time, shall pledge to perform their duties in harmony with the Holy Scriptures as the inspired Word of God, the Lutheran Confessions, and the Synod’s doctrinal statements.

3.10.6.79.32 All initial appointments to persons serving on theology faculties, or teaching classes in or cross-listed with the theology department, shall require prior approval by a majority vote of the President of the Synod (or his designee), the chairman of the Council of Presidents (or his designee), and a member of the ~~Concordia University System Commission for University Education~~ board selected by the chair, and shall include a thorough theological review. The three voters shall be ordained. The process shall be facilitated by the ~~president of Concordia University System chair of the Commission for University Education or his designee~~. Initial appointment refers to the initial engagement of any person to teach one or more theology courses, regardless of assigned academic department, other than faculty who teach theology courses no more than one academic year in any three-year period.

~~3.10.6.7.4 A formal procedure shall be in place to carry out performance reviews for all faculty on a regular basis.~~

~~3.10.6.7.5 Other than honorable retirement, termination of faculty employment may only be the result of the following:~~

- (a) professional incompetency;
- (b) incapacity for the performance of duty;
- (c) insubordination;
- (d) neglect of or refusal to perform duties of office;
- (e) conduct unbecoming a Christian;
- (f) advocacy of false doctrine (Constitution Art. II) or failure to honor and uphold the doctrinal position of the Synod as defined further in Bylaw 1.6.2 (b);
- (g) discontinuance of an entire program (e.g., social work, business);
- (h) discontinuance of an entire division or department (e.g., modern foreign language) of a college or university;
- (i) reduction of the size of staff in order to maintain financial viability in compliance with policies concerning fiscal viability;
- (j) discontinuance, merger, or consolidation of an entire college or university operation;
- (k) expiration of the term of a contract of employment; and

(h) ~~for those whose position requires membership in a Synod congregation, if the person ceases to be a member of a Synod congregation:~~

3.10.6.79.53-1 A faculty or staff member who is on a roster of the Synod is under the ecclesiastical supervision of the Synod. In the event a member is removed from membership in the Synod pursuant to procedure established in these Bylaws, then that member is also considered removed from the position held and shall be terminated forthwith by the board of regents.

3.10.6.79.54-2 ~~An appeal process 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 the Commission for University Education) shall be in place for use by faculty members who wish to challenge a termination decision. Each board of regents shall establish policies for handling doctrine and practice complaints against faculty and staff, which shall be consistent with policies established by the Commission for University Education.~~ 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. Each board of regents shall facilitate the Commission for University Education's monitoring of such policies and their implementation.

And be it further

Resolved, That Bylaw 3.9.5.1 [8] be revised as follows:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

3.9.5.1 The Commission on Theology and Church Relations shall consist of 16 voting and 4 advisory members:

Voting Members:

8. A member from one of the faculties of the affiliated colleges and universities ~~of the currently accredited by the~~ Synod

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2019 Res. 9-17 Report: Study of Voting Privilege in the LCMS (CCM)

The following report was shared with the Synod on March 10, 2021, "at least 18 months prior to the [2023] convention," by placement on the Synod web page, official notice, and announcement to the membership, with comment to be shared with the floor committee to which this report is assigned.

Introduction

2019 Res. 9-17, "To Study Voting Privilege in the LCMS," charged "the Commission on Constitutional Matters (CCM) in conjunction with the Council of Presidents (COP), including a number of commissioned ministers chosen by the COP, [to] prepare a report regarding the historic and current voting privileges in the Synod," to be made available to the Synod at least 18 months prior to the 2022 Synod convention. This resolution bore special reference to the service of commissioned ministers and to the fact that "the cur-

rent structure of the Synod does not allow for a third category of voting delegates at district and Synod conventions," which "third category" might be understood to consist either of commissioned ministers specifically or advisory individual members in general.

In order to fulfill this assignment, a study group was appointed, in part by the CCM and in part by the COP, consisting of the Rev. Dr. George Gude, CCM Chairman; the Rev. Dr. John Sias, LCMS Secretary; the Rev. Derek Lecakes, Atlantic District President; the Rev. Dr. Michael Gibson, Pacific Southwest District President; the Rev. Dr. John Wohlrabe, Second Vice-President (Great Lakes Region); Teacher Wendy Morris (Missouri District); Teacher Chris Cody (South Wisconsin District); and Teacher Zachariah Schnare (Southern Illinois District), all but the first two appointed by the COP. The committee met twice, by electronic means, in June 2020 and January 2021. The final draft report was circulated and approved for publication on March 9, 2021, concluding the committee's assignment.

At its first meeting, the committee dealt chiefly with the extensive historical background assembled by Drs. Gude and Sias, this question having been explored repeatedly in conventions reaching back to the very roots of the Synod. At its second meeting, the committee treated in more detail the present role of individual advisory members in the conventions of the Synod and, to this end, invited Rev. Dr. Allan Buss, Northern Illinois district president, to share his district's unique practice of advisory delegate polling. At this meeting and afterward, the committee also considered roster and statistical information, provided by Secretary Sias and Dr. Gude, treating the distribution of advisory individual members in the Synod and their representation at conventions, including on their floor committees. Some of that material is reflected here, in order to assess or to assist districts with assessing, in a synodwide context, how effectively the principle of advisory representation is being realized, both in the districts and at the Synod level.

The committee limited itself principally to its explicit assignment—namely, documenting the historic and present voting practice in the conventions of the Synod, as well as the many unadopted proposals, over the years, to change it—but understood its task also to relate to the long-standing, historical *advisory* role afforded commissioned and other advisory, individual members, and to how it is functioning in the conventions of the districts and the Synod. The committee offers, in that regard, observations for further consideration by the congregations, circuits, conferences, and district conventions of the Synod, with the hope that these will renew appreciation for the prominent role Synod's polity gives advisory members—both on the part of the individual members who have this opportunity and for the conventions they are intended to advise. Perhaps these observations may also lead to the development of proposals, whether by way of encouragement, standing rule, or convention overture, district or Synod, for improvement in the actual realization and implementation of this role.

The Synod and its districts are not able to adjust their voting representation without a convention of the Synod amending its Constitution. This report is intended to be helpful to congregations, circuits, and districts that might be contemplating such a proposal to the Synod convention, so that they might do so cognizant of the significant amount of study these questions have received many times before and the close relation of these issues to fundamental polity of the Synod. It is also intended to assist congregations, circuits, districts, and the Synod in assessing how well the ideal of advisory representation is presently being achieved. Improvements in

this area, many details of which are not dictated in the Constitution or Bylaws of the Synod or of the districts, may be much more readily achievable, and may also well serve the Synod and its members, both congregational and individual.

PART I: Franchise in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

Principle of franchise in the Synod: the *Pfarrgemeinde* concept

The basic principle of franchise in the Synod at the time of its formation in 1847 involved two essential components. The first essential component was that the Synod consisted of equal congregations or parishes (*Pfarrgemeinden*) [1], no matter their numerical size, and it was these that held the franchise. The second essential component was the maintaining of a “balance of power” in the conventions of the Synod between the clergy and the laity. To accomplish this principle of franchise, the 1847 Constitution of the Synod assigned the franchise to each member *Pfarrgemeinde* (“pastor-congregation” or “parish”) of the Synod, with each *Pfarrgemeinde* to receive two votes, one to be cast by its pastor and the other by the lay delegate accredited by the parish. [2]

This arrangement developed during the course of the discussions that led to the founding of the Synod. The initial impetus for the formation of the Synod came from the men Pastor Wilhelm Löhe had sent to the United States to provide spiritual care for its many German immigrants. Löhe had instructed them to join one of the established synods in their new land. They did so but were not satisfied with the theology they found in those synods. In December 1844, Pastors Wilhelm Sihler and Adam Ernst sent a letter to C.F.W. Walther, the pastor of Trinity, St. Louis, asking if it would be possible to form an organized union with the Saxons.

In his January 2, 1845, response, Walther expressed a desire for unity, but at the same time he noted that among the Saxon immigrants there was a great fear of clergy domination (C.F.W. Walther, ed. Carl S. Meyer, *Walther Speaks to the Church: Selected Letters* [St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1973], 15). A meeting was scheduled in Cleveland in September 1845, to which Walther was invited; his health, however, did not allow him to attend.

The meeting was held Sept. 13–18, 1845, in Cleveland for the purpose of proposing a constitution for a Synod with the doctrine and polity taken from the Word of God and the Lutheran Confessions. While a rough draft of a constitution was produced, no copy of it has survived. However, Pastor Wilhelm Sihler published a series of articles following the meeting, in which he laid out his ideas regarding the nature of such a Synod. After showing how it would be impossible to copy the organization of the church as it was in Europe on the American soil, Sihler states his ideas how such a Synod could be organized:

According to Sihler a synod should not merely be advisory, but it should be a body, or corporation, which would in the name of the Church, i.e., the whole number of the adult and confirmed members, direct, watch over, and administer the Church. The synod should not be simply a ministerium, composed of members of the clergy only, but worthy members of the laity would be elected by their congregations to synodical membership. These laymen, together with the clergymen, would constitute the synod. This synod would then regulate, direct, and administer all matters pertaining to the doctrine, life, worship, and discipline of the Church. To quote Sihler:

“All means, therefore, which would in any way preserve and further the Church according to its essence and purpose, the synod, according to its ability, would have to inaugurate energetically and watch over its harmonious and active co-operation.” This conception of a synod and its jurisdiction was radically different from that held by Walther in St. Louis. (Carl S. Munding, *Government in the Missouri Synod* [St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1947], 175n.)

During much of May 1846, the pastors held a series of meetings in St. Louis at which the voters of Trinity congregation were also involved. By the end of this meeting, a complete draft of the constitution was formulated. Sihler and the other eastern pastors had, in their time with Walther and Trinity, St. Louis, been won over to the potential of a fundamentally congregational, yet confessional, polity in which the laity had an equal part. Naysayers of Trinity, St. Louis, still smarting from the Stephan affair, were also convinced that the rights of congregations and of the priesthood of all believers would, under such a polity, be preserved (idem, 178–79). The Constitution would be put into its final form at a meeting in Fort Wayne in July 1846 and adopted at the formation of the Synod in Chicago in April 1847.

It is important to note that this polity’s basic franchise principle, while an adiaphoron, was totally consistent with concepts Walther had presented in the Altenburg Theses as he led the Saxon immigrants out of the chaos that followed the debacle with Martin Stephan. The church consists in the community of believers, and all ecclesiastical authority resides in the congregation. This was later developed in greater detail in *Kirche und Amt* (C.F.W. Walther, *Church and Ministry: The Voice of Our Church on the Question of Church and Office* [St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2012]. Since it is each congregation that possesses all ecclesiastical authority, each parish possesses an equal vote (the equality of congregational votes is known as *Stimmengleichheit*). The office of pastor is a divine institution, and this office is conferred through the congregation as the possessor of all ecclesiastical authority. The pastor is charged to exercise spiritual care of the parish. At the same time, the parish is primarily the members, the laypeople. Therefore, it was concluded that each parish received two votes, one by its pastor and the other by its lay delegate.

Kirche und Amt was affirmed in 1851 and reaffirmed in 2001 as the official position of the Synod, the “definitive statement under Holy Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions of the Synod’s understanding on the subject of church and ministry” (2001 Res. 7-17A). The *Pfarrgemeinde/Stimmengleichheit* trans-parochial polity of the Synod can be seen to align logically with the scriptural and dogmatic foundations of the Synod, especially in relation to “Church” Theses VI–VIII and “Ministry” Theses III, V–X. The trans-parochial polity of the Synod also aligns with Walther’s further practical development of intra-congregational polity in his 1864 book, *The Right Form of a Christian Congregation*, especially with its parts VI and VII (trans. J.T. Mueller and published with *The True Visible Church* [St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2005]).

The Synod is conceived as an aid and extension of such congregations, and not of any other constituencies or units of the church (not individual believers, estates, or vocations). Believers, estates, and vocations relate to one another in their respective congregations. These congregations relate to and work with one another through the Synod. Though other forms of church polity are possible within the freedom the Church enjoys, it would be difficult

to conceive of a form flowing more naturally from the doctrine of *Kirche und Amt* than a polity based upon equal representation of parishes by their basic constituent elements: their preachers and the priesthood of all believers.

Individual membership and advisory delegates; nineteenth-century proposals of teacher franchise

While *Pfarrgemeinden* (pastor-congregations) were designated as the only voting members, membership in the Synod was not limited to them. The 1847 Constitution of the Synod established three categories of individuals who were designated as advisory members. The first category included pastors not authorized by their congregations to vote [3]; the second, candidates for the office of pastor; and third, teachers of the parochial schools of congregations of the Synod.

In 1854, when the Synod divided into districts, the wording of Const. Chapter III regarding voting did not change and was applicable to both district and Synod conventions. When delegate conventions for the Synod were begun in 1872, the Synod again did not change this wording. The practice for conventions of the Synod would simply henceforth be that each pair of delegates, one a pastor of a *Pfarrgemeinde* and the other a layman, now came from a group of congregations.

Apparently some congregations were interested in their parochial schoolteachers or instructors at the institutions of the Synod being allowed to vote in place of a lay delegate at district conventions. The question came to the 1874 Synod convention, and it was resolved that no district may seat these individuals as a lay delegate at one of its conventions (1874 *Proceedings*, 79). To do so would have violated the principle of equality between the clergy and the laity.

The matter of allowing teachers (today, commissioned ministers) to vote was discussed at the 1887 convention. The proposal was to allow teachers to vote in the election of officers but not in financial matters. The convention rejected the proposal, noting that the proposal would drastically change the representative principle on which the Synod had been founded. In addition, it observed that it would be too difficult to distinguish what was a financial matter and what the impact might be on a vote that was neither an election of officers nor a financial matter (1887 *Proceedings*, 85).

The matter was also a topic of discussion at the 1893 Synod convention, though the report of the committee assigned to consider the matter and bring proposals was essentially the same as in 1887. The committee stated that the question of allowing teachers (today, commissioned ministers) to vote could not be separated from a fundamental principle of the structure of the Synod. From the beginning, there was a distinction between voting and advisory members, and the reason for this distinction was that the Synod was constituted by equal congregations that had freely joined together for ecclesiastical purposes. It was these member congregations alone that had the right to vote, and the committee stated that these principles are best be carried out when each parish sends two delegates: one the pastor and the other a properly accredited lay delegate (1893 *Proceedings*, 124).

To grant franchise even in a restricted sense, limiting it to the election of officers, it was determined, would violate this fundamental principle. If this were enacted, the result would be that some congregations would have restricted voting powers while others would have too much power. In addition, were the right of voting to

be granted to teachers, it could equally be argued that it should be given to other advisory members as well. In such a case, this group of advisory members could ultimately be the determining factor in any election, contradicting what might have been the will of the congregations. Upon these considerations, the Synod adopted a resolution, in view of the reasons presented, to retain the present well-established order and not grant the vote to the teachers (1893 *Proceedings*, 125).

Twentieth-century proposals of teacher and other advisory franchise

Following the 1893 convention, the topic of teachers voting did not occur again in the *Proceedings* of the Synod until 1962. In response to a memorial requesting that the right of franchise by members of the Synod be reconsidered, the Synod declared simply that the Synod was organized on a congregational basis, with each congregation or parish limited to two votes, namely its pastor and a layperson, and that giving the right to vote to advisory members of the Synod would alter the representative structure of the Synod. It therefore resolved to decline the memorial (1962 *Proceedings*, 129).

Several overtures were submitted to the 1969 convention of the Synod regarding the right of franchise, and the floor committee was of the opinion that it did not have sufficient time to thoroughly consider all of the implications, so it presented a resolution to the Synod calling for the President of the Synod to appoint a special committee to consider the question and present a report to the following convention. This resolution was adopted (1969 *Proceedings*, 117–18).

Regarding the franchise of teachers, the Committee on Organization that had been appointed reported to the 1971 convention of the Synod. It pointed out that the topic had frequently been raised before in the Synod, and that the Synod had always consistently answered, maintaining the principle that the vote belonged only to the congregations, with each congregation or parish having two votes, one its pastor and the other a layman, in order to maintain a balance between clergy and laity. The report continued by referencing in detail the action of the 1893 Synod convention. The report concluded that no changes should be made in the right to vote at conventions (1971 *Workbook*, 218). 1971 Res. 5-09, however, which indicated that the Committee on Organization appointed following the 1969 convention had not been able to complete all of the tasks assigned to it, placed the remainder of the items into the hands of a new Committee on Organization (1971 *Proceedings*, 155).

The 1973 report of this Committee on Organization included several topics pertaining to the organization of conventions of the Synod. Pertaining to voting rights, the topics covered by their report did not specifically deal with teachers voting at conventions but with other aspects. The questions considered were a more equitable division of delegates among districts, allowing large congregations more than one lay vote, giving a second and third lay vote to the other congregations of a multi-congregation parish, and allowing advisory pastors and campus pastors, too, to vote. The committee rejected all as incompatible with the essential principles of voting rights in the Constitution: that the Synod consists of equal congregations or parishes, no matter the size, that possess the franchise, and that there be a balance of lay and clergy vote (1973 *Workbook*, 208–9). Two overtures were also submitted that called for an expansion of voting rights. In response, the floor committee

submitted two resolutions to the Synod stating that the current practice be retained and that the current practice be clarified. These were placed in an omnibus resolution, referring them to the Board of Directors of the Synod (1973 *Proceedings*, 168–69).

A task force had been established by the 1975 Anaheim convention that was to study and propose revisions to the Constitution, Bylaws, and organization of the Synod. Several overtures to change the franchise within the Synod were submitted to the 1977 Synod convention. Two new issues were added to the charge given to the task force formed in 1975: one was to consider the way delegates were elected, and the other was to consider allowing advisory delegates to vote, with a proportional increase in the lay votes (1979 *Workbook*, 59–63).

The task force in 1979 proposed significant wording changes to several articles of the Constitution of the Synod, and in addition proposed changes to the eligibility of the delegates who would cast the two votes of the congregation or parish. One vote was to be cast by a pastor or teacher who is in full-time office in the congregation, and the other by a duly elected lay delegate of the congregation (1979 *Proceedings*, 111, 137). A congregation also presented an overture requesting that teachers be given a vote. The convention responded by simply adopting a resolution to retain the Constitution in its present form and to defer allowing teachers to vote (1979 *Proceedings*, 111, 137).

At the 1981 convention, the President of the Synod, in his address to the convention, recommended a change to allow teachers to vote (1981 *Proceedings*, 64). Resolution 2-14 proposed that the delegates of an electoral circuit be a pastor and anyone else from a congregation of that circuit. Preferably, it should be a layman, but any teacher or ordained minister who was not the pastor of one of the congregations would also be eligible. After lengthy discussion, this was referred to a committee to be appointed by the President of the Synod for a report to the 1983 Synod convention (1981 *Proceedings*, 141).

In its report to the 1983 convention, the task force formed by the 1981 convention gave a report detailing the length of its research. It identified the various possibilities that have been suggested and discussed the advantages and disadvantages of each. In the end, it concluded that the disadvantages of any of the suggested ways to change the exercise of the franchise in the Synod outweighed what would be gained by such a change. It termed the current exercise of franchise a long-established and well-working procedure (1983 *Workbook*, 213–15). The floor committee's Res. 5-23 resolved that no change be made in the Constitution or bylaws pertaining to the franchise. However, no action was taken, and it was apparently not brought to the floor of the convention (1983 *Proceedings*, 190).

A congregation submitted an overture to the 1995 convention of the Synod that called for all ordained and commissioned ministers to be eligible to vote (1995 *Workbook*, 23–31). The convention addressed this by placing it in its "Omnibus B Resolution," declining to act on it and referencing the past action of the Synod, specifically that of 1983 (1995 *Proceedings*, 160).

Twenty-first century proposals of commissioned-minister franchise

The 2001 Res. 8-10 referred the matter of equitable representation at conventions of the Synod to the Commission on Structure. While the commission was directed to look at various aspects of representation, one of these was the inability of commissioned

ministers to vote. The overture presented by the Commission on Structure, after noting that any change allowing the commissioned ministers to vote would change the basic franchise principles of the Synod, called for the elimination of delegate conventions. Instead of delegate conventions, each congregation of the Synod would send two delegates. One was to be a rostered member of the Synod, and the other was to be a layperson (2004 *Workbook*, 264–65). The floor committee essentially ignored the suggestion of the Commission on Structure, instead bringing a resolution that proposed a blue-ribbon committee be formed to study the structure of conventions, including whether to allow commissioned ministers to vote. This resolution was declined by the convention (2004 *Proceedings*, 157–58).

Resolution 8-04A, developed by the floor committee assigned to the material from the Blue Ribbon Task Force on Structure and Governance, would have essentially allowed congregations to send whomever they saw fit as their voting delegates at district conventions (2010 *Today's Business*, 2:379–81). Resolution 8-04A was not presented to the convention for action.

The 2016 convention of the Synod amended the Constitution, eliminating the category of assistant pastors from the list of "advisory members *only*" in the Constitution (2016 *Proceedings*, 202–3). The effect of this change was that any pastor who is called by the congregation, full-time or part-time, is eligible to cast the pastoral vote of a congregation. In addition, an overture was submitted that called for a discussion; it culminated with action by the 2019 convention of the Synod to allow the franchise of commissioned ministers at future district and Synod conventions. This was placed in the convention's Omnibus B, assigning the topic to the President of the Synod and the CCM (2016 *Proceedings*, 269).

Several overtures related to this question were submitted to the 2019 convention. The result was the adoption of Resolution 9-17. This called for the formation of this committee by the Commission on Constitutional Matters and the Council of Presidents, which was to study the current and historic voting practices and prepare a report prior to the 2022 convention (2019 *Proceedings*, 201). This report is submitted in fulfillment of this resolution's assignment.

Conclusions to Part I

The basic principle of the polity on which the franchise within the Synod was established is that the Synod consists of an organization of equal congregations (*Pfarrgemeinden*), which are the possessors of all ecclesiastical power; the franchise belongs to these equal congregations or parishes (*Pfarrgemeinden*). To maintain the balance in authority in the Synod between the pastor, resident in a divinely instituted office, and the laity, who make up the substance of the church in each place, the priesthood of all believers, each of these congregations or parishes (*Pfarrgemeinde*) received two votes. One was given to the pastor of the congregation and the other to the lay delegate of the congregation. While our particular mechanisms of church polity are adiaphora, neither commanded nor forbidden by the Scriptures, the *Pfarrgemeinde* polity does reflect the fact that the church is where the marks of the Church are: Word and Sacrament. There may be other aspects of the Church's work, but the center is the congregation, and the Synod is for and on behalf of the congregation (Bylaw 1.1.1).

Essentially all proposals to broaden the franchise to include teachers (commissioned ministers) have floundered because they would have negated this basic principle, which is consistent with our understanding of Church and Office. Unless and until it can be

demonstrated that this basic principle is inadequate or unworkable in terms of enabling the Synod to function, or some other form of organization is proposed that can be demonstrated to enable the Synod to function better, it is far better to leave this basic principle of franchise intact.

At the same time, there may be room for improvement in how this franchise is carried out. The committee has heard and acknowledges a significant feeling of “disenfranchisement” among a very significant part of the individual roster of the Synod, as expressed in some emotional remarks at the 2019 Synod convention. Is the advice of the advisories being welcomed and given full consideration by those who do exercise the franchise? Are their voices afforded opportunities and consideration commensurate with the importance of the auxiliary offices they hold and with the immense value to the church of the servants holding them?

In the *Pfarrgemeinde* polity, the votes belong to the congregation and are cast—in one part by the preachers and in the other by the hearers—as an act not of power but of service. The ordained and the laity are not represented as two voting blocs, but the voting power of each congregation (or group of congregations) is exercised, in one part, by the one responsible for the total Office of the Ministry and in the other part by one representing the laity, for and on behalf of whom the ministry is carried out in their place. Voting in the church is not to be understood as the exercise of individual or class power, over against that of others, but an exercise of care for the whole so that common goods may be for the common benefit (1 Cor. 12:4–31; Constitution Preamble).

The voice of advisories—the scope of which category goes far beyond simply teachers or commissioned ministers—is intended to inform such a vote, to be heard, carefully considered, and taken into account at every level, with those who exercise the vote on behalf of the member congregations as fully informed of the needs and insights of the whole church, including its auxiliary offices and candidates for and emeriti of ordained and commissioned ministry. As with many aspects of the Synod’s polity, there is probably a significant opportunity for the broad reengagement of the Synod’s member congregations and their delegates in this listening and reflecting process—and, as we shall see, for the broad reengagement of the Synod’s advisory members, as well.

PART II: Realization of the Synod’s Concept of Advisory Member Input

As noted in the first part of this report, the Synod has, from its inception, welcomed the participation of advisory individual members, originally including those pastors who had joined the Synod but were not voting representatives of member congregations, candidates for the ministry, and teachers. These came to include, as the various other categories of commissioned ministry developed over time, all members in these categories as well.

Taking stock of the individual (advisory) membership of the Synod

In considering the roles of advisory members of the Synod [4] in relation to district and Synod conventions, it is instructive to consider how many there are and how widely they are distributed in the Synod. The table below shows the number of congregational voting delegates (pastor and lay) and the number of individual advisory delegates of the various types in each district. Three columns provide ratios at the far right: first is the ratio of individual advisory to voting delegates, then are the ratios of all commissioned to all

advisory delegates, both for all advisories and for all *actively serving* advisories.

Taking all district conventions collectively, there are 1.77 potential individual advisory delegates for each voting delegate in the Synod, 70 percent of which advisories are commissioned ministers (of the advisory ministers actively in service, commissioned ministers constitute 82 percent). Note, however, that these ratios vary widely from district to district. South Wisconsin District has 3.12 potential advisory delegates per voting delegate, 80 percent of which are commissioned; North Dakota has 0.57, and only 53 percent of these are commissioned. In considering proposals for changes to how commissioned ministers interact with their district conventions, it will be important to take this degree of variation into account. In districts with very large numbers of advisory ministers and very low advisory member attendance at present, it has been suggested that a scheme for designating certain specific representatives to attend on a proportional basis (like that used for the Synod convention, Bylaw 3.1.3.1) may be preferable to the current arrangement, but this may not be necessary or desirable in many districts with fewer advisories and relatively higher participation rates. Circuits, too, are not likely good “units” for commissioned representation, given the very uneven distribution of commissioned ministers across the circuits of the Synod.

While district convention advisory delegate attendance rates were not readily available to the committee, the table will provide each district a means of evaluating the rate of attendance of its advisory members (active, candidate, emeritus, commissioned, and otherwise) at its conventions. It is suspected to be the case that at least in districts with many potential advisories, relatively few regularly attend. While there may be reasons for this, Synod bylaws do expect the participation, apart from a valid excuse, of all advisory members of the districts in their district conventions (Bylaw 4.2.3). If the advisories—especially those active in ministry, principally in the district’s schools—are not in attendance, why not? What can be done to engage the teachers and other commissioned ministers in what is hoped and intended to be a time of vital importance for life together in Word, confession, and mission (Bylaw 4.2.1)?

It was also noted in the committee’s discussions that approximately 28 percent of teachers in Synod schools are presently rostered; including emeriti, rostered teachers comprise approximately 49 percent of teachers related to the schools. The majority of teachers are lay (i.e., not commissioned) and therefore have the opportunity (if members of Synod-member congregations) to serve as delegates, which commissioned teachers do not—part of the conundrum of commissioned teachers’ “advisory-only” status.

Parish and circuit

Constitutionally, the lay and pastoral delegates together represent each parish (*Pfarrgemeinde*) and its total ministry in a manner that reflects the connection of Synod’s polity with the Synod’s doctrines and principles of Church and Ministry. A school or other parish ministry involving commissioned workers is an extension of that congregation’s ministry. The existing parish voting delegates should be representing the interests of the school and the school’s workers. How often do the delegates meet, before and after district conventions, with those represented, to discuss issues in ministry in general and issues before the convention in particular? At least for district conventions, where representation is on a direct parish basis, that ought to be the case.

Estimated District Convention Delegations as of January 2021

Sorted by ratio of individual advisory delegates to voting delegates

District	Parishes	Congregational Delegates			Individual Advisory Delegates						TOTAL	Indiv. Advisory / Vot. Del.	Comm. frac. of Adv. Del.	
		Pastor	Lay	Adv.* Lay	Active**	Candidate	Emeritus	Active	Candidate	Emeritus			Total	Active
TOTAL	5280	4455	5280	542	1458	374	3333	6474	1859	3773	17271	1.77	0.70	0.82
SW	185	168	185	21	72	9	141	555	84	241	1102	3.12	0.80	0.89
NI	198	166	198	3	72	10	106	471	160	280	1099	3.02	0.83	0.87
MO	264	227	264	25	199	19	207	575	95	344	1439	2.93	0.70	0.74
IN	221	193	221	6	109	20	187	481	111	286	1194	2.88	0.74	0.82
PSW	265	223	265	5	92	32	204	568	162	277	1335	2.74	0.75	0.86
TX	324	272	324	19	146	30	217	647	104	222	1366	2.29	0.71	0.82
MI	336	288	336	16	102	19	213	549	76	427	1386	2.22	0.76	0.84
NEB	194	165	194	43	56	18	95	301	112	192	774	2.16	0.78	0.84
MNS	212	191	212	27	60	20	148	317	96	199	840	2.08	0.73	0.84
SI	82	70	82	12	17	4	30	145	31	80	307	2.02	0.83	0.90
RM	159	131	159	13	35	16	94	189	115	100	549	1.89	0.74	0.84
FG	185	161	185	0	43	14	195	162	110	118	642	1.86	0.61	0.79
CI	137	109	137	13	15	8	63	154	34	99	373	1.52	0.77	0.91
CNH	163	128	163	10	36	17	106	141	40	72	412	1.42	0.61	0.80
NW	169	137	169	45	30	9	102	188	32	70	431	1.41	0.67	0.86
NOW	248	206	248	8	22	19	185	161	87	142	616	1.36	0.63	0.88
SE	206	168	206	3	41	29	167	128	45	88	498	1.33	0.52	0.76
OH	149	126	149	7	28	10	84	115	32	77	346	1.26	0.65	0.80
KS	140	112	140	19	27	4	70	77	61	52	291	1.15	0.65	0.74
AT	92	62	92	4	35	5	34	56	20	25	175	1.14	0.58	0.62
EN	158	136	158	5	40	6	87	64	34	82	313	1.06	0.58	0.62
MDS	116	99	116	6	33	5	69	52	19	38	216	1.00	0.50	0.61
SD	68	59	68	38	16	5	46	27	14	19	127	1.00	0.47	0.63
IE	96	89	96	19	13	3	39	64	19	40	178	0.96	0.69	0.83
SELC	51	41	51	2	20	4	23	25	7	8	87	0.95	0.46	0.56
EA	107	84	107	16	13	6	63	40	20	27	169	0.88	0.51	0.75
OK	77	62	77	2	5	4	30	45	18	14	116	0.83	0.66	0.90
SO	137	109	137	14	15	4	74	45	21	45	204	0.83	0.54	0.75
MT	47	42	47	21	8	3	21	19	6	14	71	0.80	0.55	0.70
NE	62	53	62	5	1	3	42	8	17	19	90	0.78	0.49	0.89
IW	136	122	136	30	21	4	54	41	23	30	173	0.67	0.54	0.66
WY	45	43	45	15	9	1	26	8	9	6	59	0.67	0.39	0.47
MNN	158	131	158	37	8	5	81	39	23	31	187	0.65	0.50	0.83
NJ	45	37	45	1	5	8	20	3	10	7	53	0.65	0.38	0.38
ND	48	45	48	32	14	1	10	14	12	2	53	0.57	0.53	0.50

* Congregations of a multi-congregation parish other than the one supplying the lay voting delegate may elect and depute an advisory lay delegate.

** Includes parish pastors in multi-pastor parishes other than the voting pastor and ordained in extra-parochial service.

For total number of active ordained, add the "Voting Pastor" column to the left.

The voting representatives of a parish might well be expected to represent the needs of their commissioned workers at the convention; at the same time, commissioned workers may be called by nonparish entities (of current commissioned minister assignments, 30 percent of those for teachers, 40 percent for deaconesses, 11 percent for directors of Christian education, and 14 percent for other commissioned are with calling entities other than a congregation or congregationally governed school). This is not to mention the diminished and further diminishing proportion of Synod-related teaching positions filled by installed, commissioned ministers—another issue entirely.

Beyond the parish, commissioned ministers don't have frequent circuit conferences (winkles), as pastors do, though they do, like their ordained brothers, have less frequent official district or sectional conferences (Bylaws 4.8.1–4.8.2), which are able to adopt and submit overtures to district and Synod conventions (Bylaw 4.8.3). Circuit forums can allow for additional advisory participation (Bylaw 5.3.2 [a]). In meetings related to representation of

the circuit at the Synod convention, especially those at which the circuit interacts—either before or after the convention—with representation of member congregations or with the congregations themselves (Bylaw 3.1.2.2 [d]) (as infrequent as such meetings seem to be), care can be taken that individual advisory members have an opportunity to participate, or that the voting forum representatives of the congregation take into consideration and represent their needs and insights.

Floor committees (district and Synod conventions)

Advisory members appointed to floor committees at either the district or the Synod level have voice *and* vote and serve in a capacity where more thoughtfully substantive change can be made, typically, than on the convention floor. This is probably one of the most significant opportunities, besides having a voice on the floor, to allow advisory members very significant potential impact on the convention process.

Dr. Gude prepared a report on bylaws governing advisory participation in Synod convention-floor committees and statistics on that participation. From 1924 on, laypersons were required to be appointed to floor committees; from 1969 on, teachers—and then, from 1986, commissioned ministers—were also to be included on all committees. A general revision of bylaws in 1981 made explicit the advisories' right to vote when serving on floor committees in the district. At the same time, it also reduced by half—from one-in-thirty to one-in-sixty—the ratio of advisory representation at the Synod convention.

Each convention since 1924 has had some teachers on some floor committees, sometimes apparently depending on topics treated; since 1969, teachers and then commissioned members have been required on all floor committees.

In the early conventions, the number of committees was significantly larger, and some committees were very large. There was a predominance of pastors and district presidents. There were also a large number of faculty from the educational institutions of the Synod and quite a high percentage of these were on floor committees. In the later years, faculty of the institutions of the Synod were not included on floor committees, with one or two possible exceptions. In the early years, a fairly high percentage of the teachers who were delegates to the convention wound up also serving on the floor committees. There were also many districts that did not send teacher delegates to the Synod convention, or not as many as they were allowed.

The total number of advisory teacher and advisory pastor delegates was fairly consistent throughout the conventions studied. In the early years of the Synod, the majority of the advisory pastor delegates would have been pastors who were members of the Synod, serving independent congregations. In the period reviewed, this would not have been the case. Prior to the 1970s, the majority of advisory pastors would have been assistant pastors, with some emeritus pastors. From the 1980s forward, the majority would have probably been emeritus or with *candidatus reverendi ministerii* (CRM) or candidate status.

The number of voting delegates attending conventions rose for most of the period but recently has declined. The number of floor committees also declined in the later period considered, as did the number of people on the various committees. Given that the number of district presidents and Vice-Presidents of the Synod has remained constant, and the committees have grown smaller more recently, there has come to be a higher percentage of Synod and/or district officials on the floor committees. Compounding this effect, some of the advisory delegates (commissioned and ordained) are also executives of the districts or officers of the district representing the various district boards of directors. (It is also apparent that the percentage of lay delegates, in relation to the total number of lay delegates on the floor committees, has decreased. In 1983, there were 87 rostered church workers and 59 laity on floor committees. In 2016, there were 129 rostered church workers and 44 laity.)

The committee noted that the full and active involvement of advisory delegates in the floor committees is an already-available measure that should be emphasized. In a day of fast-paced conventions with relatively little substantive debate, floor committees are where the “deep work” happens—and here, if they are included in the composition of the committees, advisory delegates have both voice and vote. (Convention time also needs to be allotted to issues of primary relevance to the work of commissioned ministers; one committee member noted extensive work on 2019 Floor Commit-

tee 12, dealing with important matters for schools and families, that seemed to receive only “short shrift” at the end of the convention.)

District convention

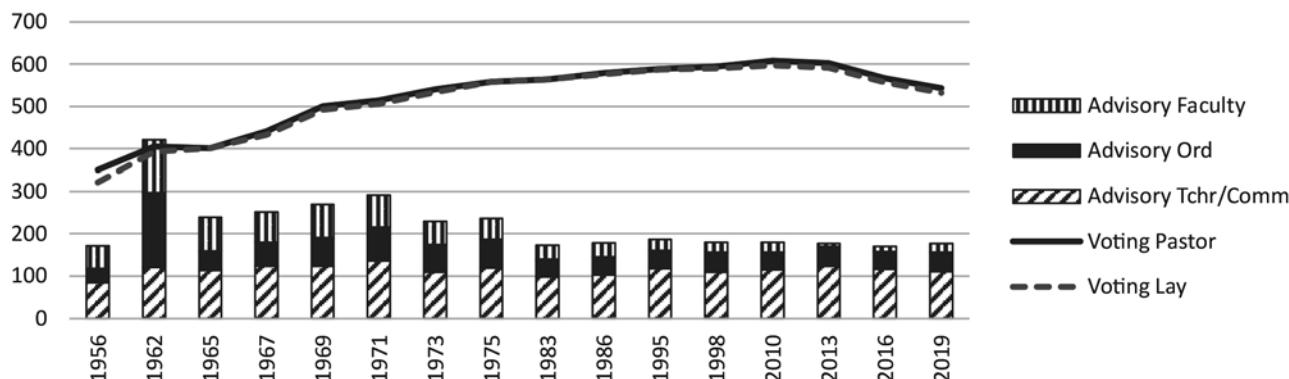
Time and expense should be allowed for significant advisory delegate input at the conventions, for a sense of true inclusion and valued voice. Their input is constitutional and important. Nonetheless, in many districts, their attendance is low. Some district conventions align poorly with school-year events or occur on a week-end during the school year, when time away is especially valued. In other cases, the value or purpose of attendance may be questioned or the cost of attendance prove an obstacle. Anecdotally, participation often tends to be by commissioned ministers who are personally interested in Synod or district affairs, but not a priority or practical possibility for most potential advisory delegates.

A district doesn't typically cover the attendance cost of advisories, which may vary greatly depending on the geography of the district and the setting of the convention. While a congregation or other entity served might reasonably be expected to help bear attendance costs for those individual members (including advisories) actively serving it, such support does not seem generally to be provided for the bulk of active commissioned ministers, and schedules may not even be adjusted to accommodate their convention attendance. Moreover, many advisories are not presently serving in installed positions. It was suggested that financial support of advisory attendance could make a significant difference in their attendance rate.

President Allan Buss shared with the committee a practice of the Northern Illinois District, started some 18–20 years ago, of having an “advisory poll” prior to the vote of voting delegates on key convention business. Originally, advisory members attending the convention received green and red cards to display to the body prior to significant nonelection votes. Today, those advisories (typically 30–35 wish to participate) register in advance and the district provides them with polling devices for this purpose. The advisory delegates who register and receive devices are polled and the result displayed prior to assembly votes on motions to close debate, on resolutions, or on substantial amendments thereto. There is some cost to the district of the additional voting devices but very little impact on convention pace. The advisory delegates participating are primarily commissioned ministers, active and emeritus, though some ordained emeriti also participate. The practice is thought to have increased somewhat the participation of commissioned ministers in the convention. With approximately 180–200 voting delegates attending, “somewhat more than 30” commissioned register and participate (not by way of formal representation, but through choice) in the advisory poll. Buss noted that this “creates good will with advisories and a more formal opportunity to share opinions.”

It was noted that Northern Illinois District, with 198 active parishes, each representable by a pastor and a lay delegate (ca. 364 voting delegates, accounting for pastoral vacancies), presently has 354 ordained rostered (238 active, 21 of which are SMP; 10 candidates; and 106 emeritus) and 911 commissioned rostered (471 active, 160 candidate, and 280 emeritus). This makes for a theoretical total of 198 lay delegates, up to 198 ordained ministers voting on behalf of parishes and, theoretically, 1,065 advisory ordained and commissioned delegates. If 30–35 advisories typically register for and attend the district convention as active participants, this indicates by how much—at least in some places—reality falls short of the ideal of Bylaw 4.2.3, that “all . . . shall, unless they present a valid excuse, serve as advisory delegates” and—at least in a

Synod Convention Delegate and Faculty Representative Attendance



larger district—how impractical that ideal might prove if achieved. Northern Illinois happens to be the district with the highest ratio of commissioned to ordained ministers (2.57:1, compared to a Synod-level statistic of 1.26:1) and proportion of individual members who are advisory delegates (81 percent; Synod: 72 percent).

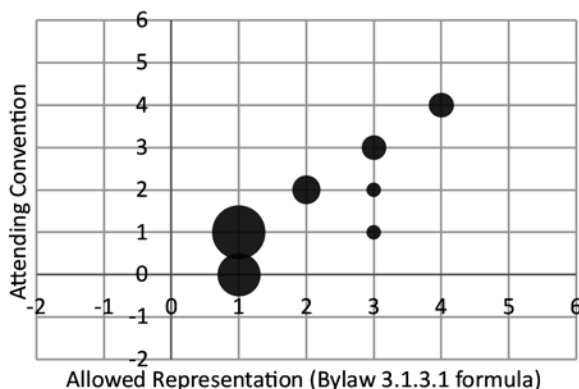
Granting each advisory member a voice allows, theoretically, an equal opportunity to be heard, but only so many get to speak or are inclined to do so, especially at a national convention. A displayed, pre-vote advisory poll may offer a broader opportunity for input. There is a feeling that commissioned ministers (and other advisories) have been “left behind,” especially in an age of little in-depth debate and rapid machine voting. In Northern Illinois District, the advisory poll has given those advisories inclined to participate some form of tangible input.

Synod convention

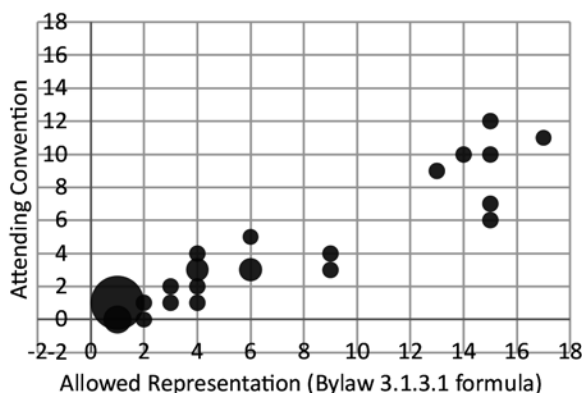
The committee discussed the participation of the advisory delegates in conventions of the Synod. Dr. Gude’s historical survey also examined their numbers between 1956 and 2019, which have, apart from a couple of exceptional years, remained remarkably stable throughout the period, though the number of rostered Synod educational institution faculty has declined significantly. It is noted that the roster of commissioned ministers has expanded over time, from male teachers only to also include women (allowed to be called, 1965; allowed to be on roster of Synod, 1973; first listed on roster, ca. 1975; included by rule, even if still contracted by member congregation, 1981) and other categories of commissioned ministry besides *teacher*. Before 1981, they were represented at a one-to-thirty ratio; after, by a one-to-sixty ratio. In 1981, 149 teachers attended the Synod convention as advisory delegates; in 1983, 98 did so (a reduction by one-third, not one-half, indicating that not all districts were making full use of the one-to-thirty ratio before 1983). Today 110–120 commissioned ministers attend as advisory delegates, of which (in 2019) 78 percent were active (87 percent of those are teachers), 7 percent were candidates, and 16 percent were emeritus.

The chart shows, for Synod conventions between 1956 and 2019, three stacked bars for the number of advisory delegates (commissioned and ordained, in modern terms) and educational-institution representatives relative to two lines for the number of pastoral and lay voting delegates.

2019 Ordained Minister Advisory Delegates, by District



2019 Commissioned Minister Advisory Delegates, by District



It was suggested that in addition to the important opportunities involving floor committees, there should be more common and formal “listening sessions” to ensure elected delegates are prepared to represent the concerns, needs, and insights of all represented congregations, and of all their ministries and workers. Perhaps this could be codified in the Bylaws for circuit meetings as a mandated

process for lay and pastoral delegates to sit with advisories and discuss issues of interest before coming to the convention. (Of course, it might be cautioned that many things—like the post-convention report to the circuit of the delegates—are codified in Bylaws but are not pursued uniformly or even generally in the Synod. Previous attempts at “grassroots listening” have not succeeded in general practice.)

Some districts send fewer than the allotted number (Bylaw 3.1.3.1) of advisory delegates to the Synod convention. In 2019, 184 commissioned and 58 ordained advisory delegates were permitted by the proportional formula; 111 commissioned and 46 ordained advisory delegates attended the convention. The chart below shows how many advisory delegates districts sent (y-axis) relative to how many they were entitled to send (x-axis). (In both charts, ideally, the points would all be on the x-y diagonal.) Does this reflect lack of interest on the part of commissioned ministers, an estimation that participation is not “worth it,” a poor process for selecting representatives, a lack of support of the role, or some combination thereof? This seems a valuable conversation to suggest in each district and in commissioned- and ordained-minister district conferences.

Conclusions to Part II

In evaluating how well the constitutional concept of having advisory members offering advice to the conventions is realized, the committee noted that the voice afforded to advisories is significant but not ideally implemented or utilized. Conversations need to be had—perhaps in a more formal, structured, or expected way—so that voting representatives in fact are equipped to represent the “total ministry.” It must be acknowledged that we are sinners; voices may be permitted but not listened to or even treated in a way that encourages and builds up.

Several voiced a desire to ensure that commissioned workers “feel valued.” Commissioned ministers, who outnumber ordained ministers synodwide, care about being regarded as “valued partners in ministry.” Some are “pretty passionate about the vote.” Some feel they are “second-class citizens” without a say in Synod or district. There is a feeling that “we struggle to engage lay people, too” in the collective impact of what happens at convention. “How do we make conventions edifying for the church and make it visible that kingdom things are happening here?”

It was felt that one of the best existing opportunities is to encourage more participation of commissioned ministers on floor committees. Both commissioned and lay participation seem to be declining over time, with district presidents and Synod representatives seeming to play an increasingly dominant role. Asked whether floor committee roles are perceived as important by advisory delegates, a commissioned minister noted that “committee work affords much more than what’s on the floor.” Increasing the number of commissioned ministers involved in the “back and forth” of committee work would be very valuable, and this is probably the most readily achievable and potentially richest opportunity for meaningful and influential input from advisory members of the Synod.

With regard to the “advisory poll” idea practiced in the Northern Illinois District, or a simpler red/green version, this may be an easy enough thing for a district to try. At the Synod level, the simple red/green system would not work well. Some other implementation might be possible by an amendment of the standing rules, although there would probably be significant technical hurdles. Preparations

would have to be made, with extra polling devices and technical preparation required in advance.

Regarding such mechanisms, however, a danger was noted, even if remote or secondary—like a danger perceived by some in the posting of pro/con voting queues at the Synod convention—that the custom of regular polling in an environment of inadequate debate can result in the diminution of important minority voices. Of course, parliamentary law is intended to protect both the rights of the minority (and the character of a deliberative assembly) and the right of the majority’s mostly agreeable business not to be stymied by a dilatory minority. The conventions of the district and Synod are, however, not simply vehicles for expeditious majority rule or for testing the waters of various constituencies and then voting but for study and persuasion in the Word of God, for the building of true and churchly consensus. Numerical polling can give the impression that a collective voice has been heard, possibly at the expense of more important individual minority voices.

Overall Conclusions

Ultimately, the exercise of the franchise in the Synod is not intended to be simply for the decision of issues by the prevalence of political power but is intended to be the means—once the Word of God and conscience have had all necessary opportunity to hold sway, and the needs and concerns of the whole Synod’s union, including its advisory individual membership, have been adequately heard and considered—for the body to vote for the good of the churches and the furtherance of their mission. Only then, in the design of our Synod’s polity, is it time for a matter to be decided by majority vote.

Votes change things, but voices change minds. Votes often divide, but a fit word rightly spoken can unite. How, indeed, can the voting assembly of a district or Synod know how to serve and supervise ministry if it doesn’t hear from all its ministers, to understand not only what they want but how they think? It is thus the committee’s hope that their report will be useful to the Synod, not only in reviewing the historical and theoretical foundations of its franchise, but also in recognizing and revitalizing for all it is the “voice, not vote” role—which may not be less than vote, but more—that advisory individual members, including commissioned ministers, have always been intended to have in the mechanisms for governance of the Synod.

Endnotes

1. The German term used, *Pfarrgemeinde*, is defined in a footnote to the 1847 Constitution as “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.” When the Constitution was translated from the German in 1924, *Pfarrgemeinde* was translated as “congregation or parish” to reference situations where a pastor served either one or more than one congregation. Hereafter “parish” is generally used as shorthand for “congregation or parish” or *Pfarrgemeinde*, not to exclude single-congregation parishes.

2. At its founding and for about the first 120 years, the Synod assumed that each *Pfarrgemeinde* (pastor/congregation) had a single pastor who was responsible for its spiritual care (was “in charge of” the congregation). If a congregation had more than one clergyman, one was considered the *Prediger* (we would say sole or senior pastor) and the others were *Hilfsprediger* (we would say helper pastors or assistant pastors). In the Trinity Congregation meeting of May 18, 1846, drafters of the LCMS Constitution definitively established the rule that only one pastor per *Pfarrgemeinde* could vote for the congregation, and that others sent were only advisory, under the

name of Stimmengleichheit (“equality of votes”) (Carl S. Mundinger, Government in the Missouri Synod [St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1947], 178). At Fort Wayne, the rule was established that multiple congregations under one Pfarrgemeinde could send only one lay delegate, conserving the Stimmengleichheit in another respect (id., 181–83).

3. The men in this category primarily consisted of men who were pastors of congregations that had not yet joined the Synod. However, it did include others as well, such as professors. The 1847 convention of the Synod lists 10 advisory members in attendance. Nine of these were pastors of congregations that were not members of the Synod. The other individual is described as assisting with the instruction at the Fort Wayne institution.

4. Advisory members: That is, individual members of the Synod who are not the voting pastoral delegate of a parish/circuit. No individual member possesses a vote in his own right. One pastor of each parish/circuit casts one of the parish/circuit’s two votes. At the district level, all individual members of the Synod, all ordained and commissioned ministers—active, candidate, and emeritus—are intended to attend the district convention apart from a valid excuse (Bylaw 4.2.3). At the Synod level, such individual members not eligible to be voting pastoral delegates and not eligible to be selected as advisory representatives (Bylaws 3.1.4–3.1.4.6) are represented at the Synod convention by advisory delegates, selected on a proportional basis (1 per 60) from each district (Bylaws 3.1.3–3.1.3.1).

Appendix

To Study Voting Privilege in the LCMS 2019 RESOLUTION 9-17 Overture 9-22 (CW, 501)

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 (directors of church ministries) through their inclusion as ministers of religion—commissioned; and

WHEREAS, The Synod highly values commissioned ministers for their eagerness to serve the Lord and His Church; and

WHEREAS, The Synod recognizes the voices and wisdom of our commissioned ministers as gifts from the Lord; and

WHEREAS, The Synod appreciates and gives thanks to God for the unique vocations of ordained ministers, commissioned ministers and lay people alike; and

WHEREAS, Historically, the structure of the Synod is based on the franchise belonging to the Pfarrgemeinde, maintaining a balance of clergy and lay voting; and

WHEREAS, The current structure of the Synod does not allow for a third category of voting delegates at district and Synod conventions; and

WHEREAS, Commissioned ministers from across the Synod seek to use their gifts and serve the Church in the fullest way possible; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Commission on Constitutional Matters (CCM) in conjunction with the Council of Presidents (COP), including a number of commissioned ministers chosen by the COP, prepare a report regarding the historic and current voting privileges in Synod; and be it further

Resolved, That this report be made available to the Synod at least 18 months prior to the 2022 Synod convention.

Action: Adopted as read (7)

Res. 9-17 was read and introduced by the committee, removing the first resolved (lines 20–21), which erroneously remained in the draft. During discussion by the assembly, the orders of the day were called; closure of debate carried [Yes: 727; No: 188]. Res. 9-17 was adopted as read [Yes: 669; No: 251].

John W. Sias, *Secretary*

R63

Ecclesiastical Visitation of Concordia University Wisconsin and Ann Arbor

By the Office of the President,
The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

This report was publicly promised to the Synod. Since my visitation and delivery of a report to the Board of Regents, the Board of Regents has called Dr. Erik Ankerberg as the new president, and he is already addressing issues I raised in my report. I am very thankful the board of regents resumed the process outlined by our governing documents. I believe the future of Concordia University Wisconsin and Ann Arbor is bright.

Introduction

On March 23–25 and April 1, 2022, consistent with the duties and responsibilities given my office by the Constitution and Bylaws of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS), which also govern Concordia University Wisconsin and Ann Arbor (CUWAA), I conducted an ecclesiastical visitation of the university. This is a summary of the report I sent to the CUWAA Board of Regents (BOR) and an update on progress made since that visitation.

I announced my intention to conduct this visitation in a March 9, 2022, letter to CUWAA Interim President Dr. William Cario. I wrote, in part:

I am taking this action because Concordia has been such a precious blessing to the LCMS, to her Gospel-defined mission, and to countless thousands. I am also acting because of a consistent and growing number of concerns addressed to me by lay and clergy members of the Synod, district presidents, regents, CUS representatives, faculty, and students of CUWAA.

On October 13, 2021, I emailed the entire CUWAA Board of Regents that, because of bylaw violations in the search process and because of “persistent complaints from the campus about attitudes, actions and events which are not in harmony with the public teaching, doctrine and practice of the LCMS, if you act to terminate the [presidential] search process and do not proceed in clear accord with the Bylaws, I shall be forced to exercise my responsibility with respect to Bylaw 3.3.1.2 (c).”

In that same email, I stated, “I shall form a task force to perform a visitation of the campus and speak to all concerned. And I shall report accordingly to the church, including the Synod in convention.”

CUWAA has been established by the congregations of the Synod, and its Board of Regents and administration are responsible to them for its faithful operation. The congregations allow the school great freedom in accomplishing its mission, but that mission is defined “within the broad assignment of Synod” (Bylaw 3.10.6.1). Concordia, as an “agency” of the Synod, has a sacred responsibility to operate in accord with the bounds of the confession of Synod (“the written Word of God as the only rule and norm of faith and practice,” and in accordance with the Symbolical Books

of the Evangelical Lutheran Church), as expressed in Article II of our Constitution.

The President of Synod “has the supervision regarding the doctrine and administration of . . . all such as are employed by the Synod” (Article XI B 1 b). “It is the President’s duty to see to it that all the aforementioned are acting according 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” (Article XI B 2).

Composition and Methods of the Visitation

The visitation team:

Rev. Dr. Jon Bruss, Board of Directors, Concordia University System

Rev. Paul Dare, pastor, Zion Lutheran Church and School, Alexandria, Minn.

Rev. Dr. Matthew C. Harrison, President, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

Michelle Kazmierczak, JD, Board of Regents, Concordia University Chicago, River Forest, Ill.;

Dr. Leo Mackay, Board of Regents, Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Ind.

Dr. Gerhard Mundinger Jr., chairman, Board of Directors, Concordia University System

Rev. Dr. Paul Philp, director of institutional research and integrity, Concordia University System

Rev. Dr. Dean Wenthe, president, Concordia University System

Rev. Dr. John Wohlrabe Jr., second vice-president, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

Over the course of the three days on the Mequon campus and one day on the Ann Arbor campus, we interviewed 113 individuals, attended chapel, and ate lunch in the campus dining halls. Interim President Cario was very accommodating of our requests, and his executive assistants are to be especially commended for their tireless work helping to schedule interviews; communicate with administrators, faculty, and staff; and assist the visitation team.

The visitation team asked questions related to Lutheran identity, the mission of the university, the faculty’s use of a biblical worldview in their approach to controversial topics, concerns regarding the presidential search, campus life, and other related topics. At the end of many interviews, I asked how loved and supported students and faculty felt on campus. The visitation team did not argue with the interviewees and did not push back on answers given. The team asked clarifying questions when appropriate or necessary. Summaries from the interviews and related comments were included as an appendix to the report given to the BOR.

The Good

The team found much that was good and worthy of celebrating. Both campuses are beautiful, with stunning chapels at the heart of each. Both have vibrant student communities composed of a mixture of Lutherans, other Christians, and non-Christians. Both campuses have pastors on staff who seek to be attentive to the spiritual needs of the students. Many CUWAA students are preparing for careers in church work alongside students preparing for secular occupations where they can and are bringing the light of the Gospel to

their corners of the world. Despite the financial challenge of merging Concordia University Ann Arbor (CUAA), Ann Arbor, Mich., into Concordia University Wisconsin (CUW), Mequon, Wis., in 2013, the Ann Arbor campus is now achieving positive financial results. CUWAA is expanding its academic programs and seeking ways to grow and remain competitive amid the uncertainty facing higher education in the country.

Many students told us how they had grown in their faith during their time at CUWAA. They praised the theology faculty for their compassionate engagement with their students and their fidelity to the truths of sacred Scripture and the distinctiveness of the Lutheran confession of the faith. In Ann Arbor, we heard of 90 students baptized since the merger of CUAA and CUW. We also heard good reports about many professors in the science departments, which include faithful LCMS men and women, who teach according to the biblical understanding of creation and the fall. We consistently heard of the professors’ dedication to their students. There are many good faculty members, diligent administrators, and hardworking staff who could probably make more money in other universities or in the secular marketplace but who choose to work long hours, teach more classes, and make less money because they value the mission of Concordia and want a share in God’s work to deliver His Word to young people. Interim President Cario is conscientious, kindly serving at a difficult moment of transition. Many faculty are deeply committed to the institution and its historic mission, and they demonstrate competence toward this goal.

The visitation team’s specific objective was to evaluate the university in light of concerns raised to me in recent years, concerns that escalated and were exacerbated during the presidential search. In our interviews, we asked questions related to these concerns. The fact that we found so much praiseworthy about Concordia should encourage readers of this report that, despite the problems noted, there is hope for the future of CUWAA. In fact, CUWAA is a great university.

The Presidential Search and Bylaw Violations

The visitation report to the BOR discussed, at length, events surrounding the presidential search process; the inadequacies in the presidential search process, including deviations from the Synod Bylaws and Synod doctrine; and the need to correct those failures. We detailed concerns that arose in the presidential search regarding use of secular buzzwords with no theological redefinition of these terms and laid out a detailed explanation showing how the BOR had abdicated its Bylaw authority and responsibilities. In particular, the report detailed how the visitation team found that the BOR violated the Bylaws in three significant ways: (1) failing to oversee the carrying out of the university’s Lutheran mission, (2) delegating authority to the Executive Committee of the BOR, and (3) failing to participate fully in the presidential search process and to maintain supervision over the Search Committee. As a result of these very serious concerns, I called on the BOR to return to a presidential search process undertaken in accordance with the Synod Bylaws. We are grateful that, following our visitation and the delivery of the report to the BOR, the regents complied with our exhortation and reengaged the process for selecting a president laid out in the Synod Bylaws. From the list of eligible candidates, the BOR called Dr. Erik Ankerberg, who accepted this call. I remain tremendously hopeful that Dr. Ankerberg will address other concerns uncovered by the visitation team and outlined in the full report given to the BOR.

One purpose for the BOR as a whole to exercise its ruling authority as directed by Synod Bylaws is to ensure that the minority voices on the Board are at least heard. Until our visitation and simultaneous scrutiny from stakeholders throughout the Synod, the regents consistently rejected the input of the elected pastors on the BOR as well as the district president and my appointed representative. These men are seasoned pastors. They know the Scriptures and are deeply concerned about mission drift at the university. Some of these regents shared in the interviews their concerns that the Executive Committee may be seeking to distance itself from Synod oversight and affiliation.

Bylaws are not Scripture. Violating them is not the same as breaking the Commandments. But they represent the way in which we have agreed to walk together as a Synod. They guide us to our common mission, which is the proclamation of Christ crucified for the forgiveness of sinners. They are also the expressed will of the congregations of the Synod, the congregations to whom all members of the LCMS and all of the Concordia universities, as institutions of the Synod, are accountable. That a return to the process for selecting a president outlined in the Bylaws yielded such a candidate as Dr. Ankerberg is a testament to the value of following the process laid out for all of us by the collective will of the congregations of the Synod.

Mission Drift

Three different adverse forces seem to be pressing on the university simultaneously: (1) fear of the “demographic cliff” threatening institutions of higher learning, (2) rapid and broad expansion of CUWAA, and (3) a push by some in the administration for a more progressive agenda.

Several administrators spoke of the looming “demographic cliff” threatening higher education. Since the recession of 2008, higher education pundits have been wringing their hands about the declining birth rate and the looming decrease in undergraduate enrollments, which threaten traditional four-year colleges and universities.

The danger is real. Since 2016, 75 universities have closed. Those closures are largely the result of an inability to match income to expenses. Among that list of 75 shuttered universities are three of our own Concordias: Concordia College Alabama, Selma, Ala; Concordia University, Portland, Ore.; and Concordia College New York, Bronxville, N.Y. Despite millions of dollars loaned by Lutheran Church Extension Fund (LCEF) and the CUS, as well as financial support provided by the LCMS and generous donors, each of these schools closed because the financial obstacles simply became too great to overcome. We would have mourned the loss of any Concordia, but we have had to grieve the loss of three in quick succession.

In 2012, Concordia University Ann Arbor (CUAA) was also in an unsustainable financial situation. Instead of letting the institution close, though, Concordia University Wisconsin (CUW) proposed a merger that would assume CUAA into CUW and allow CUAA to operate as a campus of the combined CUWAA. This move saved CUAA by leveraging CUW’s stronger financial stability, and it demonstrated the strength of the partnerships within our CUS. We are grateful to God for the courageous leadership of CUW in this matter. Prior to the merger, CUAA was losing millions of dollars annually. Before the merger, CUW was profitable at \$15 million per year. After the merger, CUWAA was losing a few million dollars a year while paying off CUAA’s significant debts.

Several interviewees expressed fears over the survival of CUWAA. This deep concern over the future of CUWAA’s place in higher education is the first force pushing the institution off course. Fear of the future was a common theme in our interviews.

The second adverse force is related to the first. To contend against these threats to the institution’s survival, CUWAA has sought to expand its degree offerings in an effort to maintain a sustainable student base. CUW addressed its slow decline in church work students since the 1970s by adding programs (nursing, pharmacy, health, and others not inherently incompatible with a Lutheran mission) that could keep the university profitable. This is not at all unique. All our Concordia universities have followed a similar course. Adding programs is not wrong or necessarily detrimental to a university’s mission. But the push for growth at CUWAA seems to have come at a significant cost to the institution’s Lutheran identity.

We repeatedly heard the concern from interviewees across the board (faculty, staff, administration, and students) that the driving force at CUWAA was “growth at all costs.” The rapid expansion of the university by means of ever-growing curricular offerings has caused a significant obstacle. New programs necessitate rapid new hires. New hires need to be taught the biblical and confessional theology of the LCMS and how to integrate that teaching into their discipline.

The effort to familiarize new instructors with the biblical and confessional theology of the LCMS is sorely inadequate. As noted above, the team learned that instruction for faculty in Lutheran doctrine and practice has been reduced from “formal ongoing training” in Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions to a mere one-hour exposure to Lutheran doctrine. Nascent efforts to correct this situation were unknown to the theology faculty. In contrast, other Concordias have more robust programs for catechizing new faculty, with at least one requiring additional study in Lutheran doctrine for faculty advancement.

The third adverse force is the introduction (sometimes inadvertent) of progressive ideologies of diversity. The Gospel is for all people. Forgiveness in Christ truly puts all people on the same level; the blood of Jesus is the price paid for every human being, with no discrimination. All are created in the image of God.

Initiatives designed to draw more people to a place where they can hear the Gospel, regardless of the color of their skin, are laudable. Intentional efforts to make minority students feel welcome at our universities are divinely driven acts of Christian hospitality.

But words are not neutral. “Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion” (DEI) is a phrase with a well-known secular meaning. In the workplace and in academia, DEI initiatives are not limited to race and culture. They aim to diversify not just the ethnicity of their populations but also the gender identities, sexual preferences, abilities, neurodiversities, and more.

CUWAA’s diversity initiatives have been hindered and have caused consternation in the church because these terms were used without being defined, leaving students, faculty, administrators, and stakeholders with no reason to believe they were being used in any way other than the common understanding of “diversity, equity, and inclusion.” From many interviewees, we heard, “We did not do a good job defining these words.” Some students and faculty reported unbiblical ways in which diversity was being taught in some classrooms. Books with messages opposed to a biblical worldview have been suggested as diversity resources.

This language was used in the Presidential Prospectus as well, demonstrating the degree to which it had saturated the ethos of the university. The Presidential Prospectus called for the next president to have “a demonstrated record of promoting and achieving diversity in all of its myriad forms” and “demonstrated belief in and commitment to equity and inclusion,” language and terminology borrowed without qualification or theological nuance from secular DEI initiatives that do not distinguish between cultural diversity and diversity of gender identities. To contend, as some interviewees did, that diversity initiatives at CUWAA were merely aimed at cultural diversity, while the document guiding the search for the academic and spiritual head of the institution called for someone who embraces diversity “in all its myriad forms,” is an untenable argument.

These forces pushed CUWAA off course. If the university is focused on surviving, it is not focused on a thriving Lutheran identity. The rapid addition of programs and the treatment of all departments as equals diminished the influence of the Lutheran theological faculty. As one visitor observed, “If you are trying to have a Lutheran school, [Lutheran] identity is not [going to come] out of the pharmacy school.” In other words, the pharmacy school and all others must be thoroughly informed and shaped by our biblical and Lutheran substance.

Many interviewees pointed to a change in CUWAA’s branding and marketing about five years ago that seemed to them a deliberate attempt to downplay or obscure the university’s Lutheran identity. Even administrators acknowledged that a genuine Lutheran identity was obscured or altogether missing from the website.

“Live Uncommon” was introduced in CUWAA’s promotional materials and strategic marketing in 2018. Though “uncommon” could be a way to talk about a distinctly Lutheran identity, in two brochures for potential students no reference was made to CUWAA being a Lutheran university.

Interviewees regularly defined Lutheran identity at CUWAA in terms of teaching and preparing students for “lives of service.” While “lives of service” can be understood within the Lutheran doctrine of vocation, this is not the Gospel, nor is it what it means to be Lutheran. Except for the theology faculty, too few faculty members, staff, or administrators articulated anything approaching “Christ crucified for sinners” as the heart of a Lutheran confession of the faith.

This mission drift away from a distinctly Lutheran ethos is apparent in the five-year Strategic Plan for CUWAA titled *Together We Will*, along with its Executive Summary. The Strategic Plan and Executive Summary call for more growth, diversified income streams (including seeking multimillion-dollar partnerships from corporations), change and agility, additional online programming, and an emphasis on post-traditional learners. Large corporations are not driven by fidelity to confessional statements and would likely base such partnerships on profitability metrics. What happens when adherence to scriptural truths is at odds with the bottom line? Online-only degree programs may be valuable, and they bring significant revenue to the university, yet these programs also limit participation in the healthy spiritual life of the campus, preclude chapel attendance, do not allow interactions with Lutheran faculty outside the classroom, and keep its users away from face-to-face interaction with students in church work programs. They also require more significant care in exposing students to Jesus and His mission. Nothing in the Strategic Plan is distinctly Lutheran. In fact, its aim to “increase market share within high potential Chris-

tian (non-Lutheran) markets” is a worthy goal, but also problematic without laser-like focus on biblical and Lutheran foundations. The Strategic Plan aims to “strengthen our Christian ethos through changing cultural norms,” but a generically Christian ethos is not a distinctly Lutheran ethos.

The Executive Summary at least mentions the Lutheran identity of the institution, seeking to be a “21st century Lutheran Christian university,” but it ultimately reduces Lutheran identity to “uncommon lives of purpose, service, and leadership for the good of self and society, all for the sake of Christ.” Vocation is a Lutheran category, to be sure, but not the Gospel heart of a Lutheran identity. With the exception of the phrase “for the sake of Christ,” nearly any secular university could embrace CUWAA’s mission to “develop students (mind, body, spirit) for uncommon lives of purpose, service, and leadership.” And even with the phrase “for the sake of Christ,” there’s nothing distinctly Lutheran about that mission.

The rest of the Executive Summary reads like the Strategic Plan, emphasizing growth, new programs, online learning, vague diversity and inclusivity goals, and new funding models. Despite the commitment that “we will not sacrifice our brand identity of Lutheran Christian higher education purpose to achieve increased enrollment,” the perception of most interviewees indicates that this is exactly what is happening—growth at the expense of a distinctly Lutheran identity.

If CUWAA continues with the 2021–2026 strategic plan, all indications point toward continued mission drift, obfuscation of a clear Christocentric Lutheran identity, and an increased alienation of Lutheran contributors and stakeholders.

Faculty Frustrations

It became apparent to the visitation team that many of the faculty of CUWAA are deeply frustrated. The theological faculty in particular feels marginalized. Two prominent members of the theology department have left for other institutions; others may depart soon. LCMS Lutherans in other departments have expressed similar concerns. Several of the faculty feel overworked and underpaid. Many of them feel their concerns are unheeded by the administration. An alarmingly high number of them answered “no” when asked if they feel loved and supported by the administration.

Since the visitation, several faculty members have reached out to the CUS BOD and members of the visitation team to voice their concerns over new language in the updated faculty contracts, which they feel makes them more disposable and susceptible to firing without due process.

As a university in the CUS, CUWAA has enjoyed a strong theological and philosophy faculty. The science faculty is also strong and faithful. But an alarming number of the faithful among the faculty are considering employment elsewhere.

Though the open letters published by a now-suspended faculty member were not the cause of our visitation, those letters and the administration’s handling of the situation were a source of deep concern to almost everyone to whom we spoke during our visit. Many faculty expressed empathy for their colleague. Though they did not all agree with the way he aired his concerns, they understood that he felt his concerns were not being heard and addressed by the administration for so long that he had no other recourse than to make them public. Many interviewees shared his concerns, noting that there is validity to many of his concerns. One interviewee called him “a canary in a coal mine.” The visitation team perceived

that the situation exposed a breakdown of communication between faculty and administration and is indicative of the perils of what many faculty described as a “growth at any cost” mentality. Members of the faculty, especially those faithful to the Scriptures and LCMS doctrine, are deeply worried about the Lutheran identity of CUWAA. Many of them are worn out and frustrated. Commenting on CUWAA’s Strategic Plan, one faculty member wished that the university focused as much on faculty development and retention as it does on student recruitment and retention. A minority faculty member forthrightly described the identity problem as a “fear of letting prospective students know who we are” and what the LCMS teaches on the issues of sex, marriage, and biblical views of diversity.

Trust from the Synod

As a result of these significant concerns, some of which have been made public across the Synod and in news reports beyond the church, there is a risk of pious laypeople and congregations of the Synod losing trust in the university’s faithfulness to genuine Lutheranism, her mission to raise up both church workers and faithful citizens in other vocations, and her efforts to reach the lost with the true and full Gospel of Christ.

However, there are wonderful things happening at CUWAA. In addition to the core LCMS faculty, there are many biblically minded, non-Lutheran Christians, who truly love the university and its mission and who desire to grow in their knowledge and practice of the Lutheran confession. I have great hope that CUWAA can perform the necessary course correction, play to its strengths, and embrace a Lutheran identity and ethos that pervades every program and saturates every syllabus. This is a critical moment. What the BOR and university administration do with this report will determine both the health of the university and the trust that congregations, pastors, laypeople, faculty, students, and alumni place in the institution.

Steps can be taken to strengthen trust. Here’s how.

Call for Action

1. *Acknowledge both the anemic Lutheran identity and the current mission drift.* The joy and confidence of being Lutheran is more than knowing that one’s life is to be lived in service to others. The Gospel, the full and free forgiveness from Jesus, delivered to undeserving sinners in the Lord’s Means of Grace, is the heart of our Lutheran identity. Utilize the theology faculty, not just the chair of the department or campus pastors, to catechize non-Lutheran faculty.
2. *Engage diversity from a biblical perspective.* Clearly and carefully define the words being used. Ground these definitions in Scripture. All our Concordias are dealing with similar pressures from secular DEI agendas. Collaborate with them or take the lead in speaking of the sin of racism, the brokenness of humanity because of the fall, the great equalizing force of the death of Christ, and the wonderful unity people have in Him. Work together with the Office of the President of the Synod and utilize the theological resources of the church and her seminaries and universities to define a truly winsome biblical, Lutheran, and unique view of the diversity issues and related questions.
3. *Scrap the strategic plan until there’s a new president and the church is assured of the university’s clear Lutheran identity and mission.* Rapid and aggressive pursuit of the plan before

giving careful and deliberate attention to the university’s Lutheran identity is more dangerous than any demographic cliff. Seek growth at a pace that does not overwork faculty or jeopardize fidelity to the mission of the university. Empower the new president to bring theological clarity and vision for the university.

We are pleased to report that other action items previously communicated to the BOR have been largely accomplished with the resumption of the presidential search process and the call and installation of Dr. Ankerberg.

An Uncommon Vision for Concordia

CUWAA will weather looming demographic challenges by clarifying, strengthening, and embracing her Lutheran identity, not by increasing curricular diversity, multiplying programs and schools, and expanding at the expense of that Lutheran identity. Fidelity to what makes Concordia truly uncommon will attract students, faculty, staff, and donors. Incorporating the same diversity, equity, and inclusion language as other midwestern, four-year universities does not make CUWAA uncommon but, rather, common. Increasing online options for graduate degrees is common. Seeking business partnerships to fund endowments is common. Reducing core liberal arts requirements at the request of new degree programs is common. Catering program offerings to market demand and profit opportunities is common.

“Common” is not how CUWAA identifies itself. But chasing “growth at all costs,” a regular refrain we heard from the people we interviewed, is common among institutions of higher education, especially those concerned with survival. Hand-wringing is common. Fear of the demographic cliff is common.

What is *uncommon*? The Gospel—not merely “lives of service,” but drawing students into the life of the Savior. Forgiveness is uncommon. Jesus as the only Savior is uncommon. Distinguishing between the Law and the Gospel is uncommon. Fidelity to the confession of a university’s founding church body is uncommon. We know that these are deep desires of many at CUWAA.

CUWAA does not just need more programs or a larger endowment. What it needs is clarity of purpose. “Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you” (Matt. 6:33).

Talk about racism as sin—as a violation of the Commandments, as an affront to God, who made all people in His image. Talk less about diversity and more about the unity we have in the accounts of creation and the fall, in the common price—the blood of Jesus—paid for each person regardless of race. Talk about the plurality of languages at Pentecost and the diversity of tribes but also the unity of the confession of the church in Revelation 7. Diagnose sin, not with unbiblical bias reporting, but with God’s Law. And cure sin, not with secular buzzwords and market-driven initiatives, but with the balm of God’s life-giving Word, the Absolution and the medicine of immortality, the Lord’s Supper. Shift the identity conversation away from identity politics to baptismal identity. Talk more about the Word, Baptism, and the Lord’s Supper, not less. Strive for an uncommon Christian and Lutheran worldview in the social and health sciences. Be truly uncommon in the peculiarity of a robust Lutheran identity, not just a link to the LCMS website.

Be truly uncommon by elevating what students cannot get at almost any other university in Wisconsin or Michigan: the certain hope and comfort of Lutheran theology, which is simply Christian

in the best sense. Pursue, retain, and appropriately compensate theology professors. Place them at the center of the university's life. Let them bring theological insight to administrative decisions and student concerns. One of your theology faculty spoke at length with members of the Black Student Union and was well received by these Christian students. He helped them to see the goodness of the Bible's perspective on race and racism and to understand that diversity need not include errant views of marriage and human sexuality. Be uncommon by requiring regular catechesis for all faculty in Lutheran doctrine. Catechesis takes years, not a single hour in a day of new faculty orientation.

Be uncommon by calling a theologian pastor to be the next president of CUWAA. Let him fill his cabinet with the people he needs to assist him with the knowledge and experience he lacks. That worked for President Ferry, and the institution was blessed remarkably because of it. It can work for the next president too.

Be uncommon by focusing on what Concordia can do better than all other universities, not by trying to look like all the other universities. Be competitive by being truly uncommon. Double down on the liberal arts. Emphasize philosophy, languages, rhetoric, critical thinking, ethics, and biblical humanism. Read the Scriptures, Luther, Dante, Milton, Aristotle, and C.S. Lewis more than Kendi, Hannah-Jones, DiAngelo, and Gladwell. Emphasize the uncommon nature of a science faculty that values science and confesses a Creator. Celebrate and strengthen what Concordia has, before looking to acquire what it does not have.

Be uncommon by training students not primarily for careers but for vocations in the God-ordained estates of church, family, and society. I know you believe this.

Concordia can thrive. It can be a modest-sized but mighty institution that exposes students awash in secular ideologies and identities to the washing and renewal of the Holy Spirit, giving them eternal baptismal identities. It can be a powerhouse in the LCMS' wonderful CUS, churning out zealous and faithful church workers and pious, well-rounded, deep-thinking laymen and laywomen who will be assets in their Lutheran congregations and broader communities. It can draw students seeking an excellent liberal arts education free from the narrow-mindedness of modern progressivism, and then graduate them equipped with the knowledge of genuine truth, beauty, and goodness. It can do all this and weather the storms threatening higher education. But its current trajectory is too common. What it needs is something truly *uncommon*: a crystal-clear confession of Jesus Christ.

By God's grace, Concordia can be an uncommon beacon of hope, a university set on a hill, built on the foundation of Jesus Christ. As the CUW seal says, *Timor Domini principium sapientiae*. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom."

Matthew C. Harrison, *President*

R64

Ecclesiastical Visitation of Concordia University Texas

By the Office of the President,
The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

This report was publicly promised to the Synod. Since my visitation and delivery of a report to the Board of Regents, the Board of Regents has expressed willingness to reconsider their November 2022 governance decision and to address issues raised in the report. I am very thankful they expressed this willingness along with a commitment to the Synod. I remain hopeful for a positive outcome and our common work together in shared mission and ministry.

Introduction

On April 20–22, 2022, consistent with the duties and responsibilities given my office by the Constitution and Bylaws of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS), which also govern Concordia University Texas (CTX), I conducted an ecclesiastical visitation of the university. This is a summary of the report I sent to the CTX Board of Regents (BOR) with some changes made in response to a reply by CTX President Dr. Don Christian.

I announced my intention to conduct this visitation in a March 31, 2022, letter to Dr. Christian. I wrote, in part:

I am taking this action because Concordia has been such a precious blessing to the LCMS, to her Gospel-defined mission, and to countless thousands. This is a fitting time for a visitation, as the CTX Board of Regents recently expressed its desire to administer the university in a manner less directly connected to the national Synod. I am also acting because of concerns addressed to me by lay and clergy members of the Synod, CUS representatives, current and former faculty, and students of CTX.

CTX has been established by the congregations of the Synod, and its Board of Regents and administration are responsible to them for its faithful operation. The congregations allow the school great freedom in accomplishing its mission, but that mission is defined "within the broad assignment of the Synod" (Bylaw 3.10.6.1). Concordia, as an "agency" of the Synod, has a sacred responsibility to operate in accord with the bounds of the confession of the Synod ("the written Word of God as the only rule and norm of faith and practice," and in accordance with the Symbolical Books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church), as expressed in Article II of our Constitution.

The President of Synod "has the supervision regarding the doctrine and administration of ... all such as are employed by the Synod" (Article XI B 1 b). "It is the President's duty to see to it that all the aforementioned are acting according 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" (Article XI B 2).

Composition and Methods of the Visitation

The visitation team:

Rev. Dr. Matthew C. Harrison, President, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

Rev. Joe Hoem, Board of Directors, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

Michelle Kazmierczak, JD, Board of Regents, Concordia University Chicago, River Forest, Ill.

Rev. Dr. Thomas Korcok, associate professor, Concordia Lutheran Theological Seminary in St. Catharines, Ontario

Dr. Gerhard Munding Jr., chairman, Board of Directors, Concordia University System

Rev. Dr. Scott Murray, third vice-president, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

Rev. Dr. Paul Philp, director of institutional research and integrity, Concordia University System

Dr. Bradd Stucky, Board of Regents, Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Ind.

Rev. Dr. Dean Wenthe, president, Concordia University System

Over the course of three days on the CTX campus, the visitation team interviewed 53 individuals, met with both the CTX leadership and the CTX Equity Team, attended chapel, and ate lunch in the campus dining halls.

The visitation team asked questions related to Lutheran identity, the mission of the university, the faculty's use of a biblical worldview in their approach to controversial topics, the proposed change in the university's governance, campus life, and other related topics. At the end of many interviews, I asked how loved and supported students and faculty felt on campus. The visitation team did not quarrel with interviewees and did not push back on answers given. The team asked clarifying questions when appropriate or necessary. Summary statements from the interviews and related comments were included as an appendix to the report given to the BOR.

Dissimilar to their experience during prior ecclesiastical visitations, the visitation team to CTX felt unwelcome and carefully managed while on campus. The team was repeatedly asked not to interact with students or faculty outside of the interviews. Almost every interviewee was accompanied by a "support person," which in most cases was a supervisor.

One member of the visitation team observed, "From the very beginning the reception from the administration was not welcoming. ... Almost everyone we were allowed to meet with was accompanied by a supervisor or support person. This made it difficult for us to get a real look as to what is happening on campus. I was certainly made to feel like I [as a representative of Synod] was the bad guy, and we had no right to be on campus."

This sentiment was echoed by nearly the entire visitation team. They believed their time on campus was unproductive, that most of the interviewees had been prepped with common talking points, and that having a superior as a "support person" caused interviewees to give guarded answers.

The Concordia University Texas Proposal

Though I have been made aware of several concerns from former faculty members of CTX, the final precipitating event for our visit was the BOR's February 2022 announcement of their desire to seek separation from the LCMS through a restructuring of its governance model.

All interviewees were aware of the proposal to create a new model for governing CTX apart from the Synod, though interview-

ees had differing degrees of familiarity with both the proposed model and the current model of governance. One person revealed to the team that even as a new employee he was made aware, as early as June 2021, of the university's plan to seek independence from the Synod.

The draft document "Reimagining the Relationship: A proposal from Concordia University Texas to Separate from LCMS Governance," proposes a "model of governance in which the institution is solely governed by the CTX Board of Regents while continuing to align itself with the LCMS." To explain this proposal, the document also provides the rationale for separating from the Synod.

CTX views the move away from the Synod as one in the "long tradition of Lutheran social service, medical, and military ministries" that have distanced themselves from their parent church bodies. "To meet the above challenges, nimble, focused, and local control is essential so that issues can be quickly addressed by those most close to the institution. This proposed governance change would equip the institution's local board to address complex issues in the most efficient way possible, ensuring that decisions can be made in a way that best serves the church and local constituents, much as is done in a congregation."

When asked to identify the hindrances of Synod oversight that keep CTX from responding to complex issues efficiently, interviewees named two: (1) the slow process for getting approval for a loan from the Synod Board of Directors (BOD), and (2) the prior approval process, which slows down hiring or removes some job candidates from consideration.

These arguments fail to hold up to closer scrutiny and fail to justify the university's desire to completely change its governance model to one that is a novelty in the history of the LCMS. In fact, the CTX BOR minutes from the Sept. 6, 2019, meeting blame the lender, not the Synod, for failure to get a loan on the school's timeline. Regarding the second concern, prior approval is only required for the hiring of the university president and members of the theology faculty. Administrators we spoke with only mentioned one hire that was impeded by the prior approval process.

The proposal to separate from the Synod is also based on the false assertion that the closing of three Concordias over the past four years is evidence of the failure of the current governance model. The closures of Concordia College Alabama, Selma, Ala.; Concordia University, Portland, Ore.; and Concordia College New York, Bronxville, N.Y., were not the result of too much oversight from the Synod. They closed because of financial pressures and declining enrollments. Their relationships to the Synod and financial assistance from both the Synod and her entities allowed them to stay open much longer than they would have if they were self-governed and separate from the Synod. Over the past 16 years, the LCMS has given over \$92 million in support to the Concordia University System.

The CTX BOR identifies concerns about the governance changes proposed by the LCMS BOD 7-03 Task Force as the primary rationale to seek separation from the Synod. The final form of the task force's proposal to the Synod in convention in 2023 is uncertain, and no one can know what the Synod in convention will decide. Moving to separate from the Synod before the 7-03 recommendations are finalized or before the Synod in convention has taken any action on the recommendations of the 7-03 Task Force is imprudent and premature.

Moreover, though the proposal anticipates five “problematic possibilities” should the Synod in convention pass the current proposals of the 7-03 Task Force and should a school eventually lose its ecclesiastical accreditation, all five could happen as a result of CTX’s separation from the Synod. These are the five concerns:

- The sudden loss of eligibility for participation in Concordia Plans
- The removal of the ability to call certified church workers
- The discontinuation of LCMS accepted church worker programs
- The loss of standing as an LCMS institution, causing a possible loss in financial support and harming the overall reputation of the institution
- A confusion of leadership, mission, and direction as a third-party committee—a new model of ecclesiastical oversight in the 7-03 recommendation—exerts outside influence that is *confusing in its execution* (emphasis added)

Even the CTX BOR proposal admits that “CTX will not be able to certify [church work] students” and will need to partner with another LCMS institution that would certify students for church work. Separation from the Synod would cost CTX its standing as an LCMS institution. In order to avoid the proposed “new model of ecclesiastical oversight” of the 7-03 recommendation, CTX proposes its own *new model of ecclesiastical oversight*. This new model is most certainly “confusing in its execution.”

The desire for separation from the Synod is not new, as even the proposal mentions discussions in 1976 and 2003 about governance independent from the Synod. Was 2019 Res. 7-03 really the impetus, or has the desire for independence been simmering for a while?

Before the 2019 Synod convention, which passed Res. 7-03, ELCA emeritus professor Rev. Dr. Darrell Jodock presented at a faculty development series at CTX in July 2018. Jodock has written extensively on the nature of Lutheran higher education, much of which is available online. Jodock’s church affiliation and long-term professorate at an ELCA school (Gustavus Adolphus College) reflect a public confession of a Lutheran identity not in concert with what most LCMS Lutherans understand Lutheranism to be about.

In his presentation at CTX (which was available online, and which one of the visitation team members listened to), Jodock argued for a Lutheran university as a “third path” between sectarian religious institutions and non-sectarian institutions. This third path is both “Lutheran and inclusive,” deeply rooted in religious tradition but also an understanding and welcoming way of diversity and inclusivity. Jodock told the CTX faculty that the vocabulary of a “Lutheran identity” does not work for other faith traditions. Instead, he argued, we must talk about “Lutheran values” to which everyone is more willing to subscribe. This is an insidious move to eschew a confessional identity borne out of Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions and to replace this identity with a set of “values” for how to see the world through the same critical eyes as, some suppose, Luther had. Jodock rejected universities being tied to church bodies, as such affiliation automatically subjects colleges to religious authorities. Jodock reasoned that since Luther challenged ecclesiastical authority, so should Lutheran universities. Finally, in Jodock’s vision of a Lutheran university, Lutheran identity is reduced to the area of vocation, which supposedly “enhances the educational experience.”

This is a pauper’s Lutheran identity, lacking the essence of what Lutherans believe and confess. But it sets the stage for CTX’s move away from the Synod’s ecclesiastical authority.

The doctrine of vocation is not the fullness of a confessional Lutheran identity, rooted in Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions. Instead, Jodock’s presentation on vocation functions as a Trojan horse, in which is hidden an attempt to make the imagined renegade ghost of Luther the Geist of a Lutheran university.

If Lutheran hospitals and social service agencies are the model for separating from Synod governance, the natural question is, “Is there any such institution still faithful to its confessional moorings?” Is there a hospital that bears the name “Lutheran” and does not perform or prescribe abortions? Is there a Lutheran adoption agency that has severed its ties with a church body that does not place adoptees into same-sex households? For that matter, is there any example of a university or college, founded by a traditionally conservative church body, that after severing its ties with its mother church body continued to remain faithful to that body’s public confession? The weight of historical evidence is stacked against CTX remaining faithful to the doctrine and practice of the LCMS once such a separation has occurred.

Other peculiar statements about CTX’s relationship to the LCMS can be found in recent BOR agenda and minutes:

- September 2019: “Need to determine if we are still independent of the LCMS. If we determine we’re not—need to notify SACS-COC. We can say we are a multi governance system.”
- February 2020, discussing Res. 7-03: “We embarked on a new structure this past July, having all departments other than philanthropy report to Kristi Kirk. ... You can have great confidence that the leadership of Concordia is deep and very results oriented, with a focus on mission and margin.”
- Minutes from the February 2021 BOR meeting: “Time for us as a board to resolve that we oppose the changes of 7-03 committee. As we are not in alignment with the committee, and they are not listening to our proposed changes. [sic] Other schools may join us in opposition, but it’s difficult to see any other school taking the lead.”
- Minutes from the April 2021 meeting: “Proposal: The Board of Regents, in its meeting of April 16, 2021, commission the president to prepare and present models of alternative governing structures to the board and relationships to be considered alongside the 7-03 proposed bylaws; and that the board, after exploring and studying the risks and rewards of each of the models, determines which one best serves the school, the church and its constituents. The models presented will continue to align CTX with the church in a way that is faithful to the doctrine and practice of the LCMS, allows for a sustainable future, and meets the long-term vision of the University.”
- September 2021 State of the University Report about DEI: “As we take seriously the work of diversity, equity, and inclusion, we are ever mindful of how that work is influenced by, understood through, and lived out in accordance with our Lutheran identity. There are many words and phrases in this work that have been co-opted or misconstrued by various groups. Our mission must always align with these initiatives.”

- September 2021 Governance Exploration: “The work on which the board is embarking will set the institution on a path in which it can thrive and move ahead. Having explored options and making a conscious decision allows the institution to embrace its governance relationships and make important decisions for the future.”
- December 2021 President’s Goals for 2020–2021 include “By February 11, 2022, the Board has decided on the governance structure that reflects its future relationship with the LCMS. ... I continue to explore this topic with multiple people, seeking advice and best practices. I believe that the Board is on track to make a decision no later than February 11.”

Despite repeated clarifications from the LCMS Commission on Constitutional Matters (CCM) that, in accord with the Scriptures, presidents of CUS universities must be men, CTX’s proposed new bylaws are vague on the president being male, making no mention of his role as theological overseer of the university and changing pronouns to the generic and grammatically incorrect “their.” Of the president of any institution of the Concordia University System, LCMS Bylaw 3.10.6.6 says, “He shall serve as the spiritual, academic, and administrative head of the institution.” The proposed new bylaws for CTX, however, describe the duties of the president differently: “The President shall be an executive officer of the University and serve as the head of the University.” Not only does the proposal remove CTX from the ecclesiastical oversight carried out by the President of the Synod, the CUS, and the Synod in convention, but it also removes any responsibility for ecclesiastical headship from the president.

CTX’s proposal to separate from the ecclesiastical oversight of the Synod brings into question CTX’s faithfulness to a Lutheran identity before such a separation might occur. If CTX is already robustly and faithfully Lutheran, one could perhaps expect such a divorce from ecclesiastical oversight to yield—at best—no diminishment of the university’s Lutheran identity. Not one of the visitors, nor any careful student of the history of formerly church-affiliated universities, expects such a separation to result in the university’s increased faithfulness to a scriptural and confessional Lutheran identity. Therefore, this is the pressing question: If the current status quo is the ceiling for a Lutheran identity following a separation of CTX from the Synod, how faithful is CTX presently to such a Lutheran identity?

Lutheran Identity

What does the evidence show regarding CTX’s Lutheran identity? Interviewees assured members of the visitation team that the university has a clear, distinct Lutheran identity. Few, however, articulated what a Lutheran identity is. Some interviewees talked about vocation and preparing students for lives of service. Some interviewees spoke of the paradoxes of Lutheran theology. Some faculty told us they were glad to be able to talk about faith in the classroom; others told us that a Lutheran identity is not part of their jobs.

In order to maintain alignment with LCMS doctrine and practice, the CTX BOR drafted *Concordia University Texas—A Demonstration of its Lutheran Identity* (DLI), “a framework by which CTX will live out and demonstrate faithfulness to its Lutheran identity.” This document notably states that CTX will continue to subscribe to Article II of the LCMS Constitution, despite a pending proposal to separate itself from the Synod. The document’s major

shortcoming, however, is its failure to articulate a Lutheran identity. Merely saying “we are Lutheran and we agree with what The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod teaches” fails to offer anything meaningful whereby the teaching and practice of the university might be evaluated using the DLI, which is its expressed function.

The DLI calls for university leadership that “both represents and is committed to” the confession of the faith in Article II of the LCMS Constitution, as well as “a sufficient number of faculty who deeply understand the ethos of Lutheran higher education.” And yet, presently only three members of the leadership team are members of LCMS congregations. The majority of the faculty are not members of LCMS congregations, although CTX leadership suggests improvements have been made in the quantity of LCMS faculty over the last three years. One interviewee described the current process for catechizing new faculty: a four-day orientation in the summer, which includes a half day on “Lutheran ethos.” Neither Luther’s Small Catechism nor the Augsburg Confession, both foundational to a Lutheran identity and prescriptive for a Lutheran ethos, is used.

The visitation team heard from two former faculty members who believed that their quick and quiet dismissals were due in part to their fidelity to the Lutheran Confessions. One other former faculty member grew so tired of secular worldviews and agendas antithetical to a Lutheran identity that he left for employment elsewhere.

The visitation team produced an extensive list of troubling things at odds with the insistence of interviewees that CTX is built on a solid foundation of Lutheran theology, which would positively influence students, even if they were not Lutheran, some of which are listed below:

- The professor of Lutheran identity and mission resigned from the LCMS clergy roster in 2011.
- Speakers on Lutheran identity have included the current dean of Christ College, Valparaiso University, and a former dean of Christ College, Valparaiso University. No interviewee recalled any faculty instruction in Lutheran identity from anyone in the LCMS.
- Non-Lutheran faculty regularly speak in chapel, and the visitation team was told that this practice has BOR approval.
- In anticipation of the visit, some of the visitation team members watched the online CTX chapel service for Holy Tuesday. The service featured a pastor from a local non-denominational church, who invited students to make their first surrender to God.
- A post on the CTX website from an administrator closed with a prayer from Richard Rohr, a Roman Catholic priest who denies that salvation is only through Christ. This prayer began and concluded, “O Great Love ... we offer these prayers in all the holy names of God. Amen.”
- A CTX webpage on “consent” approaches sexual ethics from a purely secular perspective, without any treatment of God’s design for marriage and sexuality. “Show your partner that you respect them enough to ask about their sexual needs and desires. If you are not accustomed to communicating with your partner about sex and sexual activity, the first few times may feel awkward. Practice makes perfect. Be creative and spontaneous. Don’t give up.”

Any one item in the above list would be concerning alone. As a whole, the items listed point away from a robust Lutheran identity or solid Lutheran catechesis. The DLI says the university “accepts without reservation the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament as the written Word of God and the only rule and norm of faith and practice,” but we did not observe practices being normed by the rule of Holy Scripture. Instead, we heard that the scriptural account of creation is not normative to what is taught in the science department. No science faculty member reported teaching according to the Synod’s biblical doctrine of creation, nor did anyone report hearing anything approaching this biblical view of creation espoused in the classroom. We heard the clear Word of God regarding the monergistic nature of salvation contradicted by having a non-Lutheran speak in chapel and invite students to surrender to Jesus. Members of the visitation team watched this chapel service online before and after the visitation. The Word of God, which is clear in matters of marriage and sexuality, is hardly normative when all that is required for appropriate sexual activity is consent between partners. Subscription to the confession of the LCMS is just an empty phrase if faith mentors in each residence hall floor are required only to be Christian, not Lutheran, and not given any meaningful instruction in the Catechism.

The visitation team was repeatedly told that the university is Christ-centered and “our Lutheran identity infuses everything we do.” During our visit, however, the visitation team simply did not find that. Instead, pop-Evangelicalism, liberal theology of justice, and secular diversity initiatives appear to influence nearly everything. One member of the visitation team observed, “CTX is Lutheran in name only, and they seem to be proud of that fact.”

Another member of the visitation team gave this assessment:

We’re in the College Growth Movement. What sells? How do we market? Young faculty have not had a rigorous academic background, nor a Lutheran background. Without strong academics and strong theologians in the ranks, there’s no one to guide young faculty, no strong theological voice. It’s like a church growth campus.

I am encouraged that many at CTX speak of a Lutheran identity. I have been critical of Concordia universities that have shied away from even using the word “Lutheran” in their promotional materials and marketing strategies. To its credit, CTX continues clearly to use “Lutheran” publicly. The concern of the visitation team is that the Lutheran identity of CTX is superficial, normed and shaped more by other Lutheran church bodies and their theologians, rather than by theologians and pastors within the LCMS who have the theological horsepower to engage cultural issues in a solidly confessional Lutheran way.

Diversity Concerns

CTX’s student population is 55 percent non-Caucasian. Having such a racially diverse student body is truly a blessing from God. Making students of all cultures feel welcome at the university is absolutely laudable. But nearly all secular treatments of diversity, equity, and inclusion also incorporate unbiblical understandings of sex and gender, marriage, and family. By the admission of the Equity Team, in its earliest days of pursuing diversity, CTX was less than careful in adopting these terms and hiring those of different worldviews who do not share our theological foundations.

According to the Equity Team, CTX received the designation of being a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) nearly by accident. The announcement of the HSI designation in a Jan. 16, 2019, post on

the CTX website, however, tells a somewhat different story. One of CTX’s administrators was “charged with leading the institution toward this federal designation [and] established a task force to plan the expansion of campus programs and services as well as education and training for students, faculty and staff.”

This aligns with the university’s 2016–2021 Strategic Plan and its strategic initiative 4.7 to “strengthen diversity, equity, and inclusion across campus and support cultural competency in faculty, staff, and students.” In reports documenting the accomplishments of CTX toward this objective, which were removed from the CTX website shortly before our visit, there are some successes to be celebrated but also some accomplishments out of harmony with Scripture and the Confessions.

- In 2017–2018, CTX “collaborated with Jelani Consulting, LLC.” Jelani Consulting focuses on diversity as not simply a matter of race, but also advocates for equity and inclusion for people of the LGBTQ+ community.
- In July 2018, CTX’s Faculty Summer Development Series was led by emeritus ELCA professor Rev. Dr. Darrell Jodock (discussed above).
- In August 2018, the CTX Faculty Summer Development Series (posted online; one of the visitation team listened) featured Dr. Gina Garcia, whose work focuses on “decolonizing” institutions. In her presentation, she said universities must change their mission statements to include diversity, equity, and justice for all. Curriculum, she says, is a colonial tool that is structurally racist and privileges white students. Standardized tests are racist too. And, she argued, we should not “Christianize people” while teaching them “Christian ways of knowing.”
- In 2018–2019, Dr. Kazique Prince, again from Jelani Consulting, “provided Equity and Inclusion Lab focused on a mindset regarding diversity, equity, and inclusion education and awareness.” Dr. Prince was also asked to consult the university regarding the “next steps for Concordia in terms of its commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion.”
- In 2019, a chief diversity officer was hired, who the Equity Team admits was not in alignment with a Lutheran identity and whose hiring was a “mistake.”

These concerns demonstrate the value of the current model of CTX’s affiliation with the Synod and show the perils of decisions made hastily based on cultural trends. Even under the ecclesiastical oversight of the Synod, CTX demonstrated its reluctance or unwillingness to allow Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions to be the source of Lutheran identity and mission. Instead, the quickly changing winds of culture seem to hold sway over the university’s day-to-day decisions. The benefits of a system of governance that binds our universities to a national—not a regional—church body; of having regents from the region, district, and beyond; and of having prior approval for theology faculty and university presidents is underscored by the Equity Team’s admission of these mistakes.

Keep Concordia Weird

So what is a Lutheran identity? The Gospel of Jesus Christ is the beating heart of a Lutheran identity. Vocation and lives of service are certainly part of a Lutheran identity, but they are not the heart of what it means to be a Lutheran Christian congregation, university, or church body. Our primary vocation is to believe, by the power of the Spirit, in the true Gospel of Jesus Christ. Vocation as our

service to neighbor is a matter of the Law, the way God calls those who have received the Gospel to live their lives. But they cannot live God-pleasing lives of service apart from the change worked by the Gospel. [*President Christian responds, "CTX holds that its primary vocation, as Lutheran Christians, is to believe in the true Gospel of Jesus Christ. Any intimation that CTX does not believe or hold this as truth is both misleading and inaccurate. At the same time, the vocation of the university and its employees is also one of education for all who choose to learn here. They learn at the foot of the cross; they learn from those who honor Scripture and the Confessions; and they learn of the saving love of God through Christ."*]

CTX falls short of a robust, vibrant, Lutheran identity. This problem reflects other occurrences of vague, undefined "Lutheran" identities that are rightly criticized as "Lutheran in name only." The *sine qua non* of a Lutheran identity is the Gospel, the full and free forgiveness of sinners for the sake of the perfect, substitutionary death of the incarnate God, Jesus Christ, on the cross. Lutherans rightly confess two kingdoms, over which God rules in distinct ways. He rules His Church through the Gospel, the forgiveness of sins. He rules society through His Law, the ordering of His world according to the pattern of creation. Colleges, like families, straddle both kingdoms. Therefore, to engage the broader culture, to converse in the secular, left-hand kingdom, a Lutheran university must have an inviolable, robust Lutheran identity. This is not a way to survive in academia; it is the *only* way a Lutheran institution will survive in academia, on the bleeding edge of culture, without being Lutheran "in name only."

The three tenets of the CTX mission, to empower students "of all backgrounds to lead lives of critical thought, compassionate action, and courageous leadership," cannot be realized in any student apart from the Gospel, the Good News of a Savior who died on the cross to redeem sinful mankind. This is the essence of a Lutheran identity. Any talk of vocation separated from talk of repentance and forgiveness is pointless, incomplete, and misguided.

In the updated statement on Lutheran identity on the CTX website, and in the accompanying document, "Here I Learn," CTX adopts the phrase "Keep Concordia Weird" as an unofficial motto. I love it.

But vocation is not weird. Lives of selfless service to others are not weird. Unless shaped by the new life in the Holy Spirit, lives of "critical thinking, compassionate action, and courageous leadership" are not weird. Most institutions in the greater Austin area encourage their constituents and stakeholders toward this basic level of weirdness. And if everyone is doing it, it's no longer weird.

What is weird? In the shadow of a city that wants to keep itself "weird," that wants to embrace all forms of sexual preference and gender identity, that celebrates all things against the grain, what is truly weird is the Good News of a God who gave Himself in the place of sinful men. Clinging to and teaching the sacred and unchanging truths of Scripture is weird.

Repentance is weird. Forgiveness is weird. The Word of God is weird. Baptism is weird. The Lord's Supper is weird. And yet, these are what we believe and confess toward the world because they are true, beautiful, and comforting.

CTX seems to have lost these Lutheran distinctives in favor of blending in to a not-that-weird culture of half-religious liberalism. A genuinely Lutheran identity would be altogether weird in Austin. Preaching Christ crucified for the forgiveness of sinners would be weird in Austin. Calling sinners to repentance would be weird in

Austin. Pointing sin-scorched consciences to the rock-solid Means of Grace would be exceedingly weird in Austin.

So I fully agree with the idea of keeping Concordia weird. I just think it should *actually be weird*. CTX should stand out from other Austin, other Texas, other higher education models. Rigorous and unapologetic Lutheran catechesis for new faculty, staff, and students should be the weird norm at 11400 Concordia University Drive on the outskirts of a city where being "progressive" is no longer weird but expected.

To be a campus truly normed by Scripture, where the Gospel is rightly preached and the Sacraments properly administered, would make CTX truly weird. This is my hope and prayer for CTX.

I am encouraged by CTX's willingness to admit past mistakes and reframe conversations in a more Lutheran lens. I am optimistic that the proposed new governance documents do not shy away from stating that the university subscribes to the Lutheran Confessions. I believe the beautiful campus can be more beautifully adorned with the purity of the Gospel. The truth that the university wants to inculcate in her students begins with the Word of God.

We—the Synod and CTX—are in this together. We are allies, not adversaries. We share a common mission of preaching Jesus Christ and Him crucified for the salvation of sinners. We have a united vision of the "weird" future in the resurrection, when "a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, [is] standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands" (Rev. 7:9), confessing with one voice the salvation found in the one, peculiar, weird, exclusive Savior alone.

Now is not the time for separation, but for closer affinity. Now, the mission of the Synod and the mission of CTX can be best advanced and preserved through greater affiliation, not less. Now is the time for the universities of the Synod to embrace their Lutheran weirdness and cast off cultural banality. Now is the time for the Synod to buck popular trends in higher education and embrace the weirdness of being distinctly and unapologetically Lutheran.

I fully agree with keeping Concordia weird. The weirdness the world needs will be found in a closer relationship between university and church body. The weirdness of Christ crucified for sinners, delivered in perceptible Means of Grace, is best expressed when congregations and their universities continue to walk together. This is the path forward for Concordia University Texas and for The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod as a whole. Let's be weird together.

Matthew C. Harrison, *President*

Appendix

Summary of Response to the Synod President's Report on the Ecclesiastical Visitation of Concordia University Texas

President Dr. Don Christian sent a response on behalf of CTX saying, in summary, the following: Concordia University Texas (CTX) is deeply committed to its Lutheran history and tradition and working toward continuing a meaningful and productive relationship with The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

However, CTX criticized the report for being sent so long after the conclusion of the visitation on April 22, 2022; for including findings that were gathered after the visit; for leaving room for subjective conclusions; and, in its opinion, for not including some facts that would provide additional background or supporting

information for readers to draw different conclusions. CTX also took issue with the interview process and complained that it did not receive a list of questions and standards before the visit and, therefore, with no outlined process, it was challenging to ascertain the nature of the visit besides the general expectation for ecclesiastical questions. It also noted that the visitation team visited the university during the week prior to finals, a traditionally hectic time for faculty, staff, and students.

President Christian acknowledged CTX was able to glean insights from the report and has committed itself to the following actions:

- Being more explicit with how Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions shape policy and practices, including the university's statement on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion.
- Creating a statement on human sexuality that aligns with the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions that will guide the university's policies and practices.
- Developing a statement of what CTX means when it speaks of its Lutheran identity, using it to inform and norm our work across sectors.
- Creating a practice whereby documentation is reviewed for alignment with the university's commitment to its Lutheran identity.

In concluding, CTX confirmed it is a Lutheran institution of higher education that aligns itself with The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and that the leadership made it clear to its constituents that the president of the Synod had the right to visit the campus and meet with employees and that they remain committed to the teachings and mission of the LCMS and remain a place where Christ is honored, students of all backgrounds are welcome, and students encounter the love and compassion of Jesus.

R65

Opinions of the Commission on Constitutional Matters

The following opinions of the Commission on Constitutional Matters (CCM) were issued since the report to the 2019 convention and were selected by the commission's chairman as being of general interest to the Synod (for example, reviews of agency bylaws and policy manuals are not included). Full commission minutes are reported at lcms.org/ccm.

Meaning of Face-to-Face (19-2914)

Minutes of July 18–19, 2019

The commission received the following request for an opinion from a member of the Synod:

Question: May the requirement of a “face-to-face meeting” in Bylaw 1.10.5 also be fulfilled by modern digital technology via face-to-face telephone conversation via computers, smartphone and the like using FaceTime or via Skype, where both parties are very much face-to-face, merely separated by a monitor, but in real-time communicating face-to-face?

Opinion: No.

After receiving the request for the opinion, the commission requested input in accordance with Bylaw 3.9.2.2 (b), in this instance, from the Council of Presidents (COP), district presidents being primarily responsible to determine when the requirement of a face-to-face meeting has been satisfied, and staff of the Commission on Theology and Church Relations. A very large number of virtually unanimous responses were received, supporting the conclusion that *face-to-face* means what it says, that is, *in person*. For example:

[P]arties need to make every effort to meet together physically—even if it requires personal financial expense and the use of a great amount of time. Matthew 18 calls us to meet together. A personal meeting has qualities that cannot be duplicated electronically. Meeting personally also shows care for one another demonstrated by the time and effort expended.

Some responses suggested that perhaps in extreme cases a technological alternative to direct physical interaction could be substituted for the in-person meeting. For example:

If for some reason, meeting “face-to-face” would cause an inordinately long delay in the process and hurt the possibility of reconciliation, or if an extreme circumstance exists that does not allow for a personal meeting, an electronic meeting or meetings may be substituted after proper consultation with the parties involved and with appropriate ecclesiastical supervisors.

On the other hand, there was this response:

The only argument that I can muster for conducting such meetings by electronic media is convenience. There is certainly no Biblical argument for doing so. Human convenience does not seem to be a Biblical priority. Since human convenience often detracts from God's purposes, I would not admit it as a valid argument in favor of the proposal.

One response, in particular, crystallized what this commission finds to be the requirement of the *face-to-face* language of the Bylaws of the Synod:

Presuming that Matthew 5:24 and 18:15 are the Biblical foundation for the face-to-face meeting requirement found in the bylaws ...

Jesus' command to go to the brother (ὑπάγε) could not have been understood in any other way, at the time, than having the parties physically meet. ... [T]o adopt the use of electronic media for the purpose of meeting would require interpreting the word “go” (ὑπάγε) to mean “stay.” ... [W]e should be interested very much in following the example given in the Scripture as closely as possible.

The verb in Jesus' command to go to the brother (ὑπάγε) is an imperative. At the very least, such an imperative requires some commitment to making the reconciliation happen. The arguments against physical meetings suggest a lack of commitment due to the cost of time and money. While some may consider such expense a “barrier” to reconciliation ... it is a fruit of reconciliation.

Both texts suggest a high priority on maintaining relationships: [6:24: ὑπάγε πρῶτον διαλλάγηθι τῷ ἀδελφῷ σου, 18:15: ἐκέρθησας τὸν ἀδελφόν σου] ... [C]ommon sense ... suggests that physical presence is the most effective means of creating potential for good communication (e.g., tone, facial expression, body language, the elimination of distractions unique to the individual's location, and presence). ...

[P]ersonal relationships would be served best by face-to-face meetings in person.”

This response well reflects the goal and intent of the Bylaws’ *face-to-face* language, as expressed in Bylaw 1.10.1.2:

The words of Jesus in Matthew 18:15–20 provide the basis for church discipline for the local congregation. The same passage also grants Christ’s guidance to all Christians in seeking to settle other disputes, many of which fall outside the purview of church discipline involving the congregation. In either case, the steps of Matthew 18 should be applied lovingly in both formal and informal settings. Matthew 18 does not apply directly in cases of public sin, but face-to-face meetings are required nonetheless, even in the case of public sin, toward the goal of reconciliation and winning the brother or sister. The parties and others attempting to effect resolution of a dispute must always remain mindful that the church has been given the “ministry of reconciliation” (2 Cor. 5:18). Hence, conflict resolution in the church is to lead to reconciliation, restoring the erring member in a spirit of gentleness (Gal. 6:1). Its aim is to avoid the adversarial system practiced in society.

The noted response also well interprets the Bylaws’ own definition of *face-to-face* (Bylaw 1.10.4 [f]; 2.14.2 [f]) and the Bylaws’ repeated connection of such language to its root in Matt. 18:15 (e.g., Bylaw 1.10.5; 1.10.5 [d]; 2.14.3 [f]; 2.16.3 [c]; 3.10.5.7.9 [a]).

The requirement of a face-to-face meeting was inserted when the current Bylaw section 1.10 process was first adopted in 1992. The meaning of *face-to-face* was clarified by the 2004 convention:

Face-to-face: A meeting face-to-face, in person, between the parties in dispute following the guidelines of Matthew 18:15. Email, regular mail, fax, or telephone call (or any combination thereof) does not satisfy this requirement. (Note: Failure to conduct a face-to-face meeting within 30 days or within such extension as may be established by the involved ecclesiastical supervisors shall result in dismissal if the fault lies with the accuser or movement to the next stage if the fault lies with the accused.) (2004 Bylaw 1.10.4 [f])

The reference to “email, regular mail, fax, or telephone call (or any combination thereof)” was not intended to be exhaustive of insufficient means but was simply a listing of the technological alternatives of the day. It was clearly intended that the parties need to meet together physically.

At the same time, it also should be noted that the requirement for a face-to-face meeting is not absolute. If one party attempts to obstruct the process by refusing to meet or creates so many conditions for the meeting that it creates a hardship on the other party, the ecclesiastical supervisor may make the decision to move the process to the next stage.

In conclusion, for the reasons stated above, it is this commission’s opinion that *face-to-face* means what it says, namely, the physical presence of the parties in the same place. While the Bylaws do acknowledge that there can be specific exceptions to the requirement of a face-to-face meeting (e.g., Bylaw 2.17.3 [d], or should the accused party utterly and demonstrably frustrate reasonable attempts by the accuser to arrange a face-to-face meeting) and admit that Matt. 18:15 does not provide a dominical *sine qua non* in all cases (e.g., in the case of public sin, Bylaw 1.10.1.2), they do require face-to-face meetings “nonetheless” in the general case, in pursuit of “reconciliation and winning the brother or sister” (Bylaw

1.10.1.2). There is no allowance in these words *face-to-face* for a present-day electronic meeting, which is not all that different from the electronic means prohibited in existing bylaws (Bylaw 1.10.4 [f], etc.). Bylaws as adopted, and as they presently stand and must be interpreted, require—except in narrowly specified exceptional cases—an actual *going* to reconcile with the allegedly errant brother, an effort demonstrative of the complainant’s pursuit not only of the respondent’s rebuke but also of repentance and reconciliation.

If, however, the Synod would like to alter the Bylaws in order to allow for electronic meetings at all times or only in extreme cases (with, hopefully, the facts and circumstances well defined and the parameters clear as to what is an extreme case to be sure that the exception does not become the rule), the Synod is certainly free so to do.

Shared Concordia University President (19-2924)

Minutes of November 1–2, 2019

The chairman of a board of regents of a Concordia college or university inquired of the commission whether two Concordia colleges/universities could, while remaining distinct institutions and agencies of the Synod, be served simultaneously by the same president.

Opinion: The commission does not find such a dual call to be contraindicated by the Constitution or Bylaws of the Synod, provided that the calls extended by both schools are compatible with such an arrangement and the respective boards of regents, both of which must approve the arrangement, are able to satisfy themselves that the duties of a college or university president, to serve as “spiritual, academic, and administrative head of the institution,” as further delineated in Bylaw 3.10.6.6, are adequately provided for at both institutions.

The Concordia University System (CUS) also has authority with respect to the Synod’s colleges and universities, especially with respect to their coordination (Bylaw 3.6.6.1), and a key role in arranging for their presidential transitions. While this particular circumstance is not directly contemplated in the Bylaws, the import of such an arrangement to the governance of two of the system’s schools would require that it be undertaken only in close consultation with CUS. The provisions of Bylaw 3.10.6.6.2, regarding the selection of a college/university president, including the process for prior approval, would be fully applicable to the process for each institution. If such a possibility is contemplated, the transition review (Bylaw 3.10.6.6.2 [a]) and boards of regents’ definition of the institutions’ needs and evaluation of characteristics of a sought-after president (Bylaw 3.10.6.6.2 [b]) would need to address its impact, in comparison with the customary alternative.

Board of Directors Designation or Appointment of Representatives to Agencies (20-2925)

Minutes of April 24, 2020

2019 Res. 9-09 allowed the Board of Directors to designate representatives to serve, in a capacity formerly carried out by Synod’s Chief Financial Officer, as advisory members of the boards of the LCMS Foundation, the Lutheran Church Extension Fund, Concordia Publishing House, and the Board of Trustees—Concordia Plans (Board of Directors—Concordia Plan Services), including executive sessions (Bylaw 3.3.4.6 [d]). The mechanism is similar to that by which the President designates his representation on various boards. The board is in the process of implementing such designations, and desires to understand the full latitude within which it

may do so. The Secretary of the Synod, on behalf of the Personnel Committee of the Board of Directors, therefore poses the following questions to the CCM:

Question 1: Is it allowable (considering especially but not only Bylaw 1.5.1.1) for the Board of Directors to designate (a) an officer, (b) an executive, or (c) another staff member of corporate Synod or of another agency of Synod to serve as its representative?

Opinion: Yes, the position belongs to the Board of Directors, and the individual so designated as representative is not a *member* of the respective board but a *representative* of the Board of Directors, which possesses the position. Bylaw 1.5.1.1 reads:

Unless otherwise specified or permitted by the Bylaws, chief executives and executive directors, faculty, staff, and all other employees on either the national or district level shall not be members of the board of the agency under which they serve, nor shall any such executives or staff be members of the board of any other agency of the Synod.

Bylaw 1.5.1.1 addresses eligibility to serve as an elected or appointed member of a board or commission. CCM Op. 16-2805 deals at length with the distinction between the terms *elected*, *appointed*, and *designated*, as they are used in the Bylaws. It indicates that *designated* is not equivalent to *appointed*. The terms *elected* and *appointed* indicate that the individual so elected or appointed is the one holding the position for a given term. In the case of an individual who is designated as the representative of another, the position belongs to the one who is doing the designating, not to the individual so designated. This also reflects the earlier CCM Op. 12-2662, which specifically stated that being a representative of the President of the Synod (Bylaw 3.3.1.3 [d]) is not to be considered the same as holding an appointed position. Rather, 3.3.1.3 (d) references the manner in which the President of the Synod, to whom the position belongs, is represented at these various meetings.

2019 Res. 9-09 draws a parallel to Bylaw 3.3.1.3 (d), which gives authority to the President of the Synod to attend, personally or by way of a representative, the meetings of all commissions (except the CCM) and the boards of all synodwide corporate entities, including executive sessions, and establishes a similar process that provides the ability of the Board of Directors to designate a representative to attend the board meetings of the LCMS Foundation, the Lutheran Church Extension Fund, Concordia Publishing House, and the Board of Trustees—Concordia Plans (Board of Directors—Concordia Plan Services) (Bylaw 3.3.4.6 [d]). In the case of Bylaw 3.3.4.6 (d), the position belongs to the Board of Directors, which, as a whole, is an officer of the Synod (Const. Art. X A 4) and is authorized to designate someone to attend those meetings on its behalf.

Question 2: Is it allowable (considering especially but not only Bylaw 1.5.1.2 and the precedent of CCM Op. 03-2340 and 12-2662) for the Board of Directors to designate one of its own members to serve as its representative?

Opinion: It is allowable, since the individual in question is not an appointed or elected member of that board to which he or she is designated as a representative. That individual is simply representing the Board of Directors, which possesses the position.

CCM Op. 03-2340, which answered what may appear to be a similar question in the negative, does not apply to this situation because that opinion was referencing a case in which the Board of Directors

was appointing someone to fill a vacant *elected* or *appointed* position. In that instance the position did not belong to the Board of Directors *per se*, as in the current situation.

Question 3: Is it allowable for the Board of Directors to designate any suitably qualified member of a member congregation of the Synod, other than the above, to serve as its representative? To what extent do Bylaws 1.5.1.1 and 1.5.1.2 apply to such persons?

Opinion: Yes; Bylaws 1.5.1.1 and 1.5.1.2 do not apply in regard to this designation. See above answers.

Question 4: Is it allowable within the meaning of “the representative designated” for the Board of Directors to designate, with regard to a single board position, more than one individual, with the intention of them serving on an as-available or rotating basis, or does the sense of the bylaw require designation of no more than one individual to a given position at any given time?

Opinion: It is allowable. While appointed and/or elected membership to a board is for a specified term, this is not the case for an individual who has been designated as the representative of the one who possesses the position. The one possessing the position has the freedom to change its representative as is seen fit.

(Note: This opinion on *designated representatives* of the Board of Directors does not apply to Bylaw 3.6.6.3, which specifically states that the Board of Directors *appoints* up to two individuals to the Concordia University System Board of Directors.)

Nomination Ballot and Voter Registration Processes for Synod Conventions (20-2930)

Minutes of April 24, 2020

The Office of the Secretary, for a variety of reasons, hopes to replace, beginning with the 2022 convention cycle, the present paper form and ballot processes for the registration of presidential voters and for the nomination of the President and vice-presidents of the Synod with electronic processes. It intends to replace the former using an in-house system and the latter using a reliable, impartial election contractor. The change would be in pursuit of the following chief aims:

- Online-interactive entry of data by congregational officers will allow errors to be detected and corrected at time of registration/nomination, as opposed to a delayed and expensive process afterward. E.g., emails of registrants can be confirmed almost immediately by the system, and users can select precisely which ordained ministers from the roster they mean to nominate, definitively identifying them by their own selection, rather than relying on a later ballot counter to correct misspellings and incorrect or outdated locations.
- Elimination of postal transit and data entry time will improve tabulation time, the window for which is now reduced in the case of the presidential election by two weeks due to the election opening six, instead of four, weeks before the convention.
- Elimination of postal transit and data entry time will allow timely and accurate reminders to congregations that have not yet registered or cast nominating ballots. This is particularly important as districts are now asked to encourage registration and need to be informed of registration status in

a timely manner. Automation of the system will allow “reminder” communications to be carried out automatically or (in the case of the nomination system) by a reliable, impartial election contractor.

Relevant bylaws have been designed, with the clear intent of the convention, to support the use of electronic processes in both these regards, but this possibility has either not been fully worked through all relevant bylaws or has been obscured by subsequent modifications. The following questions request an interpretation of to what extent the implementation of the contemplated electronic systems would be either prohibited or constrained by potentially contradictory elements of the governing bylaws. In any case, the contemplated electronic system would make every reasonable attempt—as present processes do—to ensure that the actions reflected are valid acts of the congregation, taken according to its governing documents and resolutions, properly registered by officers of the congregation.

A. Nomination of President, First Vice-President, and Regional Vice-Presidents

Bylaws 3.12.2 and 3.12.2.7 govern the nomination of the President and vice-presidents of the Synod.

Bylaw 3.12.2, treating the nomination of the President and First Vice-President, was amended by 2010 Res. 4-07 (*Proceedings*, 124–27), acknowledging “the availability of electronic communication tools that allow for timely and economical distribution of materials,” to allow for the use of any “secure and verifiable method,” including electronic methods (cf. the use of “secure and verifiable method” in Bylaw 3.12.2.4). Bylaw 3.12.2 today reads as follows (annotated with changes made in 2010):

Nominations of President and First Vice-President

3.12.2 Nominations for the offices of President and First Vice-President shall be made by the member congregations of the Synod.

(a) Each member congregation shall be entitled to nominate from the clergy roster of the Synod two ordained ministers as candidates for president, and two ordained ministers as candidates for First Vice-President.

(b) The Secretary of the Synod shall provide a secure and verifiable method that will offer opportunity to every mail to each congregation of the Synod to submit nominations ~~ballots for nominating these candidates~~. He shall, with the approval of the Board of Directors of the Synod, obtain the assistance necessary to accomplish this task.

(c) ~~The Each nominating process ballot~~ shall be completed signed by the president and secretary of the member congregations not later than ~~five~~ four months prior to the opening date of the convention. There shall be no opportunity provided for additional nominations. [2010 Res. 4-07, *Proc.*, 124–27]

(d) The Secretary of the Synod may engage, with the approval of the Board of Directors, an external

auditing firm to tabulate the nominations and shall report in the *Convention Workbook* the names and tallies of all ordained ministers who have received nominating votes.

Bylaw 3.12.2.7, treating the nomination of regional vice-presidents, was added by 2010 Res. 8-14A (*Proc.*, 165–66; *Today's Business*, 306). Again, Bylaw 3.12.2.7 today reads as follows:

Nominations and Elections of Regional Vice-Presidents

3.12.2.7 After the results of the first-vice-presidential election have been announced, the convention shall elect five regional vice-presidents according to the following nominations and elections process.

(a) Each member congregation of a region (including any non-geographic-district congregations in that region) shall have been given opportunity to nominate two ministers of religion—ordained from the clergy roster of the Synod with residence in its designated region as candidates for regional vice-president.

(b) The Secretary of the Synod shall receive such nominations (signed by the president and secretary of the nominating congregation). [See 2010 Res. 8-14A, *Proc.* 165–66; *TB* 306, where the foregoing procedure is put in place.]

(c) The names of the five ministers of religion—ordained residing within the boundaries of each geographic region who receive the most nominating votes shall form the slate from which the Synod convention shall select by majority vote each regional vice-president.

(d) No opportunity shall be provided for additional nominations from the floor of the convention. ...

Note that the change made to Bylaw 3.12.2, to allow an electronic method for nomination of the President and First Vice-President, was not propagated to the newly-created nomination process for regional offices. Note also that the bylaws specifically allow the use of an external tabulator in the case of the President and First Vice-President nominations, but indicate receipt of the signed ballots in the Office of the Secretary in the case of the regional vice-president nominations. (It is noted that the 2010 procedure also called for nomination of a number of board positions by the same regional process; it was likely felt that the auditor could not be expected to absorb all this activity.)

The present intent to create a coherent electronic process, taking care that it is as secure and as verifiable (or more so) than the paper ballot process, requires a few questions of the commission:

Question A.1: May the process for nomination of regional vice-presidents be adapted from the use of paper ballots to the same secure, verifiable, online system being contemplated for use with the offices of President and First Vice-President?

Opinion: The current wording of the Bylaws, on its face, specifically requires that the ballots for nominations of regional vice-

presidents must be signed by the president and secretary of the congregation submitting the nomination. This process was added to the Bylaws following the 2010 convention of the Synod, which adopted several resolutions. Res. 8-14A resolved that vice-presidents two through six be elected regionally and added Bylaw 3.12.1, which described how the regions were to be formed. Res. 8-16A specified that there were to be five regional lay members of the Board of Directors. Res. 8-08A established a Board for National Mission (BNM) and a Board for International Mission (BIM), also with regional membership. Res. 8-08A also adopted 2010 Bylaw 3.12.2.5 (*TB* 305–6, today numbered 3.12.2.7), establishing the process by which all regional nominations and elections were to be done. 2010 Bylaw 3.12.2.5 (b) required that all nominations were to be signed by the president and secretary of the nominating congregation and submitted to the Secretary of the Synod.

The 2010 Synod convention also adopted Res. 4-07, which made a large number of bylaw changes pertaining to the preparations for conventions of the Synod. One of these bylaw changes altered how the President and *all vice-presidents* of the Synod were to be nominated. The 2010 change to then-Bylaw 3.12.1 eliminated the requirement of 3.12.1 (b) that all nominating ballots be signed by the president and secretary of the nominating congregation, replacing it instead with a provision directing the Secretary of the Synod to provide “a secure and verifiable method that will offer opportunity to every congregation of the Synod to submit nominations.” This change was not, however, incorporated into the 2010 *Handbook* with regard to the nomination of *regional* vice-presidents.

Rather, probably because of a desire to keep the manner of nominations for all regional positions consistent, 2010 Bylaw 3.12.2.3 (b), as incorporated into the 2010 *Handbook*, followed the process adopted in Res. 8-08A, continuing to require the signature of the president and secretary of each nominating congregation to sign the form and submit it to the Secretary of the Synod.

The 2016 Synod convention adopted Res. 11-05, which changed the manner of nominating the regional members of the Board of Directors and the elected members of the BNM and the BIM (all of which are regional). In this new process, nominations were no longer limited to congregations, but followed the process for all other nominations received by the Committee for Convention Nominations. The stipulation requiring signatures from the chairman and secretary of a nominating congregation was removed. Res. 11-05 did not address the manner of nomination for regional vice-presidents.

Since the procedure for nomination by the congregations today applies only to the offices of President of the Synod, First Vice-President, and the five regional vice-presidents, it is the opinion of the commission that Res. 4-07, adopted by the 2010 convention, can be followed in its original intention to allow the Secretary of the Synod to provide “a secure and verifiable method that will offer opportunity to every congregation of the Synod to submit nominations,” not only for the President of the Synod and the First Vice-President, but also for the five regional vice-presidents, without requiring the signature of the president and secretary of nominating congregations.

Question A.2: Is the use of a reliable, impartial election contractor to facilitate these nomination processes to be precluded either by the language limiting external tabulation help to an “auditing firm,” or the language, in the regional process, requiring ballots to be received by the Secretary of the Synod?

Opinion: Bylaw 3.12.2 (d) uses the term *may* in reference to the engaging of an external auditing firm to tabulate the nominations. The term *may* would allow the process to be handled in-house by the Secretary of the Synod, should he so choose, or by an external tabulator. Since 2010 Res. 4-07 was intended to apply to the election of the President of the Synod, the First Vice-President, and the five regional vice-presidents, the application of this process to the nomination of the regional vice-presidents would allow the Secretary to use a reliable outside resource to tabulate the nominations and also certify these results, should the Secretary of the Synod so decide. This is also comprehended within the sense of his provision of a “secure and verifiable method” using “assistance necessary to accomplish this task.”

Question A.3: Could the requirement that regional nominations be “signed by the president and secretary of the nominating congregation” be implemented in some electronic fashion, rather than physically, on an official ballot? (In asking this question, it is noted that there is no ability at the Synod level to verify the signatures currently submitted, and that the security and verifiability of the process presently relates to identifying valid, original physical ballots and keeping records as to which congregations have cast their votes, to prevent duplication or third-party submission. An electronic process could be “verified” more thoroughly, for example, by emailing congregational officers when the congregation’s nominating ballot has been cast, to alert them to any potential unauthorized use.)

Opinion: Bylaw 3.12.2 (b) directs the Secretary of the Synod to provide a secure and verifiable method that will offer opportunity to every congregation of the Synod to submit nominations. The Bylaw does not stipulate what this secure and verifiable method might be. This same process may be used for the nominations of the regional vice-presidents. See the answer to Question 1A.

B. Registration of Presidential Voters

Bylaw 3.12.2.3 governs the registration of presidential voters by the congregations-and-parishes (*Pfarrgemeinden*) of the Synod. This process involves the collection of name, address, email address, phone, and a “security question” for the pastoral and lay voters to be registered. Handwriting of this information on a form and subsequent data entry have proven very error-prone and time-consuming. The especially important email address has been a challenge. Improperly completed or signed forms take a long time to detect and correct, with the consequence that some congregations have difficulty completing the process in time. An electronic process would reduce the administrative burden and significantly increase assurance, as well as allowing more timely and accurate reminders to congregations that have not yet registered. Bylaw 3.12.2.3, created by 2010 Res. 8-17 (*Proc.* 167; *TB* 304–5), as modified in 2016 and 2019, reads:

3.12.2.3 The Secretary of the Synod, ~~using lists of delegates in attendance at the prior year’s district conventions as submitted by the secretaries of the districts,~~ shall compile and maintain the voters list for the election of the President of the Synod ~~in coordination with the secretaries of the districts.~~ This list and any of its parts shall not be disseminated.

(a) ~~This voters list shall include two voting delegates from each congregation in attendance at the previous district conventions who remain members of the congregations they represented.~~

(1) the pastor of each member congregation or multi-congregation parish (assisting pastors are not eligible)

(2) a lay person from the 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.

(c) If one or both delegates are unavailable, congregations shall be provided opportunity to select substitute voters up to a deadline designated by the Secretary. [2016 Res. 11-03A, *Proc.*, 196]

(d) The registration status of congregations shall be made available to respective district presidents for the sole purpose of their encouraging registration for greater congregational participation. The registration status of congregations shall not be further disseminated. [2019 Res. 9-16, *Proc.*, 201]

The process adopted in 2010, because it relied on information from district secretaries and not on direct registration by congregations, involved no paper communication with the congregations themselves. In 2016, responding to dissatisfaction that congregations that did not attend the district convention or had lost those who had attended prior to the presidential vote were not able to vote in that election, the bylaw was modified to require direct registration of congregations with the Secretary of the Synod. The implementation specified was along the lines of other official ballot processes: a proper credentials form, signed by two congregational officers. This process involves a significant administrative burden, and mail delay and data entry time do not readily facilitate timely and accurate reminders to congregations, especially as now required by subparagraph (d). Prior to the 2016 change, there would have been no obstacle to a completely electronic registration process; the perhaps over-specified procedure dictated in 2016, however, may be construed to present an obstacle—even though the 2016 action evidences no intent to create such an obstacle, but perhaps rather a default impression of how another such process might be modeled on existing methods of the time.

Question B: Does the language of Bylaw 3.12.2.3 (b) preclude implementation of presidential voter registration by a secure and verifiable electronic means, requiring participation of congregational officers and their affidavit that the registration is taken as an official congregational action?

Opinion: The process adopted at the 2010 convention (2010 Bylaw 3.12.2.3) established means by which the list of eligible voters for the election of the President of the Synod was to be submitted by

the secretary of each district of the Synod. This list was comprised of the voting delegates who had attended their respective district conventions. When the process was changed by the 2016 convention (2016 Res. 11-03A) to require instead the direct registration of voters by congregations, the wording used in Bylaw 3.12.2.3 (b) replicated the wording of Bylaw 4.2.2 (a), which described the certification, by congregational officers, of their congregation's designation of voting delegates to a district convention.

Bylaw 3.12.2.3 (b), as so amended, simply states that the congregation shall present to the Secretary of the Synod “*a proper credentials form provided by the Secretary.*” It does not specify how this form is to be distributed. It could be a paper form mailed to each congregation, or it could be an electronic form accessible on the Synod website.

The bylaw further specifies that this form must be signed by two of the congregation's officers. This could be done via an electronic signature (which has come to be commonly understood—as in the case of Missouri contract law, for example, for fifteen years—not necessarily to require a handwritten mark) before the form is electronically submitted to the Office of the Secretary. If it were not technically feasible for the two officers to electronically sign the form, the registration could also be submitted electronically, with a printed copy of the registration form, bearing the appropriate signatures, sent to the Office of the Secretary prior to the deadline.

Thus, the wording of Bylaw 3.12.2.3 (b) allows the Secretary of the Synod to use a “secure and verifiable method” for the registration of the voting delegates of each congregation or parish to vote for the President of the Synod so long as it involves the collection by some means of the required “signatures” (i.e., verifiable attestations, by some commonly understood means of physical or electronic signature) of two congregational officers.

District Conventions, Circuit and Advisory Meetings, and Coronavirus Contingencies (20-2938)

Minutes of June 16, 2020

The Secretary of the Synod, responding to a number of inquiries from district presidents and secretaries inspired by the COVID-19 pandemic and associated impediments to large physical gatherings, potentially extending to or recurring over the next months or years, requested the following guidance from the commission:

Question 1: In the event that circuit forums, necessary to elect circuit visitors and to select Synod convention representation, or meetings of commissioned ministers and certain ordained ministers to select advisory delegates cannot meet physically, how can their business be conducted?

The Synod's Bylaws have been specifically amended in recent years to allow the (at that time, new) possibility of conducting these specific meetings electronically or “virtually.”

The forum of a circuit may meet electronically (Bylaws 3.1.2.1 [a] and 5.2.2 [a]) and, in the context of a meeting, physical or virtual, vote electronically (Bylaw 3.1.2.1 [b] and 5.2.2 [c]). The holding of such a “virtual” meeting presumes that congregations are able properly to designate representation, that someone in the circuit has the wherewithal to facilitate a proper electronic meeting and a means of voting that satisfies the stated requirements, and that the congregational representatives have fair and reasonable opportunity to attend by the means utilized. Attention should be given by the circuit visitor, who is responsible to convene the meeting, to

ensure that the vote is and can be exercised only by those properly designated by their congregations-or-parishes to represent them at the forum (Bylaws 3.1.2.1 [c]; 5.3.2), and that all eligible participants have a reasonable and reasonably uniform opportunity for full and fair participation. Careful attention would need to be paid to advance submission and subsequent effective dissemination of names and biographical information on nominees (Bylaws 3.1.2.1 [e] and 5.2.2 [b, d]) to all those attending the meeting as voting and advisory members of the forum.

In a similar case, the commissioned ministers and those ordained ministers ineligible to serve as voting pastoral delegates may meet by electronic means, under Synod Board of Directors policies (specifically, Policy 5.7.8 in the manual available at lcms.org/bod), to elect their proportional representation to the Synod convention (Bylaws 3.1.3–3.1.3.1). Concerns similar to those expressed with regard to circuit forums would pertain, and those responsible need to consider the full and fair participation of all eligible participants.

Question 2: In the event that district conventions are prevented from meeting physically by COVID-19 restrictions or similar circumstances, what options are available to the districts, under the Constitution and Bylaws of the Synod, for proper conduct of the business ordinarily conducted through these means?

The Constitution and Bylaws of the Synod provide specific provisions for the conduct of district conventions (Const. Art. XII 10, 13–15; Bylaws 1.3.3, 1.4.1–2; Bylaw sections, 4.2 and 4.7; and, by analogy, Bylaw section 3.1, insofar as it is applicable, and Bylaw section 3.12, in the sense indicated in Bylaw 4.7.1). Like the convention of the Synod, the conventions of the districts are not simply vehicles for accomplishing certain “essential” pieces of business, such as elections and resolutions, couched with extensive “inessential” trappings. Rather, they “*shall* [emphasis added] afford opportunities for worship, nurture, inspiration, fellowship, and the communication of vital information. They are the principal legislative assemblies, which amend the district’s Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws, consider and take action on reports and overtures, and handle appropriate appeals” (Bylaw 4.2.1). Conventions are thus regulated by the Bylaws of the Synod (Bylaw 4.2.1 [a]) and those of the districts, bylaws which may be amended substantially only by or with the specific and express authorization of such conventions (Bylaw chapter 7; Bylaw 4.2.1; Const. Art. XIV).

The Bylaws of the Synod, which govern the districts, do not provide for virtual or electronic conventions, or for doing the business assigned to a convention by means other than meeting; explicit allowance has been made for those meetings which can be conducted electronically (see above), but conventions are not among them.

Robert’s Rules, on which the conduct of our conventions, as deliberative assemblies, depends (Bylaw 3.1.9 [i][3]), permits the business of an organization “to be carried out only at a regular or properly called *meeting*—... a single official gathering in one room or area—of the assembly of its members at which a quorum is present” (*Robert’s Rules of Order, Newly Revised* [11th ed.], 97:11–14) unless the bylaws of the organization *explicitly* authorize electronic meeting. The sense behind this rule is the preservation of the fundamental character of a deliberative assembly (*Robert’s*, 1–5).

Our Bylaws do not so authorize. Moreover, our conventions are *churchly* deliberative assemblies. Their proper function, in pursuit of the aims described above (“worship, nurture, inspiration, fellowship, and the communication of vital information,” and only then

“tak[ing] action”), depends essentially on the voting and advisory delegates being able to interact fully and personally in a manner hardly reproducible by electronic means. The expectation is that the functions assigned to the convention would be taken in a context allowing full and free debate, fellowship, and personal interaction, and not by some impersonal means. Const. Art. VIII A 2 and XII 14 speak of a “constitutional convocation” and “presence” of at least a quorum of representatives. As a practical matter, the size of even the smallest of our district conventions does not seem at all likely to admit the possibility—even if the Bylaws were so to authorize, which they do not—of an electronic or virtual meeting that retains the character of a physically gathered, churchly, deliberative assembly.

The commission is aware of the possibility that certain jurisdictions, in state not-for-profit corporate law, may provide mechanisms for electronic meeting of members, or for the doing of business ordinarily conducted in a members’ meeting by means other than assembly. Such laws are permissive but not prescriptive; that is, where the Constitution and Bylaws of the Synod have assigned certain functions to be performed exclusively within the context of a gathered convention, such laws, where they might exist, do not require or permit those functions to be exercised otherwise. The Constitution of the Synod is the fundamental agreement of the congregations as to the maintenance of their synodical union, and is also the Constitution of the several districts, as the Synod Bylaws are their primary bylaws (Bylaw 4.1.1.2). The Synod and its districts acknowledge civil authority but intend “to retain all authority and autonomy allowed a church” (Bylaw 1.2.1 [f][2]). The considerations involved in the agreed-upon patterns by which the Synod and its districts conduct their churchly work are not vacated by the availability of civil-law alternatives.

The conventions of the Synod and of its districts are churchly, deliberative assemblies, with a specific character described in the Constitution and Bylaws, for which the character of a virtual meeting or of business done without a meeting—potentially relevant civil law options notwithstanding—is not a substitute.

Question 3: Are there limitations on rescheduling a district convention to accommodate a physical meeting at another time?

As to the timing of a district convention, Const. Art. XII 13 requires that it be held in “the year immediately preceding the general convention of the Synod” and states that “only the Synod has the right to make an exception to this rule.” This is commonly understood to be the calendar year, in this instance, 2021. Districts have from Jan. 1, 2021, to Dec. 31, 2021, to conduct their regular conventions. While, practically speaking, there are matters of adequate notice and venue that may limit attempts to reschedule a district convention, should a planned meeting become infeasible, a district convention could—if there is a possibility of fairly attempting to accommodate all stipulated participants, voting and advisory, at another time—be rescheduled within the district convention year of the triennium. The program and accommodations for the meeting may be varied as compelled by circumstance, so long as the essential nature of the convention (above) and of a churchly, deliberative assembly is preserved. Districts need to make a good faith attempt to have a convention, making every reasonable attempt or attempt(s) within the dictates of fairness and good stewardship of the district’s resources.

Should a district be unable to convene or achieve the required quorum at any point during the district convention year, it would

simply have no regular convention in that triennium.

There remains the possibility, “in cases of urgent necessity,” for specific business, and by the procedure specified (Const. Art. XII 15) of calling a special convention of a district, and these are not limited to the district convention year.

Question 4: In the event that business ordinarily conducted through the above physical meetings cannot be conducted by some other means, and physical gathering cannot be achieved within the time allotted in the triennial cycle for each mechanism, what is the result (e.g., for elected offices)?

Bylaw 3.2.4 provides for terms of office aligned with the regular meeting schedule of the triennial cycle. Its subparagraph (f) provides that “[i]ncumbents shall serve until their successors assume office.” Should a district be unable to meet in the current triennium, the current term of service of all elected incumbents would be extended until the next election can take place and successors can be inducted into office. The rules of succession and vacancy appointment already in place in the districts would pertain, should any incumbent be unable or unwilling to continue in office. As the current term is, in a sense, being extended, any applicable term limits would not remove elected incumbents from office until the corresponding election can take place. As there are, in this situation, no “pending successors-elect,” the usual limitations of Bylaw 3.2.4 (f) and (g) on the starting of new programs and the appointment of new appointees during the “interim” would also not apply.

Should a district that fails to hold a regular convention within the district convention year of the triennium consider it to be of urgent necessity, outside the district convention year of the triennium and in such a situation, to conduct elections, and if the proper procedure would be followed (Const. Art. XII 15), a district could conduct a special (physically convened) convention for this purpose.

Careful attention should be given by the districts and their officers, boards, and commissions to report to the congregations on their activities and the situation of the district, even if a convention is not certain to take place or possible to convene.

Looking forward to the Synod convention, the principal required function of district conventions is, in those seventeen or eighteen districts electing representatives in a given triennium, the election of members of the Synod Committee for Convention Nominations (Bylaw 3.12.3 [f]). CCM Op. 12-2653 indicated that when a district convention has failed to elect a member of the CCN, the district board of directors must fill the resulting vacancy “to fulfill the district’s obligation to the Synod.” That provision would be applicable, should a district fail to meet in convention and elect its representative.

Otherwise, the work ordinarily done by a district convention in preparation for the Synod convention (consideration of reports, submission of overtures, discussion and forwarding of suggestions for triennial emphases) is possible to be done by other means (including congregations, circuit forums, church worker conferences, and the district board of directors).

District President Authority in a Congregational Controversy (20-2951)

Minutes of January 15–16, 2021

By an email of Sept. 16, 2020, a member of the Synod posed the following opinion request to the commission regarding the author-

ity of a district president, under Const. Art. XII 7 and Bylaw 4.4.6, as the district president assists congregations having internal disputes. The commission solicited and received input from the Council of Presidents, consonant with Bylaw 3.9.2.2 (b), and initiated discussion of the item in its October meeting. It now responds as follows:

Question 1: When a district president intervenes in an intra-congregation dispute, as long as the dispute does not involve the doctrine or polity of the LCMS, is his input binding or merely advisory?

Opinion: The district president, like the President of the Synod, “has and always shall have the power to advise, admonish, and reprove. He shall conscientiously use all means at his command to promote and maintain unity of doctrine and practice” (Const. Art. XI B 3) “within the boundaries of [his] district” (Const. Art. XII 6). He shall “moreover, especially exercise supervision over the doctrine, life, and administration of office of the ordained and commissioned ministers of [his] district and acquaint [himself] with the religious conditions of the congregations of [his] district. To this end [he] shall visit and, according as [he] deem[s] it necessary, hold investigations in the congregations” (Const. Art. XII 7). In this work, he is to “conserve and promote the unity of the true faith,” “strengthen congregations and their members in giving bold witness,” and provide “evangelical supervision, counsel, and care,” and “protection for congregations, pastors, teachers, and other church workers ...” (Const. Art. III). To this end he shall “in his ministry of ecclesiastical supervision visit the congregations of his district” (Bylaw 4.4.4) and “even without formal request therefor, may through the proper channels arrange for an official visit or investigation when a controversy arises in a congregation ... of the district or when there is evidence of a continuing unresolved problem in doctrine or practice” (Bylaw 4.4.6).

The question poses a false dichotomy in asking whether such input of the district president is “binding or merely advisory.” When Const. Art. VII 1 states that “[i]n 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,” this is not to dismiss the *advice, admonition, and reproof* of a district president as “*merely* advisory.” The duty of his office is to *advise authoritatively* on the basis of the Word of God and the Lutheran Confessions—to include, as noted above, the practical application of these to a pastor’s ministry and divine call and to any disputes that may arise in a congregation.

The congregation will do well to weigh such worthy advice, counsel, and reproof, and to act as the Word and conscience require—for the Word of God is surely binding. The Synod is, as Const. Art. VII 1 states, “but an advisory body,” but when its officers advise, counsel, and reprove from the Word of God and Lutheran Confessions, this is not to be dismissed as “mere advice”; indeed, congregations participate in the Synod *principally* to receive and provide for one another such advice.

Const. Art. VII 1 does frankly acknowledge and assert the fact that the district president does not possess directive control under any “legislative or coercive [governmental] powers” held by the Synod over congregations; such powers are explicitly disclaimed. What action the congregation takes, therefore, on the basis of (or contrary to) the district president’s advice, counsel, and reproof is of its own volition—which, while it may be captivated by the Word of God or sensible persuasion through the offices of the district

president or his representatives, its own volition remains. Even where a congregation or individual member of the Synod is violating one of the conditions of membership in the Synod, the district president cannot force the congregation or individual member to change or follow a particular course of action. Rather, in such a situation, when persuasion does not suffice, the district president will ultimately need to follow the procedure for expulsion from the Synod in Article XIII.

Question 2: Does a district president have the ecclesiastical authority to effect the forced retirement of a called/rostered pastor without the official involvement and consent of the body that called that worker (i.e., the voters' assembly of the congregation)?

Opinion: The question seems to suggest that a district president might himself retire a pastor. This he cannot do. A district president may advise, admonish, or reprove a pastor or a pastor's congregation where there is or appears to be potential cause for removal of a pastor from office. Where a compelling circumstance exists, a district president may indicate that a failure to act, either by the congregation or by the pastor, will result in restriction of the pastor or suspension and possible expulsion from membership in the Synod of either the pastor or the congregation. The district president "has and always shall have the power to advise, admonish, and reprove" (Const. Art. XI B 3; XII 6) and exercises the ministry of ecclesiastical supervision (Bylaws 4.4.3; 1.2.1 [j]). By doing so, he does not himself retire the pastor. The call of a pastor can be resigned by the pastor himself or rescinded by the congregation itself (either properly and advisedly, in accord with our doctrines of Church and Ministry and of the divine call, or improperly and unadvisedly, which would be wrong, would put its continued membership in the Synod in jeopardy, and may result in a dispute resolution process which could find the congregation liable). While the district president may within his office and presuming a compelling circumstance attempt to persuade a pastor to resign or a congregation to rescind a call, he has no means himself to retire the pastor.

Question 3: When a district president intervenes in an intra-congregation dispute, may the district president force his individual will on a congregation or called pastor by his own interpretation and application of the governing documents of the congregation?

Opinion: See the answer to Question 2 above. The district president may advise, admonish, and reprove, based on the Word of God and his understanding of the congregation's commitments established in its own documents. The congregation then makes its own decision, which—if contrary to the doctrine and practice of the Synod or to its own commitments—may result in the further exercise of ecclesiastical supervision, the need for dispute resolution, or the congregation's membership in the Synod being placed in jeopardy.

Question 4: When a district president intervenes in an intra-congregation dispute, what remedy does the congregation have if its voters' assembly disagrees with the district president?

Opinion: The question, while unclear in itself, relates to how the advice given from the office of the district president is received and acted upon by the congregation. By virtue of the congregation's membership in the Synod, the congregation has the duty and responsibility to give due consideration to such advice. Should the advice of the district president be inconsistent with the Scrip-

tures and Confessions, that is, with the doctrine and practice of the Synod, or inapplicable to the congregation's situation, the congregation may, having given such advice due consideration, consider its situation in light of the Scriptures and Confessions and do otherwise than advised, realizing that if it acts contrary to the conditions of membership in the Synod (Const. Arts. II and VI), it places its membership in jeopardy. Keeping in mind that one of the congregation's primary purposes in maintaining membership in the Synod is that it may see to the provision of proper ecclesial advice, and that therefore such, when provided, should not be lightly dismissed, this seems the most immediate remedy to advice that—upon due and proper consideration—would be found to be incorrect.

Should a dispute arise between a congregation and its district president, the proper response would be to initiate the dispute resolution process as outlined in Bylaw section 1.10, the use of which is mandated by Synod Bylaws as the process to be used in the case of disputes between members of the Synod.

The district presidents do carry out their offices both under the ecclesiastical supervision of the President of the Synod and as elected by their districts and responsible to their member congregations in convention.

Prior Evidence in Bylaw Section 2.17 Hearing Panel (20-2955)

Minutes of October 30–31, 2020

A Bylaw section 2.17 Hearing Panel by an email of Oct. 20, 2020, and under Bylaw 2.14.7.8 (k), requested the commission's opinion on the following questions:

Question 1: If a district president took no action on a previous accusation and therefore the case was terminated, is evidence from such previous accusation admissible to a current case?

Opinion: When a district president receives information that requires him to consider initiating the proceedings outlined in Bylaw section 2.17, the district president eventually has two options, to initiate formal proceedings or to not initiate formal proceedings, "which shall terminate the matter" (Bylaw 2.17.5), subject to other provisions that are not relevant to this question.

When a district president receives information that initiates Bylaw section 2.17, the district president is to "thoroughly investigate whether the allegations of the accuser can be substantiated" (Bylaw 2.17.4 [a]). "Thoroughly investigate," having no Bylaw definition, is then to be interpreted by its ordinary or plain meaning. To the commission, this means to leave no stone unturned, to look at all relevant information, and then to weigh the information as to credibility and importance. This thorough investigation may involve prior accusations that, due to the judgment of the ecclesiastical supervisor responsible at the time and to many reasons too numerous to be listed here, had previously resulted in no formal proceedings.

The provision that such a conclusion shall "terminate the matter" and that the district president responsible shall "in writing so inform the accuser, any district president involved, and the involved member" (Bylaw 2.17.5, including subparagraph [e]; cf. Bylaws 2.14.5; 2.15.5; 2.16.5.1; 2.16.8 [d]) serves as a formal statement to the accuser that the accusation as presented has been assessed and a determination has been reached by the ecclesiastical supervisor responsible that, in his judgment and upon the facts and evidence available at the time, formal proceedings will not be initiated on the basis of the specific accusation presented.

Such a conclusion does not expunge facts or evidence related to prior accusations and/or investigations, or prevent a district president, on the basis of additional facts or evidence, from initiating subsequent formal proceedings based in part on new evidence and in part on evidence existing prior to the current matter, including, without limitation, evidence connected with a previous accusation that did not result in formal proceedings.

The materiality or relevance of facts and evidence to a subsequent case is not diminished by the decision of a district president at some prior point not to proceed to formal proceedings. It may be reassessed in a subsequent decision whether to suspend a member and may be presented to a panel subsequently convened on the basis of new accusations, facts, or evidence. As is the rule for all material presented to a panel, provided by the Bylaw section 2.17 *Standard Operating Procedures Manual (SOPM)*, General Regulation K, “Witnesses and Evidence,” 15:

(b) Panels shall be the judge of the relevance and materiality of evidence offered. Relevance of testimony will be determined by whether such evidence will support (or not) an issue in contention. A panel may reject and not consider evidence or testimony from a witness that it deems unnecessary or unhelpful to its consideration of the matter.

Question 2: Does the phrase “the ecclesiastical supervisor shall close the investigation, terminating the matter” Bylaw 2.17.5 (SOPM 2.3 c) mean that evidence from such a case may not be used in a subsequent case?

Opinion: No. See the answer to Question 1 above.

Question 3: If evidence from an accusation was gathered and considered by a district president, resulting in no formal action, under a set of bylaws, and the bylaws were subsequently amended in such a way that the admissibility of that evidence to a current case is questioned, which bylaws pertain, those under which the evidence was gathered and considered without further action, or those under which a current case is being heard?

Opinion: The commission is unable to answer such a hypothetical question. Should the panel encounter a specific question regarding the applicability of specific provisions that have changed over time in a way that appears relevant to the facts at hand, the panel may inquire further.

Virtual Meeting of Hearing Panels (20-2956)

Minutes of October 30–31, 2020

By the same email, the Hearing Panel in a Bylaw section 2.17 matter also requested an opinion on the following two procedural questions occasioned by the COVID-19 pandemic:

Question 1: May one or more members of a Hearing Panel (under Bylaw section 2.17) attend a hearing by electronic means?

Opinion: The Bylaws and *SOPM* for Bylaw sections 2.14–17 do not prohibit a hearing panel, in an emergency situation (such as a weather emergency or flight cancellation), from allowing a panel member who is unable physically to attend from joining the hearing by electronic means.

The observation that such participation is not prohibited does not solve the manifold technical challenges that could arise in attempting to render such participation as effective as physical presence

would be. Such participation would therefore be confined to the realm of strict necessity (i.e., it would be impossible or highly imprudent, reasonably speaking, for the panel member to be present physically at the hearing) and not of preference or convenience.

The commission also notes that the determination of a panel to proceed with a hearing in which one or more members of the panel attends electronically (as opposed to proceeding without the member, his or her being “unable to perform required duties,” 2.17 *SOPM*, Detailed Flowchart 4.3 [d], or rescheduling the hearing if the number of members unable to attend physically would so necessitate) is a discretionary act which may be reviewed for its impact on the provision of a fair and impartial hearing.

Question 2: May the entire Bylaw section 2.17 Hearing Panel proceeding be conducted by electronic means in such a way that no two members of the panel, neither the accused or the accuser [*sic*, really “the ecclesiastical supervisor”], nor any of the witnesses are physically present with each other?

Opinion: Bylaw sections 2.14–17 and the corresponding *SOPM* do not contemplate the possibility of a virtual hearing; rather they reflect the established practice, heretofore without exception, of the panel and parties meeting at an established time in a given single place (e.g., Bylaw 2.17.7.6). Considerations that may strongly favor this practice, even given modern technological alternatives, include the nonverbal cues generally more readily observable in an in-person setting and process security (recordings are prohibited, except as made by the panel for its own use; access to the proceedings is controlled to prevent witness “contamination” or inappropriate “leakage” of sensitive information; sensitive documents can be shared in-person and collected for the official record). A physical “face-to-face” meeting of the parties is required to begin dispute resolution (e.g., Bylaw 1.10.5) and expulsion processes (except in the case of Bylaw section 2.17) for reasons that have withstood recent scrutiny even in light of technology that, for one-on-one meetings, is otherwise quite reasonable (Op. 19-2914). While there is no similar explicit requirement that the hearing in a Bylaw section 2.14 or 2.17 matter be “face-to-face,” some of the same practical implications and value judgments might surely be in play. Decisions regarding the adjudication of disputes, especially regarding membership in the Synod and fitness for ministry, ought to be afforded the best reasonable means possible.

Standard operating procedures have contemplated certain specific uses of electronic means in connection with these proceedings. Meetings ancillary to the main hearing, such as the one conducted by the panel to finalize its opinion, are explicitly authorized to be conducted electronically (Bylaw section 2.17 *SOPM*, Detailed Flowchart 4.6 [c], 43). Appeal Panels routinely (and almost exclusively) meet electronically (Bylaw section 2.17 *SOPM*, Detailed Flowchart 4.9 [g], 47). Panels may also receive testimony electronically, at the discretion of the panel (e.g., Bylaw section 2.17 *SOPM*, General Regulation K, 17). As noted above, a panel may determine to allow one or more of its members to join the hearing electronically, although this should be limited strictly to cases of necessity. These are circumscribed usages of virtual meeting technology, incidental to the main hearing at which the evidence and testimony of the parties are to be given a “fair and equitable” hearing (Bylaw 2.17.7.2 [f]).

The commission cannot at present exclude the possibility that future circumstances might occur in which law or reasonable care might render it impossible to physically assemble the required

hearing—which includes a panel of necessity drawn from various parts of the country—within 45 days or a “short delay” (Bylaw 2.17.7.6). In such a case, the interest of timely resolution begins to weigh against the customary safeguards of a fair and full hearing afforded by an in-person meeting. Even so, for a hearing to be conducted by electronic means, suitable procedures would first have to be devised to ensure, in light of the many practical concerns noted above, the panel’s ability to conduct a fair and equitable hearing by such means.

The commission is not in a position, by itself, to develop such procedures and render such safeguards, which would need to be incorporated into the appropriate “comprehensive” *SOPM* (Bylaw 2.14.10.3, etc.). It cannot, therefore, authorize such a hearing at this time.

Circumstances and perceptions of electronic means of procedural meeting, along with the technology available, have changed rapidly as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, and continue to evolve. The commission has noted previously, however, the danger that the change of means of a deliberative proceeding may very well change the essential character of a deliberative proceeding. The commission, being charged, together with the Council of Presidents, with maintaining “comprehensive” *SOPM* for Bylaw sections 1.10 and 2.14–17 (e.g., Bylaw 2.14.10.3), is open to a conversation with the Council about the wisdom and propriety of the use of electronic means for hearing processes, but finds that—as suggested by *Robert’s Rules* (12th ed., 9:30–32)—if such “are to be authorized, it is advisable to adopt additional rules pertaining to their conduct.” The commission does not here opine on whether such might, given suitable rules, be authorized without unacceptable jeopardy to the process set forth in the Bylaws.

The commission does here opine that the *SOPM* as presently amended, with the concurrence of the Council of Presidents, do not contemplate a fully electronic meeting of a Hearing Panel in a Bylaw section 2.14 or 2.17 procedure, much less provide comprehensive procedures for the same. This being the case, the use of fully electronic means for a hearing is not consistent with procedure in place at this time. The panel thus needs to seek—in keeping with law and prudence, and adopting all necessary reasonable safeguards, but also being mindful of the gravity of the matter at hand—to conduct a hearing in the accustomed fashion in as timely a manner as circumstances will allow.

Requirements for Call Processes by Agencies, Auxiliaries, and Recognized Service Organizations (20-2957)

Minutes of October 30–31, 2020

Dr. Gude and the Secretary have been assigned Commission on Handbook (COH) Issue 19-005 (COH minutes of Oct. 18, 2019), dealing with the inclusion of material dealing with call processes by agencies, auxiliaries, and recognized service organizations in Bylaw section 2.5, which has to do (otherwise) with “Membership” (agencies, auxiliaries, and recognized service organizations not being *members* of the Synod), as well as with the related issue of the meaning of the convention’s having placed recognized service organizations under the rule that they “call and be served by” only those ordained ministers (or candidates) listed in Bylaw 2.5.2.

With regard to the question of interpretation involved in the latter item, the commission understands that with regard to Bylaw 2.5.2, “served by” refers to service in the sense of the distinctive func-

tions of the pastoral office, not to “service” in some purely secular sense. A divine call cannot be extended by any of the listed calling entities to any person not listed under Bylaw 2.5.2’s (1), (2), or (3). Furthermore, such a calling entity cannot be “served by,” in the sense of any exercise of distinctive functions of the pastoral office, any person not listed under Bylaw 2.5.2’s (1), (2), or (3). The convention’s inclusion of recognized service organizations in the list of calling entities in Bylaw 2.5.2 renders this restriction applicable to such.

The commission does not object to the Commission on Handbook’s relocation of the material or references thereto for clarity’s sake, or to clarification of the above meaning with regard to Bylaw 2.5.2 and its application to recognized service organizations.

Synod Convention Deferral Vote under Const. Art. XI B 8 (20-2960)

Minutes of Nov. 23, 2020

By a memorandum of Nov. 12, 2020, prepared at the request of the President of the Synod and leadership of the Council of Presidents, the Secretary of the Synod requested the commission’s opinion on the following questions.

Background: With a coronavirus pandemic continuing to significantly impact gatherings and accommodation planning for the foreseeable future in most parts of the country, many districts are either experiencing difficulty scheduling and obtaining facilities for any reasonable district convention compliant with the Constitution and Bylaws of the Synod and CCM Op. 20-2938, “District Conventions, Circuit and Advisory Meetings, and Coronavirus Contingencies,” or are dissatisfied with the arrangements they have made or understand themselves likely to be able to make. Some district presidents have expressed uncertainty that their own districts will be able, within calendar year 2021, to convene at all, or to facilitate an accustomed and salutary churchly deliberative assembly that will be well attended by the pastoral and lay representatives of district congregations and parishes. Others have expressed concern for districts other than their own, that prevailing circumstances should not be allowed to preclude any district from likely meeting in regular convention during this triennium.[1] The extensive preparations required for district and Synod conventions, and their lengthy prior processes, have also been noted—preparations complicated at present by significant timeline uncertainties (some districts already have multiple possible convention dates laid out, accounting for lower-than-usual probabilities of successfully convening and achieving quorum).

It has therefore been suggested that the 2022 Synod convention be delayed one year, stretching the 2019–2022 triennium to 2019–2023, and that the window for district conventions to meet prior be extended from calendar year 2021 to include also calendar year 2022, to allow selection of meeting dates apparently more likely to be realized without significant complications.

The Constitution and Bylaws of the Synod do not provide specific, explicit mechanisms for the rescheduling of a scheduled convention or for the alteration of the triennial schedule laid down for the Synod in Const. Art. VIII A 1: “The Synod convenes every three years for its regular meeting,” and for the districts in Const. Art. XII 13: “The regular sessions of the districts are held in the year immediately preceding the general convention of the Synod.” Moreover, no provision is made for alteration of the Constitution or Bylaws outside of a convention or its specific direction (Const. Art. XV; Bylaw section 7). Finally, it is unrealistic to suggest the calling of

a special session (Const. Art. VIII B 2) to amend the Constitution or Bylaws to craft a remedy, as such a session would be impossible to conduct in a timely manner, being subject to the same in-person attendance requirements as a regular convention (Op. 20-2938).

However, the Constitution of the Synod does make provision for the member congregations to take action outside of a convention on specific matters that are “of such a nature that action thereon cannot be delayed until the next convention.” This provision is as follows:

Article XI Rights and Duties of Officers

B. Duties of the President

8. 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

In 1944, this provision was used to authorize postponement of the Synod convention due to the government’s wartime urging to conserve fuel. By a majority vote, the congregations approved delaying the convention that had, three years before, been scheduled to meet that year. (Circumstances ultimately changed and the convention was—the vote to postpone notwithstanding—held in 1944; the first act of the convention was to ratify and confirm the president’s calling of the convention on schedule.)[2] In 1944, the agreed-upon (but ultimately reversed) deferral of the Synod convention would not have impacted the schedule of the prior district conventions (though there is some evidence in that period of districts at least contemplating an inability to meet on schedule due to wartime fuel restrictions). In the present situation, the timing of both district and Synod conventions is involved; indeed, the full accommodation of the former is the principal impetus for the questions posed.

At present, it would be impossible to complete a vote of the congregations before the first district convention may open in January 2021. Some districts may now or, by that time, will have made definite arrangements to meet in calendar year 2021 that may yet succeed. Thus, it has been suggested that instead of deferring all district conventions to 2022 (the year before a Synod convention rescheduled to 2023), district conventions be allowed to occur any time in calendar 2021 and 2022, as noted above.

Implications of the Articles of Incorporation and Missouri Non-profit Law (RSMo. 355) have been explored separately in an opinion from Synod’s legal counsel. The commission is now asked to determine whether the measure proposed is compatible with the Constitution and Bylaws of the Synod.

Question 1: Is it consistent with the Constitution and Bylaws for the President of the Synod to submit to a written vote of the congregations of the Synod, as detailed in Const. Art. XI B 8, the following: Shall the upcoming convention of the Synod be delayed one year, in effect stretching one triennium to four years’

duration?

Opinion: It is the opinion of the commission that the question whether to delay the upcoming convention of the Synod by a year is self-evidently a matter “of such a nature that the action thereon cannot be delayed until the next convention” and therefore falls within the standard set by Const. Art. XI B 8. Such a question may, consistent with the requirements of Const. Art. XI B 8, be put to the congregations for their vote. The congregations in response have the right to approve or reject any proposal made by the President, a determination that involves not only the substance of the question put to them but also their assessment of whether the facts and circumstances necessitate action without delay.

Question 2: Is it consistent with the Constitution and Bylaws of the Synod for the congregations, through such a vote as described in Question 1, and under circumstances as described, to extend the length of a triennium?

Opinion: An action of the member congregations under Const. Art. XI B 8 must be otherwise constitutional. Const. Art. VIII A 1 specifies a three-year duration to the triennium. The purpose of this provision is to preserve the right of the member congregations to govern the Synod and its agencies with the desired regularity and periodicity.

Circumstances could conceivably and ultimately, as a matter of probabilities the commission is neither equipped nor empowered to assess, subject to futility the member congregations’ meeting in regular convention either as a Synod within the triennial schedule or as their respective districts within the allotted calendar year of that triennium. Looking back from such an outcome, mechanical submission of the congregations to the triennial meeting provision might be found to have more significantly impaired their right to govern their Synod and their districts than it would have to have offer them the ability, by the proposed vote, to manage the risk that they would be unable to meet on schedule by expanding the triennium. While it is possible, on the other hand, that expanding the triennium may ultimately delay the member congregations’ governance of Synod or of their respective districts—perhaps, ultimately, unfavorably or unnecessarily—their rights under the Constitution are not diminished by granting them the choice, under the properly actuated mechanism provided in Const. Art. XI B 8, of how best to maintain that right in the face of a risk not contemplated in the constitutional language—namely, the risk that their inability to meet legally, prudently, and reasonably on schedule could submit their triennial governance opportunity, at least on the district level, to futility.

When unforeseen circumstances arise that threaten the member congregations’ ability to realize, legally, prudently, or reasonably, regular conventions (Synod or district) on the triennial schedule, it is consistent with the purpose of Const. Art. VIII A 1 for the member congregations of the Synod, using the mechanism of Const. Art. XI B 8, to manage that threat by reaching the determination and effecting the outcome proposed.

Question 3: Is it consistent with the Constitution and Bylaws of the Synod for the congregations, by such a Const. Art. XI B 8 vote, also to extend the interval of an expanded triennium within which the districts of the Synod are allowed to hold their district conventions to include the two calendar years prior to the deferred Synod convention, thereby not invalidating

any potentially actionable and desirable convention plans already made, while extending the window of possibility for all districts?

Opinion: Such an action, given the above and that Const. Art. XII 13 explicitly contemplates exceptions to the rule that “regular sessions of the districts are held in the year immediately preceding the general convention of the Synod” as capable of being made “by the Synod,” is consistent with the Constitution and Bylaws of the Synod.

Guidance on implications of the above three questions:

The commission notes that if the question of deferring the 2022 Synod convention to 2023 and extending the window for prior district conventions to include calendar years 2021 and 2022 is put to the congregations, and especially if the vote is in the affirmative, this will necessitate many decisions about the proper application of pre-convention timelines both at the Synod and at the district levels. These will have to accommodate convention schedules that may be shifted after significant processes have already begun. Likewise, processes may also need to be initiated while there is still great uncertainty about the potential deferral of the related convention.

Specific provisions and circumstances may require various approaches to maintaining as equitable and effective the mechanisms by which congregations effect the pre-convention phase of their governance of districts and the Synod. Without examining specific language and circumstances, it is impossible to address these situations. Responsible officers need to take care that the fundamental rights of congregations and other members to participate in all aspects of pre-convention and in-convention governance of their districts and their Synod are protected, and that the exercise of such rights is facilitated by especially clear and timely communication.

With regard to the Synod convention, for example, the 18-month call for nominations is about to be issued in January, with nominations due in the Office of the Secretary of the Synod no later than “nine months prior to the convention of the Synod” (Bylaw 3.12.3.4 [f]). The opening of the process cannot at this point reasonably be delayed, as nominators must be provided their 18 months to nominate, should the convention of the Synod be held on schedule in 2022—a possibility that must be prepared for unless and until the congregations finally vote to defer it. Should the convention be deferred, the close of nominations cannot reasonably be terminated after the usual nine months’ duration but must be held open until “nine months prior to the convention.”

Similar considerations will have to be made with much greater urgency in the districts of the Synod. Care must be taken to preserve the integrity of each district pre-convention process. Furthermore, materials and reports designed to support 2021 district conventions must—while acknowledging that further developments may occur in an additional year of discussion—be available for the consideration of districts that are able to convene without delay.

Postponing the convention would also impact elections and terms of office for elected and appointed offices at the Synod and district levels. Bylaw 3.2.4 (f) provides that incumbents “shall serve until their successors assume office.” In effect, were the convention to be deferred by a year, one year would be added to each term of the 2019–2023 “triennium” on the Synod level and, depending on the year in which each district convention is held, either in the 2018–2022 district “triennium” or the 2021–2025 district “triennium.”

The proposed mechanism would impact the length of the current triennium but not that of any future triennium. Subsequent regu-

lar district conventions would, in any case, occur in 2025, and the subsequent Synod convention, in 2026, according to the normal triennial cycle.

It is incumbent upon the President to communicate clearly in the “full and complete information regarding the matter” not only the question itself but especially the consequences of adoption and rejection, providing the congregations with the requisite information to make an informed decision.

Endnotes

1. As was observed in Op. 20-2938, while it is incumbent on districts to make every reasonable effort to meet in the district convention year, it is not necessary to the holding of a Synod convention that all districts have succeeded in meeting the year prior.

2. The first act of the 1944 convention (Proceedings, 2–3; see also BOD Minutes, Mar. 6 and May 15, 1944) details this use:

The following resolution was adopted in the first session on June 21, 1944, having been drawn up by our Synodical Attorney, Mr. George Eigel:

WHEREAS, The Office of Defense Transportation urged all associations and organizations to cancel their conventions for the year 1944 on account of the transportation problem; and

WHEREAS, In compliance with said request the President of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio, and Other States did request all congregations to vote on the question of postponing their convention for the year 1944; and

WHEREAS, A majority of the congregations did vote in favor of canceling and postponing said convention; and

WHEREAS, It did later develop that the convention could be held, and as a consequence thereof the President notified all congregations that the convention would be held at the time and place decided upon at the 1941 convention, to wit, June 21 to June 30, 1944, in the City of Saginaw, Michigan; therefore be it

Resolved, by the delegates in convention assembled, being a majority of all delegates elected to said convention, and representing all of the congregations of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio, and Other States, that we do hereby ratify and confirm the action of the President in calling said convention as agreed in the resolution at the convention of 1941, and we agree that the convention may proceed with its regular business in due course in accordance with said call.

Slate of Candidates for Synodwide Corporate Entities (21-2970)

Minutes of December 3–4, 2021

By an email of Oct. 22, 2021, a member of a synodwide corporate entity board of directors posed, at the direction of the board’s chairman, the following question. The commission, in accordance with Bylaw 3.9.2.2 (b), solicited input from the board and from the President of the Synod.

Background: Bylaw 3.6.1.5 (a)(1) requires that “the slate of candidates for the initial appointment of the chief executive” of synodwide corporate entities “shall be selected by the governing board in consultation with and with the mutual concurrence of the President of the Synod.” And in the event of a vacancy in the chief executive position, Bylaw 3.6.1.5 (a)(2) requires that the governing board “shall present its list of candidates [plural] to the President.”

Question: Does the word “candidates” (plural) in subparagraphs (1) and (2) of Bylaw 3.6.1.5 (a) indicate that said “slate” and “list” must contain the names of at

least two candidates when presented to the President for his concurrence?

Opinion: Regarding the initial appointment (as opposed to reappointment) of the chief executive of a synodwide corporate entity, Bylaws 3.6.1.5 (a)(1) and 3.3.1.3 (f) speak of the President of the Synod and the entity's governing board engaging in "consultation" to reach "mutual concurrence" on a "slate of candidates." The first sentence of Bylaw 3.6.1.5 (a)(2) requires further that "the appropriate governing board and the President of the Synod shall act expeditiously to fill the vacancy."

Bylaw 3.6.1.5 (a)(2) (the content of which is due, along with [b] [1–2], to 2004 Res. 7-11A) contains also a second sentence ("This governing board shall present its list of candidates to the President."), which is the remnant of a longer sentence from the two precipitating overtures (2004 Ov. 7-36, 37) that concluded with the additional words, dropped by the floor committee: "within six months after the vacancy in the executive position occurs." The practically vestigial remainder, suggesting at most the initiative of the board in identifying potential candidates and presenting them to the President, adds little to the consideration of this question. It must be comprehended within the process described primarily in Bylaws 3.6.1.5 (a)(1) and 3.3.1.3 (f)—one of "consultation" leading to "mutual concurrence" on a "slate of candidates," in which the board and President "shall act expeditiously to fill the vacancy."

Here, the commission understands "slate of candidates" integrally, as a term of art, denoting the collection of those in candidacy for one or more positions but not requiring a specific number or even plurality of them for each position, apart from some explicit requirement otherwise. Such an explicit requirement does occur elsewhere in the Bylaws—for example, in preparation of slates for a Synod convention, at the time of which a free-flowing conversation among all participants leading to "mutual concurrence" on a slate of candidates would be inconvenient (Bylaw 3.12.3.6 [a])—but not here.

Here, just such a consultation between the board and President, leading to a point of mutual concurrence, is required. Contrary to what might be inferred by an incorrect leap from the second sentence of Bylaw 3.6.1.5 (a)(2), or by false analogy to other processes, such as in Bylaw 3.10.6.6.2 (b)(7), this process is *not* simply a "unidirectional" one in which the board provides the President with a list of candidates and the President strikes names from that list. Envisioned instead is a continued dialogue by which the board and President jointly construct—by a process not specified in further detail in the bylaw—a slate of candidates in which they can mutually concur.

The process moves on to an appointment by the board when and only when the President and board, after consultation, reach such mutual concurrence—not on the names of one or more remaining candidates, severally, but on a *slate* of candidates, integrally. Should the President and the board mutually agree on a slate consisting of a single candidate, the board may proceed to appoint that candidate; should the President or the board disagree with proceeding to appointment from a slate consisting of one candidate—perhaps even on the basis of an impression that such a slate is "defective," as giving the board no actual choice between two alternatives, regardless of and without judgment on the suitability of the single candidate—the consultation would need to be resumed until such mutual concurrence can be reached on that or another slate. In this consultation, both the board and the President would need to act responsibly, within their respective duties and in the

interest of the Synod (Bylaw 1.5.2 [b]), and "expeditiously," eagerly seeking a slate on which "mutual concurrence" can indeed be achieved, to fill the vacancy.

Noting potential unclarity and concern regarding functionality of the parallel process for interim appointments, the commission refers this matter for study to the COH.

Faculty Declaration of Qualification for First Call for Graduate of Respective Institution (22-2977)

Minutes of April 8–9, 2022

By an email of Jan. 11, 2022, a member congregation of the Synod requested an opinion of the commission on the following questions, with regard to which, pursuant to Bylaw 3.9.2.2 (b), input was solicited from the President of the Synod, the presidents of Synod universities and seminaries, the executive director of the LCMS Office of Pastoral Education, and the president of the Concordia University System. The commission replies as follows:

Background: Synod Bylaw 2.7.1 provides:

A graduate of an authorized educational institution of the Synod must be declared qualified for a first call and recommended by the faculty of the respective educational institution before the effective date of the first call to service in the church, as assigned by the Council of Presidents acting as the Board of Assignments as provided in Bylaw section 2.9.

Question 1: Does the term *graduate* (with respect to an authorized educational institution of the Synod) include any persons other than those who have received an earned academic degree from that institution (or from any previously existing institution to which the current institution is the legal successor-in-interest)? If so, what other persons are included as *graduates*?

Opinion: Many of the above-noted individuals responded to the commission's request for input, and the commission thanks each for his contribution.

In addressing itself to the sense of the term *graduate* in Bylaw 2.7.1, the commission finds that this term cannot be defined in isolation from its context in the Bylaws of the Synod. The commission's opinion therefore relies on the entirety of Bylaw sections 2.7 and 2.8 (although it addresses only those individuals whose certification as qualified for ministry is addressed by Bylaw 2.7.1—not those, for example, received via colloquy).

In the context of Bylaw sections 2.7 and 2.8, the term *graduate* functions not simply as an equivalent for "one who has 'received an earned academic degree,'" as the question seemed to imply, but also for "one who will have, at the effective time of first call, 'satisfactorily completed the prescribed course of studies' and 'received [a] diploma[]' in a program approved by the Synod to lead to qualification for ordained or commissioned ministry" (Bylaw 2.8.1 [a]). These passages are clearly parallel, so that the more precise sense of the latter must be understood to impart a specific sense to the former term *graduate*.

Adding to this interpretive context, historically and in a variety of programs, faculties of the seminaries, colleges, and universities of the Synod have certified as qualified for first placement many individuals who have received theological or vocational *diplomas* that were not equated to or connected with *academic degrees*. Examples for ordained ministry include those who complete the Specific

Ministry Program (which does not lead to a degree at either seminary), the Residential Alternate Route program, the General Pastor Certification Program, or a program of studies through the Ethnic Immigrant Institute of Theology or the Center for Hispanic Studies. Among the auxiliary office programs, the Director of Church Ministries Program at Concordia University Wisconsin leads to a certificate, not a degree, but nonetheless also to certification for this commissioned ministry.

Question 2: Other than pursuant to the colloquy process outlined in Bylaw 3.10.3, may the faculty of an authorized educational institution of Synod declare a candidate qualified for a first call, where such candidate is not a graduate of such institution? If so, are there any limitations on such authority?

Opinion: The answer to Question 1 also answers the first part of Question 2. The commission has clarified the meaning of the term *graduate* to mean “one who will have, at the effective time of first call, ‘satisfactorily completed the prescribed course of studies’ and ‘received [a] diploma[]’ in a program approved by the Synod to lead to qualification for ordained or commissioned ministry” (Bylaw 2.8.1 [a]). In this sense of the term *graduate*, as regards the individuals discussed in Bylaw 2.7.1, the faculty of an educational institution of the Synod may declare qualified for a given office of the ministry only a *graduate* of a program of *their respective institution* that is approved by the Synod to admit graduates to the respective office of ministry. Such a program could be a joint program between two institutions of the Synod operating through their respective boards of control, with the faculty of the *appropriate* institution (that is, of the participating institution authorized by the Synod to prepare graduates for the particular ministry in question) declaring the candidate qualified for a call.

The certification of a candidate as qualified for placement includes not only the satisfactory completion of an academic program but also the factors indicated in Bylaw 2.8.1 (b) and (c), and in the case of seminary students, (d). The appropriateness of a faculty certifying a candidate rests, therefore, not only on the faculty’s connection with a given academic program approved by the Synod as leading to ordained or commissioned ministry but also on that faculty’s ability to certify the candidate’s fitness for ministry in these other regards. The faculty of “the respective educational institution” (Bylaw 2.7.1), that is, “the appropriate faculty” (Bylaw 2.8.1 [c]), must know the candidate well enough to certify that the candidate has indicated “complete dedication to the ministry and evidenced a readiness for service in the church” (Bylaw 2.8.1 [b]) and that the candidate “will meet all personal, professional, and theological requirements of those who hold the office of ministry to which the individual aspires” (Bylaw 2.8.1 [c]).

As to the second part of Question 2, *supra*, “limitations on such authority,” the commission finds that the instituting of courses of study is to be coordinated by the Concordia University System (Bylaws 3.6.6.1; 3.6.6.5 [c]; and 3.6.6.6 [c]) and as to the seminaries, by their respective Board of Regents (Bylaws 3.10.5.1 and 3.10.5.5. [c]), with new routes subject to review by the Pastoral Formation Committee and approval by the convention (Bylaw 3.10.4.1–2) prior to their implementation by the seminaries.

The commission refers Bylaw sections 2.7 and 2.8 to the COH for review in light of this opinion and potential related questions.

Additional Requirements for Convention Attendance (22-2978)

Minutes of April 8–9, 2022

By an email of Jan. 13, 2022, an individual member of the Synod, an ordained minister, requested an opinion on the following question, with regard to which, pursuant to Bylaw 3.9.2.2 (b), input was solicited from the President, Board of Directors, and Chief Administrative Officer of the Synod, as well as from the presidents and boards of directors of the districts of the Synod. The commission replies as follows:

Question: Is it consistent with the Constitution and Bylaws of the Synod for a district to select a convention venue that forbids admission of delegates unless they satisfy certain additional requirements (e.g., presenting proof of coronavirus vaccination status, negative test results, or wearing a mask)?

Opinion: Const. Art. XII 10 establishes that at the meetings of districts of the Synod, “every member congregation or multi-congregation parish is *entitled* to two votes, one of which is to be cast by its pastor and the other by the lay delegate elected and deputed by the congregation or parish.” This belongs to the realm of right and not merely of privilege.

Bylaws specify in very broad terms how a district is to prepare accommodations for a convention of its congregations. Bylaw 4.2.1 (a) indicates that the conventions of the districts are governed by the Bylaws of the Synod for its conventions insofar as these are applicable. Among these, Bylaw 3.1.9 (j) describes the ways by which a date and site of a Synod convention can be determined. Details are few; where a district suggests a site for the Synod convention, care is taken to determine “minimum requirements” from the convention manager so that the number of delegates and facilities required can be accommodated (1969 Res. 11-09). It may be inferred that for a district convention the arrangements must reasonably accommodate the delegates, voting and advisory, entitled to attend (Const. Art. XII 10). What must be accommodated is a meeting of all delegates as “a single official gathering in one room or area” (*Robert’s* [11th ed.], 97:11–14), the “constitutional convocation” and presence of a quorum (Const. Art. XII 14) in a “churchly deliberative assembly,” a “context allowing full and free debate, fellowship, and personal interaction” (CCM Op. 20-2938).

Within these broad bounds, Const. Art. XII 12 specifies that “the districts are independent in the administration of affairs which concern their district only, it being understood, however, that such administration shall always serve the interests of the Synod.” Any choice of venue brings with it inherent burdens for delegates, some predictable and some not, which may even be suffered unevenly. In making of a number of unavoidable choices about convention venue, the district balances the interests of all its congregations and, in a manner serving their collective interest, as the Constitution requires, facilitates their convention.

Although in a different context, the issue of whether a burden placed on voting members with respect to convention participation is appropriate has been tested by this commission. In Op. 12-2649, following previous opinions, the commission found that “delegate attendance at a district convention cannot be contingent upon payment of a registration fee.” With regard to that specific question, the commission found that the presenting issue was directly addressed in the Constitution and Bylaws of the Synod, so that it

could respond definitively to the question without entering into findings of fact or balancing of interests.

With regard to the present question, the commission finds that the Constitution and Bylaws of the Synod—while they do provide the framework for balancing of interests in this circumstance—do not dispositively address the specific presenting circumstance. This commission is not charged to engage in findings of fact or to evaluate or correct the balancing of interests where the Constitution, Bylaws, and resolutions of the Synod are not dispositive of the matter. In such a situation, should a congregation be concerned that its district may not have balanced the issues involved in accommodating its convention “in the interest of the Synod” (Const. Art. XII 12), redress is available: by addressing the concern to the district board of directors; by addressing (albeit, likely after the fact) an overture to a convention of the Synod or district; by requesting the President of the Synod to call the issue up for the district’s review (Bylaw 3.3.1.2 [c]); or by engaging the dispute resolution process of the Synod (Bylaw section 1.10).

District President’s Provision of Information to Calling Congregations (22-2980)

Minutes of May 2, 2022

By emails of Jan. 25 and Feb. 3, 2022, two individual members of the Synod, ordained ministers, requested an opinion of the commission on the following questions, with regard to which, pursuant to Bylaw 3.9.2.2 (b), input was solicited from the district presidents and Praesidium of the Synod. The questions are as follow:

Question 1: When a vacant congregation of the Synod is in the process of calling a pastor and requests information on an ordained member of the Synod in good standing, whether a member of its own district or of another district:

- (a) Does the president of the congregation’s district have the authority under the Constitution and Bylaws of the Synod to refuse to supply the congregation with the requested information regarding that individual ordained member of the Synod who is a member of the district of which he is president?
- (b) If the individual ordained member of the Synod for whom information is requested is from a different district than the congregation’s, does the district president of that other district of which that ordained minister is a member have the authority under the Constitution and Bylaws of the Synod to refuse to supply the requested information to the district president of the district of which the congregation is a member, who will in turn provide the information to the congregation requesting it?

Question 2: If the answer is yes, the district president may refuse to provide information, what basis do the Constitution and Bylaws of the Synod specify that would authorize this refusal?

Question 3: What limitations, if any, do the Constitution and Bylaws of the Synod place on a member congregation of the Synod wishing to call an ordained minister currently on the roster of the Synod?

Opinion Background: The questions presented to the commission are part of the larger question of the relationship between the

Synod and its member congregations. In answering the questions, the commission will first review the relation of a congregation with the Synod, particularly as it relates to the calling of a pastor by a congregation.

Article II of the Constitution specifies that every member of the Synod must accept, without reservation, the Scriptures as the only rule and norm of doctrine and the Lutheran Confessions as found in the Book of Concord as a true exposition of the above.

Article III of the Constitution lists the objectives of the Synod, four of which directly pertain:

Article III Objectives

The Synod, under Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions, shall—

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; ...
8. Provide evangelical supervision, counsel, and care for pastors, teachers, and other professional church workers of the Synod in the performance of their official duties;
9. Provide protection for congregations, pastors, teachers, and other church workers in the performance of their official duties and the maintenance of their rights.

Article VI of the Constitution lists conditions for membership in the Synod, two of which pertain:

Article VI Conditions of Membership

Conditions for acquiring and holding membership in the Synod are the following:

1. Acceptance of the confessional basis of Article II.
3. Regular call of pastors and any commissioned ministers and regular election of lay delegates by the congregations, as also the blamelessness of the life of such.

C.F.W. Walther presented a series of theses in 1879 at the first convention of the Iowa District of the Synod which are illustrative of this constitutional material. At that time, a large number of the pastors who were members of the Synod were serving independent congregations, and one of the purposes of Walther’s essay was to convince these independent congregations that it was safe and in their best interest for them to join the Synod. The first three of Walther’s theses on “The Duties of an Evangelical Synod” expand on the articles of the Constitution mentioned above and focus on the duty of the Synod toward its member congregations. The congregations can expect to receive from the Synod the following: help in remaining faithful to the Scriptures and the Confessions; assistance in obtaining faithful pastors; and protection from pastors who would cause harm to the congregation. The pastors, in turn, can expect to be supported (protected) as well, as they faithfully carry out their duties within the congregations.

Thesis I

Its primary duty is to be faithful to the Confessions in word and deed, and therefore it must

- a. without reservation confess the creeds of the Evangelical Lutheran Church;
- b. accept only pastors, teachers, and congregations that are faithful to the Confessions;
- c. supervise the confessional faithfulness of its members;
- d. practice fellowship only with church bodies that are faithful to the Confessions.

Thesis II

A second major duty is that it faithfully treat its congregations in an evangelical way, and therefore

- a. not assume a dictatorial role over them but only help them in an advisory way;
- b. assist them in acquiring upright pastors and teachers;
- c. protect them against pastors who err in doctrine, follow an offensive lifestyle, and are domineering in their office.

Thesis III

A third major duty is that it supports its pastors and teachers, and therefore

- a. counsel them;
- b. support them in the proper conduct of their office;
- c. defend them against unjust treatment.

Article VII of the Constitution, finally, speaks of the advisory nature of the Synod:

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.
2. Membership of a congregation in the Synod gives the Synod no equity in the property of the congregation.

The meaning of this article is often misunderstood and has engendered significant debate. When it speaks of the advisory nature of the Synod, it does not mean that the Synod is advisory to its own administrative structure, which includes districts. Districts have been created by the Synod and are the Synod itself in that place, which means that the Constitution, Bylaws, and resolutions of the Synod are binding on the districts (Const. Art. XII 1–2, 12; Bylaws 4.1.1–4.1.1.2). A district is not free to disregard these.

With regard to its individual members and congregations, the Synod does not exercise legislative or coercive powers. This means that if

a congregation or individual member violates one of the conditions of membership in the Synod, the Synod cannot force compliance. The means by which the Synod addresses such a violation is by removal of the individual or congregation from membership in the Synod. Anything more is explicitly disclaimed: “In its relation to its members the Synod is not an ecclesiastical government exercising legislative or coercive powers.” The Synod's relation to its member congregations, specifically, is made yet more clear: “with respect to the individual congregation's right of self-government it is but an advisory body.” Here maintained is not only the congregation's ability to act freely, without any possibility of the Synod directing at law or coercing its action, but explicitly disclaimed, in matters of the congregation's self-government, is the Synod's ability to do anything more than to *advise* the congregation. While the term *self-government* is not further defined, a universally recognized and affirmed aspect of this self-government is the right of a congregation to call the pastor it wants. This it can do, of course, as the Synod is “not an ecclesiastical government exercising legislative or coercive powers.” But here, provided the congregation does not in so doing violate its agreed-to terms of membership in the Synod (for example, by calling and/or being served by a man who is not on the roster of the Synod, Bylaws 2.5.2, 4), the congregation cannot be removed from membership for acting otherwise than as advised (for example, by seeking but ultimately discounting the advice of a district president as to an eligible ordained minister the congregation might call).

Thus, in terms of calling a pastor the limits placed on a congregation are minimal:

1. Article VI 3 requires the regular call of pastors (“This is generally assumed to include such requirements as proper eligibility of the candidate, proper notification for the call meeting, the presence of a legal quorum in the call meeting, and election by the congregation itself.” Ag. 438, Minutes of June 7–8, 1973)
2. Bylaw 2.5.2 limits, as a condition of membership in the Synod, a congregation to calling and being served only by ordained ministers who are on the roster of the Synod. This requirement flows out of Article II of the Constitution, to guarantee faithfulness to the Scriptures and Confessions.
3. Bylaw 2.5.1 requires a congregation to seek the counsel of its district president when it is in the process of calling a pastor (his corresponding duty to provide such counsel being found in Bylaw 4.4.5 [a]). Because of the relationship of the Synod to the congregation as expressed in Article VII this counsel is *advisory*. Indeed, it is some of the extremely valuable *advice*, the “calling of servants of the Word [being] a most important matter” (1945 *Handbook*, 56, cited from the 4th Synod Handbook [1899], 10, 11, 147; 1863 Proceedings, 31), that motivates a congregation to join and remain a member of the Synod (Walther's second thesis, above).
4. Bylaw 2.13.1 precludes a congregation calling a specific ministry pastor to a ministry context for which he has not been trained and certified by his district president.
5. Bylaws 2.13.2.2 (b) and 2.13.4.2 (c) deal with individual members with restricted or suspended status. While technically such an individual could be *called* by a congregation, which is itself perhaps unaware of the status, they cannot *accept* such a call until their restricted or suspended status has been removed.

The commission now responds to the questions posed, first to Questions 1 (a) and 2, regarding potential calls within a district; then to Questions 1 (b) and 2, regarding potential calls across district lines; and, finally, to Question 3:

Question 1: When a vacant congregation of the Synod is in the process of calling a pastor and requests information on an ordained member of the Synod in good standing, whether a member of its own district or of another district:

- (a) Does the president of the congregation's district have the authority under the Constitution and Bylaws of the Synod to refuse to supply the congregation with the requested information regarding that individual ordained member of the Synod who is a member of the district of which he is president?

Question 2: If the answer is yes, the district president may refuse to provide information, what basis do the Constitution and Bylaws of the Synod specify that would authorize this refusal?

Opinion (Questions 1 [a] and 2, as regard potential calls within a district): The Constitution and Bylaws of Synod do not address the calling process in detail, nor the role of the district president in it.

The primary duty of a district president is to exercise ecclesiastical supervision over the congregations and individual members of the district of which he is president (Const. Art. XII 6–7; XI B 1–3; see definition of *ecclesiastical supervision* in Bylaw 1.2.1 [j]). An integral part of his being ecclesiastical supervisor of the congregations requires the district president to be aware of the conditions of the congregations in his district, to “advise the congregations of his district as to the calling of ordained and commissioned ministers, give counsel, and respond to requests and inquiries” (Bylaw 4.4.5 [a]). An additional part of his duties is *maintaining the official rosters of his district* (Bylaw 4.4.7), which includes knowing the fitness for ministry and standing of all those ordained and commissioned ministers on the roster of his district.

A congregation, as a condition of membership in Synod (Bylaw 2.5.4), may call and be served only by ordained ministers or candidates who have been admitted to the roster of Synod (Bylaws 2.5.2). A congregation is also required “to seek the counsel of [its own] district president when calling” (Bylaw 2.5.1). This counsel given by the district president flows from the district president's authority and responsibility to “exercise supervision over the doctrine, life and administration of office” of the ordained ministers of his district and to “acquaint [himself] with the religious conditions of the congregations of [his] district” and, thereupon, to “advise, admonish, and reprove” (Const. Art. XII 6–7; XI B 3; see further Const. Art. II and III 1–2, 8–9). A calling member congregation of the Synod is required to seek (Bylaw 2.5.1) and has a corresponding right to expect (Bylaw 4.4.5 [a]) its district president's counsel on candidates under consideration regarding their doctrine, “blamelessness of life” (Const. Art. VI 3), administration of office—in other words, for their fitness for ministry—and in specific regard to their suitedness to the “religious condition of the [specific] congregation.” Advice received must be of sufficient nature and scope to allow the congregation to make an informed decision regarding whether or not it is *advisable* to extend a divine call to a given eligible man. This is inherent in the fact that, regarding the call process, there is, relative to the congregational duty to seek counsel (Bylaw 2.5.1), a corresponding duty of the district presi-

dent to advise (Bylaw 4.4.5 [a]), as just described. Bylaw 4.4.5, furthermore, says that a district president shall “respond to requests and inquiries” (Bylaw 4.4.5[a]).

A district president may have good reason for advising a congregation not to call a candidate who is *eligible* to be called but not recommended, which is integral to his role to advise and counsel. Every district president is free and, indeed, bound to offer the calling congregation his prayerful wisdom, experience, knowledge, and counsel to persuade the calling congregation why such candidate is not recommended. However, a district president *must assume only such rights as have been expressly conferred upon him by the Synod* (Const. Art. XI A 1), and, while there may be wise and pastoral reasons for recommending why a requested candidate is not recommended, there is no authority in the Constitution and Bylaws of the Synod given to the district president of a calling congregation—perhaps intending to prevent such a call—to withhold the basic adequate information described above on any ordained minister of the Synod. The district president cannot prevent a congregation from acting unadvisedly, but given his duty to advise, his denial of information must not be the precipitant of such an unadvised act.

There are three qualifiers on this basic duty:

- First, if information were to be requested on a specific ministry pastor who in the determination of the involved district president(s) with regard to a call “for which he has not been certified” (i.e., that is outside the specific ministry context for which he has been trained), it suffices for the district president simply so to indicate to the calling congregation. Such a call not only may not be accepted by the SMP pastor; it may not even be offered to him, and the congregation is therefore not permitted to extend it (Bylaw 2.13.1).
- Second, information may be requested on an ordained minister whose standing on the roster of the Synod would not allow him to *accept* the call; that is, he may be on either restricted (Bylaw 2.13.2.2 [b]) or suspended (Bylaw 2.13.4.2 [c]) status. Here, the man's status and the reasons for it—particularly in the case of restricted status, which may be investigative in nature, regarding allegations not yet fully resolved as true or false—may not be known to a congregation, and a district president may not be able fully to share them.
- Third, information may be requested on a man who is neither restricted nor suspended but whose personal or family circumstances would reasonably preclude his acceptance of a call at a given time. These may be of a very private nature, such as a particular health or financial issue being addressed at a given time, and may not be fully disclosed by the pastor in the usual information provided to a calling congregation.

In these second and third cases, the district president has responsibility as ecclesiastical supervisor both to the congregation and to the man concerned. He must, in providing counsel, balance the interests of the congregation's call process and of the reputation of the restricted or otherwise constrained ordained minister. While the commission cannot prescribe the exact means of doing this in every case, it appears to the commission that there are approaches that provide adequate counsel and protect the reputation of the man concerned.

The district president might, for example, consult with a restricted or suspended ordained minister at the time status is initiated, as part of his ministry to him (Bylaw 2.13.2.4; 2.13.4.3 [b]), advising the

man that he cannot accept a call while on said status and inviting his statement that while on said status any congregation requesting information on the pastor will be informed that the ordained minister himself has indicated that he is unable to consider a call at this time. This simple statement, from the minister himself, would suffice as counsel to any potentially calling congregation if conveyed by the district president. The minister's failure to provide such a statement might require the district president to reveal to an inquiring congregation the existence of status prohibiting acceptance of a call.

The same approach might be taken with a pastor not on restricted or suspended status but dealing with personal circumstances that would make the extension of a call to him, or his acceptance of it, inadvisable. Either when information on the pastor is requested or when the district president becomes aware of such circumstances, he could consult with the pastor and ask him if he would like information shared with an inquiring congregation, perhaps making it clear that if he does share the information, he will have to be forthright about circumstances rendering a call inadvisable. If the pastor prefers that the information not be shared, in this instance the district president may indicate to the congregation simply that the ordained minister has himself indicated that he is unable to consider a call at this time. In such a case, it cannot be the decision of the district president whether or not to provide information, but the decision of the involved pastor.

The Commission notes that a district president has responsibilities toward not just the calling congregation but all congregations under his care. Concern for a congregation presently being served, perhaps only for a short time, by the pastor whose information has been requested, may weigh heavily in the advice the district president gives the congregation that is considering extending the call. The district president may, for instance, know that the congregation currently being served by the candidate may have had unusual difficulties in filling a vacancy prior to the candidate and the candidate is relatively new in his position. In such a situation, having the candidate accept a new call may lead to substantial harm to the other congregation under the district president's care. The commission does not find here substantial ground to deny information on the pastor, though there is every reason to provide, with that information, advice and counsel that will encourage the calling congregation to act in Christian love and due regard for the congregation being served. There may even be reason for the district president to proceed with the pastor concerned as described above, to seek his determination that he cannot, in care for his present congregation, consider another call at this time, which might be conveyed to the calling congregation and suffice as information. It is observed that simple denial of information in such a circumstance, as presently occurs with some frequency in some districts of the Synod, almost as a matter of course, *is not effective at preventing the call of such pastors by other congregations*, as the congregations are able, having sought advice, to act despite its not being provided.

In summary, because the Synod is not advisory either to the district or to the district president who is an officer of the district, the district president does not have the discretion to ignore a congregation's request for information. This was already indicated in CCM Op. 2069 (March 2, 1997). The opinion specifically states that a district president does not have the authority "to edit a vacant congregation's call list by refusing to provide personal information on some individuals, even when that information is specifically requested by the congregation." Here the district president provides

advice central to the congregation's very purpose in joining and maintaining membership in the Synod. In the administration of this duty, what he does must "serve the interests of the Synod" (Const. Art. XII 12). In contrast, because the Synod as well as the district, as "Synod itself performing the functions of the Synod" (Bylaw 4.1.1.1), is advisory to the congregation (Const. Art. VII 1), the congregation does have the ability to ignore the advice given by the district president, or to act in the absence of his advice, where it has been sought diligently but not provided, although it might prove very foolish to have done so.

Question 1: When a vacant congregation of the Synod is in the process of calling a pastor and requests information on an ordained member of the Synod in good standing, whether a member of its own district or of another district:

- (b) If the individual ordained member of the Synod for whom information is requested is from a different district than the congregation's, does the district president of that other district of which that ordained minister is a member have the authority under the Constitution and Bylaws of the Synod to refuse to supply the requested information to the district president of the district of which the congregation is a member, who will in turn provide the information to the congregation requesting it?

Question 2: If the answer is yes, the district president may refuse to provide information, what basis do the Constitution and Bylaws of the Synod specify that would authorize this refusal?

Opinion (Questions 1 [b] and 2, as regard potential calls from another district): Districts are not independent entities but have been created by the Synod "in order more effectively to achieve its objectives and carry on its activities" (Const. Art. XII 1–2, 12; Bylaws 4.1.1–4.1.1.2). Therefore, while a district president is the ecclesiastical supervisor only of his own district, because districts as a whole are intended for the good of the whole Synod, when a congregation requests information regarding an ordained minister who is a member of another district, the district president of that district is also required to provide such information to the district president of the congregation which requested the information, who will in turn convey it to the requesting congregation. The guidance for the rare situation where discretion is advised, mentioned above, would apply here also.

Question 3: What limitations, if any, do the Constitution and Bylaws of the Synod place on a member congregation of the Synod wishing to call an ordained minister currently on the roster of the Synod?

Opinion: Other than for the restrictions on where specific ministry pastors can serve, the only absolute restriction on congregations if they want to retain their membership in the Synod (cf. Bylaw 2.5.4; Const. Art. XIII) is Bylaw 2.5.2, that they call and be served only by ordained ministers on the roster of the Synod. In addition, Bylaw 2.5.1 indicates that the congregation is required to "seek the counsel of the appropriate district president when calling ordained or commissioned ministers." This is no perfunctory matter and expects and requires that the congregation and district president will have a robust conversation not only about the candidates about whom information has been requested but also about the *religious condition* of the calling congregation. For a congregation to

refuse to do so would be a violation of this bylaw. While it might be unwise to do so, a congregation is not obligated to follow the counsel received and may call any ordained minister on the roster of the Synod, except for SMP pastors not certified as having the proper scope of preparation. Were a congregation to call a pastor on restricted or suspended status, that pastor would not be able to accept such a call until the restricted or suspended status had been removed. Again, the commission's Op. 2069 (March 7, 1997) states that since the Synod is only advisory to the congregation with respect to self-government, a congregation may call any individual who is in good standing on the roster of the Synod.

Bylaw Requirements for University and Seminary Calls (22-2988)

Minutes of November 4–5, 2022

By an email of March 8, 2022, a member congregation of the Synod requested an opinion of the commission on the following question, regarding which, pursuant to Bylaw 3.9.2.2 (b), input was solicited from the President of the Synod, the presidents of Synod universities and seminaries, the executive director of the LCMS Office of Pastoral Education, and the president of the Concordia University System. Several letters describing historical practice and institutional perspectives were received, for which the commission is grateful.

Background: Bylaw 1.2.1 (a)(1) provides that “Agencies [of the Synod] include each board, commission, council, seminary, university, college, district, Concordia Plan Services, and each synodwide corporate entity.”

Bylaw 2.5.1 provides that “Congregations, association schools, agencies, auxiliaries, and recognized service organizations of the Synod shall seek the counsel of the appropriate district president when calling ordained or commissioned ministers.”

Bylaw 2.5.1 (b) provides that “An agency, auxiliary, or recognized service organization shall seek the counsel of the district president who would, by virtue of the call, 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.”

Bylaw 3.11.1 provides in relevant parts, “(a) Members of the Synod who are appointed to positions requiring an ordained minister or a commissioned minister shall receive a solemn call.” “(b) Other ordained or commissioned ministers appointed to positions in the Synod shall be affirmed by the respective board or commission through a solemn call.”

Question 1: Under Bylaw 3.11.1 (b), does the wording “shall be affirmed by the respective board or commission through a solemn call” mean that nonfaculty staff members of a university or seminary who are on the ordained or commissioned roster of Synod and who are appointed to positions that do not require ordained or commissioned ministers must receive a call that is approved at some point by the board of regents of the institution?

Question 2: Under Synod Bylaw 3.11.1 (a), must calls for nonfaculty staff members of a university or seminary who are on the ordained or commissioned roster of Synod and who are appointed to positions that do require an ordained or commissioned minister be

approved at some point by the board of regents of the institution?

Opinion: Bylaw 3.11.1 is not the primary bylaw governing the respective roles of a board of regents and seminary or university administration in the appointment of faculty, staff, or administration (see, e.g., Bylaws 3.10.5.5 [g]; 3.10.5.6 [j]; 3.10.5.7.1; 3.10.5.7.3; 3.10.6.4 [a][4–6], [g], [i][5, 8]; 3.10.6.6 [j]; 3.10.6.7.3). These bylaws render certain actions, such as the appointment of faculty or major administrators (Bylaws 3.10.5.5 [g] and 3.10.6.4 [g]), non-delegable; that is, the specific performance required by Synod Bylaw of the board cannot be delegated by policy or otherwise to the administration or to any other group. Some of the “nonfaculty” positions described by Bylaw 3.11.1 fall under those requirements but others likely do not.

The board of regents of each seminary or university *governs* the institution, subject to bylaws like the above and other “general policies set by the Synod” (Bylaws 3.10.5; 3.10.6). It is the “board of directors” of the agency, as referred to in Bylaw 3.11.1, capable of setting policy, within the bounds set by the Bylaws of the Synod and the general human resources policies of the Synod (Bylaw 1.5.5), governing all employment and appointment by the agency. With regard to those positions for which specific board performance (appointment or participation in the appointment process) is not required by Synod Bylaw, for example, nonadministrative, nonfaculty staff, a board of regents should determine in policy how its institution will exercise the requirements of Bylaw 3.11.1 (a) and (b), as appropriate to the circumstance.

The language of Bylaw 3.11.1 derives from that adopted in 1989 Res. 5-06A, “To Revise Bylaws re Synodical Personnel,” which noted the authority of the Synod Board of Directors (and, derivatively, of other governing boards) “to establish personnel policies in compliance with existing laws and regulations on hiring, tenure, promotion, termination, retirement, and salary administration.” In the long-standing, ordinary practice of corporate Synod and many agencies, boards—where not contrary to other Bylaw requirements—regularly delegate the authority to fill certain positions, whether requiring a called minister (as in those positions described in Bylaw 3.11.1 [a]) or open to called ministers who may, by virtue of exercise of their ministry in the position, require affirmation of their appointment through solemn call (as in those described in Bylaw 3.11.1 [b]), to the responsible, subordinate officer or executive director. If authorized by policy or resolution of the respective governing board to fill such a position, the responsible officer or director may do so, fulfilling as the board’s delegate any applicable requirements under Bylaw 3.11.1 (a–b), for example, to compose and sign call documents on the board’s behalf and as its delegate. In the absence of such delegation, the performance of Bylaw 3.11.1 remains with the respective governing board.

It is the opinion of the commission, further, that it is not the intention of the language of Bylaw 3.11.1 (b) to require, for positions where a call is incidental to employment, a higher degree of specific board performance than would be required for positions where a call is inherent to the position (i.e., under Bylaw 3.11.1 [a]). The authority over all employment by an agency ultimately vests in its board and other bylaws may require specific board performance of aspects of appointment or call to certain positions (such as those noted above with regard to faculty and administrators, as relevant to universities and seminaries). Bylaw 3.11.1, however, does not prevent a board from delegating, by policy or resolution, the actions required by Bylaw 3.11.1, for example, composing and

signing appropriate call documents, to responsible administration, as its concern in this regard is simply that rostered members of the Synod filling the positions as indicated receive calls as appropriate.

Question 3: Under Synod Bylaw 2.5.1, must a university or seminary seek the counsel of the appropriate district president when calling ordained or commissioned ministers for nonfaculty staff positions?

Opinion: Bylaw 2.5.1 requires every agency of the Synod, including each university and seminary, when calling any ordained or commissioned minister, to consult with the district president designated by subparagraphs (b) and (c).

Synod Convention Advisory Delegate Process (22-2999)

Minutes of November 4–5, 2022

By an email of Aug. 29, 2022, a district secretary of the Synod requested an opinion on the following questions, regarding the scope of participation and eligibility in the process for selection of Synod convention advisory delegates. The questions, all of which regard selection of advisory delegates *to the Synod convention*, have been edited by the commission:

Question 1: Does the second sentence of Bylaw 3.1.3 limit which ordained ministers are eligible to be selected as an ordained advisory delegate or to participate in the vote selecting ordained advisory delegates to “those ordained ministers not eligible for election as a voting delegate under Bylaw 3.1.2.1 (d)”?

Opinion: Yes, the second sentence of Bylaw 3.1.3, in constraining *which* ordained ministers are to *be represented* by advisory delegates at the Synod convention, specifically excludes any ordained ministers eligible to be elected as voting delegates [to the Synod convention] under Bylaw 3.1.2.1 (d) from those ordained ministers eligible (i) to be counted for the ratio computation described in Bylaw 3.1.3.1, (ii) to *be* advisory delegates to the Synod convention, and (iii) to *vote for* the ordained advisory delegates to the Synod convention. It reiterates in part what is stated in Const. Art. IX 2, the remainder of which (that also excluded are those eligible to be selected in some respect as advisory *representatives*) is stated in Bylaw 3.1.3.1 (c).

Question 2: Who is to be counted in the computation of the “one advisory delegate for every 60” ratios of Bylaw 3.1.3.1?

Opinion: One uniform standard determines who is to be represented and therefore, naturally, who is counted in the ratio computation, who is eligible to be selected, and who is eligible to vote for advisory delegates: that standard set forth in Const. Art. IX 2: “such individual members [ordained and commissioned ministers, in their respective groups] as are [i] ineligible to represent congregations as voting members and [ii] ineligible to represent other entities or offices in the Synod as advisory representatives.”

In keeping with this constitutional specification, the second sentence of Bylaw 3.1.3.1 sets the general pool of those to be represented, which is further constrained by Bylaw 3.1.3.1 (c). Only those ordained and commissioned ministers are to be counted (and to be eligible to be selected or to vote in such selection) who are “not eligible for election as a voting delegate [to the Synod convention] under Bylaw 3.1.2.1 (d)” (Bylaw 3.1.3) *and* not “eligible for selection in any category under Bylaw 3.1.4” (Bylaw 3.1.3.1 [c]).

Question 3: Does the first sentence of Bylaw 3.1.3 and its definition of “advisory delegate” have any bearing on advisory representation at the Synod convention?

Opinion: No. The first sentence of Bylaw 3.1.3, present in this location for historical reasons (see further below), deals only with advisory delegates at conventions of *districts* (cf. Bylaw 4.2.3 and Const. Art. XII 10 b). It has no bearing whatsoever on what commences with the second sentence of Bylaw 3.1.3 and proceeds, following the colon, into Bylaw 3.1.3.1, namely, advisory delegations to the *Synod* convention (cf. Const. Art. IX 2).

A word about the juxtaposition of these two sentences in this bylaw paragraph is in order. The first sentence of Bylaw 3.1.3 formerly existed as its own bylaw paragraph (2016 Bylaw 3.1.3). The 2019 convention of the Synod, by Res. 9-05, amended the Constitution of the Synod to no longer speak of “advisory members,” language that had proven confusing, and instead to speak explicitly of the representation of certain individual members who did not have opportunity to participate in district or Synod conventions (in manners particular to each) in other ways (Const. Art. IX 2; Const. Art. XII 10 b). As part of 2019 Res. 9-05, the existing sentence of 2016 Bylaw 3.1.3, “Advisory members of the Synod shall 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,” was replaced with the present first sentence of 2019 Bylaw 3.1.3, “The advisory delegates of a district convention shall consist, unless they present a valid excuse, [see 2019 Res. 9-02 (D)] of all individual members of the Synod within the district, except those pastors representing member congregations as voting delegates.” The 2016 language had a clear reason for being included in Bylaw section 3.1, dealing with conventions of the Synod. Just as clearly, the changes of 2019 Res. 9-05 required the old language to be replaced; the replacement language, however, while accurate, has no relation to the conventions of the Synod and would more properly reside elsewhere.

Question 4: What is the sense of *advisory* in Bylaw 3.1.3.1: “for every 60 *advisory* ordained ministers and specific ministry pastors”?

Opinion: This language is carried over from pre-2019 language and would best be revised to reflect amendments made to the Constitution of the Synod and Bylaws 3.1.3 and 3.1.3.1 (a). Individual members are no longer described as “advisory members” as before, but are treated in relation to their participation as or representation by advisory delegates at district or Synod conventions, depending on their particular circumstances at the time. Here, based on the historical interpretation of this phrase in context, “advisory ordained ministers” means “those not eligible to be elected as voting delegates [to the Synod convention].” Here the addition, “and specific ministry pastors” is redundant, as these are ineligible to be elected as voting delegates to the Synod convention (Bylaw 2.13.1 [b][1]), but their explicit inclusion here is a valuable reminder, lest this fact be forgotten.

It is important to note that the more specific Bylaw 3.1.3.1 (c) further limits these pools, specifying that any individuals eligible for selection under any category of Bylaw 3.1.4 to be an advisory representative is to be excluded from the count.

Question 5: If a district secretary is eligible to be elected as a voting delegate or to be selected as an advisory representative under any category of Bylaw 3.1.4, does Bylaw 3.1.3.1 (c) preclude his calling the meetings

of the specified ordained and commissioned ministers to select their advisory representatives, from facilitating their nomination or election procedures as they require, or from certifying and reporting the result to the Secretary of the Synod as indicated in Bylaw 3.1.3.2?

Opinion: No. Such a district secretary may not nominate or vote (i.e., *participate*) in the election process, but he may *facilitate* the process as specifically charged (to call the meetings of such commissioned and ordained minister groupings [Bylaw 3.1.3.1 (a)], to receive and certify the results [Bylaw 3.1.3.2 (a)]), and as needed to effect good order, to facilitate such meetings (particularly in the case of an electronic meeting conducted under Board of Directors policy [Bylaw 3.1.3.1 (a)]).

The CCM notes that potential unclarity in Bylaws 3.1.3–3.1.3.1 has been referred also to the COH and refers this opinion to its sister commission.

Educational Institution Advisory Representatives, Bylaw 3.1.4.2 (a) (22-3000)

Minutes of November 4–5, 2022

The CCM has received a request for an opinion regarding Bylaw 3.1.4.2 (a). The Bylaw reads:

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.

Question: Since the bylaw does not specify how the representative of the faculty is to be selected, a variety of possibilities have been used or proposed for making this selection, such as these:

1. Only LCMS rostered faculty members vote.
2. All full-time faculty members, a group which includes nonrostered LCMS faculty, some of whom are members of LCMS congregations, but also many non-Lutheran faculty, vote.
3. LCMS rostered faculty members and faculty members who are members of an LCMS congregation vote.
4. The president of the university, or other administrator, appoints.
5. The selection is made by the university board of regents.
6. The selection is made by seniority or rotation or other “automatic” means.

The commission has been asked if there is one specific method of selection that is required.

Background: The overall topic of Bylaw section 3.1 is “National Conventions” of the Synod. Bylaw 3.1.2 addresses the topic of voting delegates and their selection. Bylaw section 3.1.3 addresses the topic of advisory delegates to the convention from commissioned and ordained members of the Synod and the process of selection. Bylaw section 3.1.4 addresses the topic of other advisory representatives besides voting and advisory delegates who are authorized to

attend conventions of the Synod, representing a variety of entities and subgroups of the Synod. In addition to all officers of the Synod and all district presidents, who attend *ex officio*, this representation is divided into five categories, which are authorized and expected to send representatives to each convention of the Synod. In addition, there is a sixth category, which is permissive, allowing each district to send two youth representatives if they should so choose.

Bylaw 3.1.4.1 specifies that each board or commission shall be represented at the convention. The general rule (3.1.4.1 [a]) is that “each board or commission shall be represented by its chairman or another board or commission member and by its principal staff person.” The bylaw does not discuss how these individuals are selected, but presumably it would be by the respective board or commission. In addition, the Boards for National and International Mission are to be represented by their respective executive directors. There are four exceptions to this general rule (3.1.4.1 [b]), namely, that the Synod’s Board of Directors, the Commission on Handbook, the Commission on Constitutional Matters, and the Commission on Theology and Church Relations may be represented by as many of their members as they deem necessary. With the Board of Directors and these commissions, there is no process specified regarding how a decision would be reached, but presumably it would be by that board or commission.

Bylaw 3.1.4.2 (a) specifies that each educational institution of the Synod shall be represented by one member of its board of regents (besides the president of the district, who sits *ex officio* on the board and who is an advisory representative to the convention in his own right), by its president, and by one faculty member for each 30 members of the faculty who are members of the Synod. Bylaw 3.1.4.2 (b) specifies that fractional groups are to be disregarded except that each institution is entitled to at least one faculty representative. The bylaw does not specify by what procedure this faculty representative is to be selected or by whom.

Bylaw 3.1.4.3 (a) specifies that each foreign mission area of the Synod (but no more than 10) is to be represented by a missionary from that area who is home on leave, or if there are none home on leave, by a terminating missionary from that area. In this case, the bylaw specifies how these individuals are to be selected, which is by the Board for International Mission in consultation with the field authority for each of the fields.

Bylaw 3.1.4.4 specifies that military chaplains from each branch of the military are to be represented. 3.1.4.4 (a) indicates that these are to be selected from active-duty chaplains stationed in the United States. 3.1.4.4 (b) indicates that they are to be approved by the Board for International Mission nine months prior to the convention; however, how they are selected before they are approved by the Board for International Mission is not designated in the Bylaws.

Bylaw 3.1.4.5 specifies that each district board of directors is to be represented by one member of the board and one of the district executive staff. If a district has no executive staff, then it may select two members of the board of directors. While not specifically detailed, the implication is that the board selects which member is to represent it.

Bylaw section 3.1.3 previously addressed the selection of nonvoting advisory commissioned and ordained delegates of a district to a convention of the Synod. All commissioned ministers and all ordained ministers who are not eligible to be elected as voting delegates or eligible to attend under any category of Bylaw section 3.1.4 are eligible to be selected as nonvoting advisory delegates

from their respective category to a convention of the Synod. Bylaw 3.1.3.1 (a) specifies that each group (ordained or commissioned) selects those who will represent it, and further specifies the manner of selection.

Opinion: With the exception of the selection of representatives of the foreign mission areas of the Synod, Bylaw section 3.1.4 does not clearly and explicitly state how the representative to the conventions of the Synod is to be chosen. In the case of district boards of directors and the Synod boards and commissions, it can logically be assumed that the board or commission would make the selection, although this is not stated.

Given the process described in Bylaw section 3.1.3, in which case those whom the advisory delegate is representing make the selection, it could be inferred that in Bylaw section 3.1.4 the selection should be made by those whom the individual is representing, which in most instances would be the boards and commissions and district boards of directors they represent, unless otherwise specified. In applying this inference to the selection of faculty representatives of the educational institutions, since the number of representatives an institution is allowed is determined by the number of rostered members of the faculty, it appears that the intended conclusion is that these rostered members of the faculty should be the ones to make the selection.

However, this is clearly an inference and, since Bylaw 3.1.4.1 (a) does not address the issue of how the advisory representative of an educational institution is to be selected, the commission must conclude that Bylaw 3.1.4.1 (a) does not provide a definitive answer to the question as asked.

The commission notes that the present questions reflect the reality that the essential content of these provisions has remained static while the makeup of Concordia college and university faculties has changed substantially over time. This commission therefore recommends that the COH consider this matter and provide language that clarifies—if the above inference is to be made normative—that the representative is to be selected by those individuals being represented, which would be consistent, regarding those eligible to make the selection, with Bylaw section 3.1.3.

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Joel D. Lehenbauer, *Executive Director*

A Chaste and Decent Life:

AN UPDATE TO HUMAN SEXUALITY 1981

A REPORT OF THE COMMISSION ON THEOLOGY AND CHURCH RELATIONS
THE LUTHERAN CHURCH—MISSOURI SYNOD | DECEMBER 2022

Abbreviations used:

AC	Augsburg Confession
Ap	Apology of the Augsburg Confession
CCM	Commission on Constitutional Matters
ConcC	Concordia Commentary
CTCR	Commission on Theology and Church Relations
FCSD	Formula of Concord: Solid Declaration
KW	Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert, eds. <i>The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church</i> (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000).
LC	Large Catechism
LSB	<i>Lutheran Service Book</i> (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2006).
LSCwE	<i>Luther's Small Catechism with Explanation</i> (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2017).
LW	<i>Luther's Works, American Edition</i> , ed. Jaroslav Pelikan, Helmut T. Lehmann and Christopher Boyd Brown, 75 vols. (Philadelphia and St. Louis: Augsburg and Concordia Publishing House, 1955–).
SA	Smalcald Articles
SC	Small Catechism

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A Chaste and Decent Life:

AN UPDATE TO HUMAN SEXUALITY 1981
COMMISSION ON THEOLOGY AND CHURCH RELATIONS

PREFACE

[T]he Lord God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature. ... Then the Lord God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him." ... So 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. Then 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." Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.

Genesis 2:7, 18, 21–25 (ESV¹)

Do you not know that your body is a sanctuary of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body.

1 Corinthians 6:19–20 (CSB²)

"You are not your own." One can hardly overstate the radical implications of such a claim. It seems to fly in the face of every human instinct and desire for self-determination. How dare anyone say or think such a thing?

Christians dare to say that very thing every time we confess our creeds: "I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth." Or, as we also say it, "I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth and of all things visible and invisible." Lest there be any doubt, "heaven and earth" includes everything and everyone. Genesis 2 says that explicitly. In making our first parents and giving them the ability to procreate, God has made all of humanity. Because we are God's creatures — His creation — we are *not our own*.

Our rebellious heart, which continually longs for autonomy, hears that and feels threatened. But faith hears more clearly, knowing that since we are not our own, we belong, we have no less than life in God — we matter.

This emphatic truth is foundational for all Christian theology and, therefore, for this report on human sexuality and for its predecessor report on the same topic. In 1981 the Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR) adopted *Human Sexuality: A Theological Perspective* (HS 1981).³ The 1981 report began where Scripture begins — with the creation of man and woman by God. It thereby also assumed that we are not our own. It gave particular attention to the understanding of marriage according to biblical and traditional Christian teaching, considered particular challenges to that understanding, and concluded with seven affirmations.

¹ Unless otherwise noted, Scripture quotations are from The ESV Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

² Scripture quotations marked CSB are from the Christian Standard Bible. Copyright © 2017 by Holman Bible Publishers. Used by permission. Christian Standard Bible® and CSB® are federally registered trademarks of Holman Bible Publishers.

³ Commission on Theology and Church Relations, *Human Sexuality: A Theological Perspective* (St. Louis: The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 1981). Referenced hereafter as HS 1981.

HS 1981 has been a valuable resource for The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) and the CTCR recognizes its continuing validity. Many years have passed since the report's adoption, however, and many current assumptions about sexuality and marriage are markedly different than they were four decades ago.⁴

Consequently, Resolution 14–03A from the 2016 LCMS Convention resolved “That the CTCR be directed to update the document Human Sexuality (1981) in order to address current challenges to the estate of marriage” as part of an overall call “To Respond Compassionately to Challenges to the Biblical View of Marriage and Human Sexuality.”⁵ In 2019 Resolution 11–03A, the LCMS convention noted questions about sexual orientation and gender identity as specific challenges to biblical teaching in the realm of human sexuality. It expressed recognition of the significant work the CTCR has done in the area of marriage and human sexuality since 1981, but also urged the Commission “to prioritize the updating of the 1981 study.”⁶

Part of the ongoing value of *HS 1981* is its attention to profound truths that are implied in the biblical narratives regarding human creation. In that regard we note this insight in the report's reflection on Genesis 1:27:

“So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created *him*; male and female he created them” (GEN 1:27; italics added). The suggestion here is that it is impossible to come to know the significance of our humanity without reference to the sexual differentiation between male and female. To be human simply is to exist in this male-female duality. Consequently, it will be insufficient to say that God has created two kinds of human beings, male and female. Rather, we should say that God has created human beings for fellowship and that the male-female polarity is a basic form of this fellowship. To stress that human beings are created for community as male and female necessarily involves an equally firm insistence that they are male or female. We are created not for life in isolation but for community, a community which binds those who are different. We are not simply “persons,” however important that claim may on occasion be as a protest against inequities.⁷

The CTCR recognizes the continuing validity of these words. It is essential for the reader to understand that this report is not a “revision” of *HS 1981*, as if our teachings have changed. The Commission wholeheartedly affirms the 1981 report as a biblically faithful, confessionally orthodox consideration of our creation as male and female, particularly regarding the gift of holy marriage.

Rather than a revision, this is an update, expansion and defense of the previous report. It assumes the content of *HS 1981* and does not unnecessarily duplicate that material here. In a sense, the two should be read alongside each other. Of special note for this update are the concluding affirmations from the 1981 report, which admirably summarize the central teachings of Holy Scripture about human sexuality. Despite the many changes over the past four decades in attitudes about sexuality, Scripture's teachings are consistent.

The present report will update *HS 1981* in several ways. First, this report will reaffirm the “Affirmations” about human sexuality that close the 1981 report, while also calling attention to the new challenges that have complicated how we understand and apply those insights in a cultural climate that shares little in common with the assumptions made in 1981. Second, the report will take a detour from these pressing cultural challenges to reestablish the basic theological foundations for human sexuality that arise from a creedal, Trinitarian account of creation, fall, redemption, and sanctification. Apart from this theological framework, any specific attempt at addressing contemporary sexual ethics will simply engage in current socio-political commentary, not distinctly Christian moral theology. Third, the report will apply Martin Luther's catechetical insights of a “chaste and decent life” to the new cultural challenges raised

⁴ For a recent Lutheran treatment of sexual ethics that addresses these contemporary challenges from a biblically faithful standpoint, see the essays in Gifford A. Grobstein, ed., *Gifts of Sex: From Taboo to Delight* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2017).

⁵ The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, *Convention Proceedings 2016* (July 9–14, 2016), Res. 14-03A, pages 242–43.

⁶ The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, *Convention Proceedings 2019* (July 20–25, 2019), pages 215–16. The following documents, produced by the CTCR since *HS 1981*, were named in the resolution: *Response to Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust* (St. Louis: The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 2012) <https://files.lcms.org/d/009780019-A388-4AAS-A6DE-FC611BFA06C6/The%20Creator%20s%20Tapestry%20Scriptural%20Perspectives%20on%20Man-Woman%20Relationships%20in%20Marriage%20and%20the%20Church%20St.%20Louis%20The%20Lutheran%20Church-Missouri%20Synod%202009>; *Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity: A Response to the Synod's Request for Study and Guidance* (St. Louis: The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 2009) <https://files.lcms.org/d/009780019-A388-4AAS-A6DE-FC611BFA06C6/The%20Creator%20s%20Tapestry%20Scriptural%20Perspectives%20on%20Man-Woman%20Relationships%20in%20Marriage%20and%20the%20Church%20St.%20Louis%20The%20Lutheran%20Church-Missouri%20Synod%202009>; *Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity: A Response to the Synod's Request for Study and Guidance* (St. Louis: The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 2014), <https://files.lcms.org/d/009780019-A388-4AAS-A6DE-FC611BFA06C6/The%20Creator%20s%20Tapestry%20Scriptural%20Perspectives%20on%20Man-Woman%20Relationships%20in%20Marriage%20and%20the%20Church%20St.%20Louis%20The%20Lutheran%20Church-Missouri%20Synod%202009>; as well as the treatment of these matters in *Luther's Small Catechism with Explanation* (produced by the CTCR in cooperation with the Office of the President and published by Concordia Publishing House, 2017).

⁷ *HS 1981*, 6–7.

and a woman throughout history, that is no longer true.¹⁴ Marriage has now been legally redefined in North America, throughout most of the West, and in many parts of Latin America and Asia. Although it is now widely affirmed, the current legal understanding of marriage in the United States is incompatible with biblical teaching and, for that matter, is a novum in human history. Since 2015, legal understanding holds that the right to marry is a fundamental right protected by the Fourteenth Amendment and that a State must “license a marriage between two people of the same sex.”¹⁵ As a result of this change in how marriage is understood, the threefold ends of marriage assumed by the Commission in 1981 would be unconvincing not only to those of a secular mind,¹⁶ but also to many professing Christians today. For these reasons, the “issues” of the present go well beyond those faced in 1981 and require this update.

The seven affirmations from 1981 stand on their own and continue to reflect the stated beliefs of our Synod in its life together as a biblical and confessional church body. Nevertheless, already in 1981 the propositions would have faced significant opposition from those outside the Christian church, and today that opposition is virulent. Significant voices regularly condemn groups or organizations that promulgate or defend traditional Christian doctrines about marriage and human sexuality with a charge of hate speech.¹⁷ Simply by stating the belief that the legitimate realm for sexual activity is in male-female marriage would lead many secular American voices to charge the LCMS with hate speech against LGBT people.¹⁸ Moreover, even some within the LCMS might share that perspective and would seemingly question, if not oppose, parts of each of the seven affirmations.¹⁹

A. HS 1981: FIRST AFFIRMATION

Delight in our creation as male and female and affirm our identity as male or female

The first affirmation of *HS 1981* urges us to “delight in our creation as male and female and affirm our identity as male or female.” The report adds that the male-female creation of humanity teaches us that “To be human simply is to exist in this male-female duality.”²⁰ There is no way to be a human being other than as male or female.

Delight in our male-female sexuality could be commended in 1981 without any expectation of serious objection. Of course, many at that time would have disputed that there is a God or that He is the creator of all that exists. What was not present then, however, was any significant objection to the idea that humanity is male and female or that the sexual distinction of man and woman is cause for delight.

That is no longer the case. Today much of Western culture is greatly troubled by the assertion of Genesis — “male and female he created them” (GEN 1:27). Many deny this “binary” view. The arguments against it are to some small degree based on scientific observation, namely, the reality that a small percentage of children are born with genital

¹⁴ See, e.g., Stephanie Coontz, *Marriage, A History: How Love Conquered Marriage* (New York: Penguin Books, 2005). Coontz's detailed history of marriage is from beginning to end a story of marriage between a man and woman, even though she certainly favors same-sex marriage and is dissatisfied with specific anthropological definitions of marriage (see 24–32).

¹⁵ See Obergefell v. Hodges, 576 U.S. 644 (2015). On this, also note the Commission on Theology and Church Relations' 2006 opinion, “Legislation Regarding Same-Sex Civil Unions,” <https://files.lcms.org/d/009780019-A388-4AAS-A6DE-FC611BFA06C6/The%20Creator%20s%20Tapestry%20Scriptural%20Perspectives%20on%20Man-Woman%20Relationships%20in%20Marriage%20and%20the%20Church%20St.%20Louis%20The%20Lutheran%20Church-Missouri%20Synod%202009>.

¹⁶ For simplicity, this report uses the adjective “secular” (e.g., secular mind, secular perspective, secular thinking, etc.) as a modifier that contrasts with religious and, especially, specifically biblical thinking, values, and beliefs.

¹⁷ One example is the Southern Poverty Legal Center (SPLC), which classifies Alliance Defending Freedom as a “hate group.” The SPLC provides a list of ADL statements as rationale for declaring it a hate group. In virtually every case, the statements from ADL spokespersons reflect the kinds of concerns any biblically-committed Christian may have. See <https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/extremist-files/group/alliance-defending-freedom>.

¹⁸ This report will use LGBT as a shorthand reference for those who classify themselves as non-heterosexual. We are aware that it is now common to add additional letters to this acronym. The additional letters are imprecise in their meaning. As the University of California-Davis LGBTQIA Resource Center states on its website, the acronym LGBTQIA+ cannot be defined precisely. It has its roots in the older acronym LGB (Lesbian Gay Bisexual), but evolved, first becoming LGBT as Transgender persons were added. Q means either Queer or Questioning and I means Intersex, while A could mean Asexual, Aromantic, or Asexual. See <https://lgbqia.ucdavis.edu/education/glossary>.

¹⁹ Already in 2015, Pew Research results indicated that over half of the membership of LCMS churches thought homosexuality should be accepted, and nearly half of the same respondents supported same-sex marriage. While this does not necessarily imply belief that Christian teaching on homosexuality or on same-sex marriage is wrong, it certainly indicates changing attitudes. Pew Research Center, “Members of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod,” Religious Landscape Study, Washington, DC, May 12, 2015, <http://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/religious-denomination/lutheran-church-missouri-synod>.

²⁰ *HS 1981*, 6.

in the first section of the report in order to lay out Christian sexual ethics for understanding sexual identity, the consequences of sin for sexual desires and behaviors, and the necessity of moral integrity in all sexual activities.

I. HS 1981: REAFFIRMATIONS, NEW CHALLENGES

HS 1981 takes seriously the *embodiment* of humanity. Although the report gives full attention to marriage, it does not begin there, but with humans as male and female.⁸ The same attention to men and women as embodied beings, whether or not they are married, is evident in the report's concluding affirmations.

We may summarize the chief points of our discussion of human sexuality articulated in this report in the following propositions. We honor God and the neighbor rightly when we:

- [1] delight in our creation as male and female and affirm our identity as male or female;
- [2] see in our creation as sexual beings an intimation of our creation for fellowship and give thanks for the healing which God offers in marriage;
- [3] regard marriage as a divine, lifelong institution, ordained by God for the good of man and woman;
- [4] respect marriage as the typical, though not necessary, expression of our creation as male and female;
- [5] affirm God's will that sexual intercourse be engaged in only between a man and woman committed to a complete and lifelong sharing of their lives with one another in a marriage covenant not to be broken;
- [6] affirm that the mutual love of husband and wife, while possessing God-given meaning in and of itself, is by divine blessing ordered toward the birth of a child; and
- [7] affirm that this union of mutual love is the only proper context for human procreation.⁹

We reaffirm these seven propositions and consider them a helpful starting point for this update.¹⁰ The CTCR recognized the limitations of its 1981 report, but also offered this hope: “While the Commission recognizes that not all problems in the area of human sexuality are addressed in this report, it is hoped that the affirmations stated at the end of the study will provide guidance for Christians as they seek to order their lives as sexual beings in ways which will honor both God and their neighbor.”¹¹ Indeed, we believe the affirmations do “provide guidance” for us today as we consider some challenges of the present time.

HS 1981 was prepared with a threefold purpose: “(1) to place the order of marriage within the larger framework of human sexuality as God's creation; (2) to discuss the purposes and ends which marriage serves, as these are taught in the Scriptures and understood in the history of the church; and (3) to discuss, in the light of these purposes, certain problems or ‘issues’ which must inevitably engage the attention of those who think about human sexuality.”¹²

The CTCR's work on each of these three matters continues to offer much needed instruction and guidance. At the same time, however, new challenges have emerged that require additional consideration in each area. While the first purpose speaks of a “framework of human sexuality” (our emphasis), we note that the concept of sexuality has largely been replaced by imprecise and often agenda-driven “gender” terminology. The understanding of humanity as male and female is rejected by many.¹³ And while marriage had been universally understood to be between a man

⁸ *HS 1981*, 6.

⁹ *HS 1981*, 40. These Affirmations remain not only expressions of the CTCR, but have been endorsed by the Synod in convention. 1983 Res. 3-14 “To Commend Statement on Human Sexuality for Study” resolved that the 1981 report “be commended to the Synod for study and guidance, calling special attention to the concluding ‘Affirmations.’” The affirmations were then quoted in full as part of the resolution.

¹⁰ While the affirmations are not numbered in *HS 1981*, we have added numbers for ease of reference.

¹¹ *HS 1981*, 5.

¹² *HS 1981*, 4.

¹³ See comments on the first affirmation below.

abnormalities.²¹ Far more common, however, are those who argue that the categorization of “male and female” is a form of socio-cultural oppression that forces individuals to fit into stereotypes and demeans individuality.²²

B. HS 1981: SECOND AFFIRMATION

See in our creation as sexual beings an intimation of our creation for fellowship and give thanks for the healing which God offers in marriage

The second 1981 affirmation reminds us that we “see in our creation as sexual beings an intimation of our creation for fellowship and give thanks for the healing which God offers in marriage.” In this regard the report states: “We are created not for life in isolation but for community, a community which binds those who are different.”²³ This profound conclusion follows from our embodiment as either male or female. “Thus we do not find in the other simply an image of ourselves, an alter ego, rather, the fellowship for which we are created is a fellowship of those who are different and who yet are joined in a personal community of love.”²⁴

However, the secular appreciation for diversity is largely grounded in current intellectual and social trends, not in the Christian doctrine of creation. A Christian appreciation for diverse community has a much stronger foundation, since Christians confess that all humanity comes from a common ancestry in our first parents and that the redemptive work of Christ is emphatically promised to all people — to every tribe and nation (see GEN. 1-2; ACTS 17:26; MATT. 28:19; ROM. 1:21-24).²⁵

Moreover, the secular perspective on diversity differs in nature and scope from the Christian affirmation of the “fellowship of those who are different” as developed in *HS 1981*. The secular mind affirms not only the value of diverse races and ethnicities, but also that different forms of religiosity, a wide spectrum of moral values and virtually all “sexual orientations” are of equal value. Yet, while its view of diversity theoretically allows great moral leeway in many areas, the secular mind generally rejects moral judgments against specific sexual acts or orientations, especially when those judgments are associated with religious convictions.

When secular support for “diversity” touches such areas — for instance, judging that all religious beliefs are essentially equal or that popular standards are adequate to determine whether behavior is right or wrong — no biblical Christian or confessional Lutheran can agree. The Word of God must have authority in such matters as religious beliefs, sexual practices or the attempt to alter the sexuality God has given to us. The secular view in these matters departs dramatically from the Bible's teaching about the dignity and commonality of humanity. Human dignity flows from our common creation “from one man” (ACTS 17:26) and from the atoning work of Christ for all those fatally infected by Adam's sin (ROM. 5:12). When diverse beliefs and behavior are affirmed and encouraged without regard to our Creator's judgment about them, such a view is rebellion against God and an encouragement to sin with impunity.

We also note that in this affirmation *HS 1981* adds a thanksgiving “for the healing which God offers in marriage.” Unlike its emphasis on community, the healing that *HS 1981* speaks of in this statement is not widely affirmed, however, because the healing God offers in marriage is healing for sin and its effects, specifically for sexual sin.²⁶ This perspective is impossible for the secular mind to accept since its worldview often sees sex as little more than play — a healthy outlet between consenting persons.

²¹ For an article by a biologist who tries to make a case against binary sexuality on the basis of intersex and other genetic and hormonal abnormalities, see Lisa Brumman, “Sex Isn't Binary, and We Should Stop Acting Like It Is,” *Massive Science* (June 14, 2019), <https://massivescience.com/articles/sex-gender-intersex-transgender-identity-discrimination-title-iso/>. The CTCR addressed sexual ambiguity briefly as an excursus in its 2014 report, *Gender Identity Disorder or Gender Dysphoria*.

²² Daniel Bergner writes about an individual who wants to be neither male nor female and the counselor who encourages this. See “The Struggles of Rejecting the Gender Binary,” *New York Times* (June 4, 2019), <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/06/04/magazine/gender-nonbinary.html>. See also Penelope Eckert, “The Problem with Binaries: Coding for Gender and Sexuality,” <https://doi.org/10.1111/hc3.12113>.

²³ *HS 1981*, 7, emphasis added.

²⁴ *HS 1981*, 7.

²⁵ Biblically speaking, we are all “of one blood” as descendants of Adam. In Adam all have sinned and all are justified in the same way — through Christ. See 2019 Res. 11–04A, *Proceedings of the 2019 LCMS Convention*, 216–17.

²⁶ On the healing dimension of marriage, see Gilbert Melander, “The Sixth Commandment: Marriage as the First of Institutions,” *Luther's Large Catechism with Annotations and Contemporary Applications*, ed. John T. Pless and Larry M. Vogel (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2022), 236–40.

C. HS 1981: THIRD AFFIRMATION

Regard marriage as a divine, lifelong institution, ordained by God for the good of man and woman

The third 1981 affirmation is plainly out-of-favor if not bluntly rejected both in popular opinion and legal decisions, for several reasons. The notion that marriage is lifelong is given lip-service, but few would disagree with a widely held, yet unspoken caveat: marriage is lifelong unless a couple agrees to divorce. There is widespread acceptance of a moral standard for divorce akin to no-fault divorce laws. The idea that God gives marriage is still held by many religious people, but even they may not agree that it is for man and woman, but now accept it is for any two adults.

*Christians must confess a certain complicity with current attitudes about divorce. As divorce became more widely accepted in western society, significant numbers of Christians also chose to end their marriages.*²⁷ Congregations, in turn, have increasingly included greater numbers of divorced and remarried members. Pastors are confronted with the challenge of how to minister compassionately to the divorced without ignoring biblical teaching on the permanence of marriage.²⁸

Similarly, the West has seen dramatic growth in the acceptance of homosexual acts and same-sex marriage.²⁹ Traditional biblical teaching about homosexual acts is doubted or denied by many self-identified Christians, just as it is among the wider public.³⁰

D. HS 1981: FOURTH AFFIRMATION

Respect marriage as the typical, though not necessary, expression of our creation as male and female

In recent decades western society has not only redefined marriage but has in large measure forsaken it. The percentage of married adults in the U.S. population, for example, has declined significantly over the decades. In 2010, the University of Virginia's National Marriage Project stated that unlike the best-educated, and generally wealthiest third of the US population, the remaining two-thirds of US adults were engaged in a dramatic "retreat from marriage." The retreat, most evident among the poor and also the moderately educated economic middle group of Americans, was marked by increasing numbers of adults who did not marry, who postponed marriage, who divorced or who were deeply dissatisfied with their marriages.³¹

Moreover, in 2011, Pew Research published data indicating a precipitous drop in the percentage of married adults from 1960 to 2010.³² In 2019, Pew followed with an extensive report on "Marriage and Cohabitation in the US," providing further data that shows a weakening of marriage in American society. More Americans have cohabited than those who have married and nearly 70% of Americans view cohabitation as morally acceptable, *whether or*

*not a couple plans to marry.*³³ This decline of marriage is most certainly not the result of any commitment to forego marriage in order to live celibately for the sake of the kingdom (MATTHEW 19:12).

As with divorce, society's devaluation of marriage has impacted the church. While the percentage of Christians who cohabit before marriage is not readily available, many pastors find that the majority of young couples planning marriage in the church are already living together. In addition, pastors regularly encounter older, retired couples who choose to live together without marriage in order to avoid loss of spousal benefits from the pensions and Social Security of previous spouses. The obvious implication of the phenomenon of cohabitation in the church is that, even among those who confess the faith, many no longer hold marriage in high regard as "the typical ... expression of our creation as male and female."³⁴

E. HS 1981: FIFTH AFFIRMATION

Affirm God's will that sexual intercourse be engaged in only between a man and woman committed to a complete and lifelong sharing of their lives with one another in a marriage covenant not to be broken

Decline in the percentage of married adults does not mean that people do not hope to be married. A growing segment of the US population has rejected marriage, yet marriage remains a popular wish among far more people even though it is postponed by many and never achieved by many others who hoped for it.³⁵ This affects Christian churches both in the case of individual Christians whose sense of personal morality is guided by social trends rather than Scripture, and also for those unmarried Christians who are faithfully committed to living a chaste life despite societal views. "The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body" (1 COR. 6:19). The apostle's teaching against sexual immorality (*porneia*) is a prohibition against all sexual activity outside of marriage (see also MATTHEW 5:28 COL. 3:5, 1 THESS. 4:3-5, HEB. 13:4). This affirmation does no more than to affirm that biblical teaching. Strikingly, however, this affirmation out of the seven is most widely rejected today, since nearly 90% of American adults have had sexual intercourse prior to marriage.³⁶ Thus, the fifth affirmation flies in the face of pervasive sexual behaviors and societal assumptions. Most Americans view restricting sexual acts to marriage as an outdated moral standard and contrary to human nature.³⁷ This evidently includes the majority of self-identified Christians, including unmarried Christians who attend church on a weekly basis or more.³⁸

F. HS 1981: SIXTH AFFIRMATION

Affirm that the mutual love of husband and wife, while possessing God-given meaning in and of itself, is by divine blessing ordered toward the birth of a child

To some extent, this affirmation is still widely accepted. First, mutual love between a husband and wife is assumed in contemporary society (although a confused, overly-romanticized understanding of love is also apparent). Second,

²⁷ Institute for Family Studies, *World Family Map 2018: Mapping Family Change and Child Well-Being Outcomes*, <https://ifstudies.org/ifst-admin/resources/reports/world-family-map-2018-0518final.pdf>. Also, Bradley E. Wright, "What God Has Joined Together: Religion and the Risk of Divorce," Institute for Family Studies, August 20, 2015, <https://ifstudies.org/blog/what-god-has-joined-together-religion-and-the-risk-of-divorce>. See also Ed Stetzer, "Marriage, Divorce, and the Church: What Do the Stats Say, and Can Marriage Be Happy?" *Christianity Today* blog (February 14, 2014), at <https://churchleaders.com/pastors/pastor-articles/297689-marriage-divorce-church-stats-say-can-marriage-be-happy.html>.

²⁸ The CTCR recognizes that there are certain regrettable circumstances in which divorce is biblically permissible. See Commission on Marriage and Church Relations, *Divorce and Remarriage* (St. Louis: Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 1987).

²⁹ It is important to distinguish homosexual desire from homosexual behavior. The first, while a result of original sin in an individual, is not inherently a sinful act (yet must be resisted nonetheless as contradictory to God's will). Homosexual acts are sins of the will. See also "Homosexual Rebellion" on page 24.

³⁰ Pew Research Center, "Most Christian Groups Grow More Accepting of Homosexuality," Carly Murphy, FactTank, December 18, 2015, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/12/18/most-u-s-christian-groups-grow-more-accepting-of-homosexuality/>.

³¹ W. Bradford Wilcox, ed., *When Marriage Disappears: The New Middle America* (Charlottesville, VA: The National Marriage Project and Institute on American Values, 2010), ix-xi.

³² See Pew Research Center, "Barrelly Half of U.S. Adults Are Married—A Record Low," D'Vera Cohn, Jeffrey S. Passel, Wendy Wang, and Gretchen Livingston, *Social Trends*, Washington, DC, December 14, 2011, <https://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2011/12/14/barrelly-half-of-u-s-adults-are-married-a-record-low/>. See also, Pew Research Center, "9 Facts about Love and Marriage in America," A. W. Geiger and Gretchen Livingston, FactTank, Washington, DC, February 13, 2019, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/02/13/9-facts-about-love-and-marriage/>. Note the decline, especially, of married young adults (aged 18–34), which dropped from 59% in 1970 to 29% in 2018. US Department of Commerce, Economics and Statistics Administration, US Census Bureau, "Percent Married Among 18-to 34-Year-Olds 1970 and 2018," <https://www.census.gov/library/visualizations/2018/concept-percent-married.html>.

most people of child-bearing age desire children and marriage is still generally preferred as a better setting for child-bearing than cohabitation.³⁹

Nevertheless, the biblical foundation expressed in the sixth affirmation has been undermined by popular opinion. Of course, the decline of marriage in the West, as noted earlier, means that a widely held societal perspective sees no necessary correlation between marriage and child birth, especially among working class and impoverished Americans.⁴⁰ Moreover, the desire for children is itself in question. On the one hand, some feminist perspectives view the idea that any woman should want to be a mother as "unhealthy" because they see it leading to "a loss of self, the terrifying reality that their lives had been subsumed into the needs of their child."⁴¹ On the other hand, some couples (married or not, man-woman, or same-sex) have a strong desire to produce a child — too often viewed as project rather than as a gift of God.⁴²

G. HS 1981: SEVENTH AFFIRMATION

Affirm that this union of mutual love is the only proper context for human procreation

This affirmation follows directly from the fifth affirmation and builds on the sixth. The preceding comments on the level of disagreement with those affirmations mean that this final affirmation is also widely rejected today. Indeed, the percentage of children born outside of marriage is increasing in much of the developed world.⁴³ This phenomenon is marked, especially in secular society. Given the prevalence of unmarried sexual activity among Christian adherents, as noted above, it follows that many of them could not honestly affirm the final 1981 assertion.⁴⁴

To state it clearly again: the 1981 version of *Human Sexuality*, which has been commended repeatedly by the Synod in convention over the years, provides a biblically faithful, theologically clear, confessionally Lutheran, and ethically robust treatment of this crucial topic that concerns every human life. The present report wholeheartedly acknowledges its significance and affirms its premises and conclusions. At the same time, the culture addressed in 1981 is significantly different in terms of sexual ethics from the culture of the present. That in turn means how the 1981 report is read and applied — let alone misunderstood and responded to — will invariably be different. The new challenges that have emerged in the last four decades necessitate a different, yet ultimately complementary approach. In what follows, the present report shall establish an understanding of human sexuality founded upon a fundamentally theological basis of creation, fall, redemption and sanctification. For Lutherans, this approach revolves around our creedal understanding of the Holy Trinity as the God who creates, redeems and sanctifies. In light of that Trinitarian foundation, this report will then propose an ethic for human sexuality in the twenty-first century that finds its starting point in the Small Catechism's call for a "chaste and decent life" — a life that affirms what God has made, how we are to live chastely and decently in accordance with that creation, and how this chastity and decency apply to all Christians, married and single alike.

II. HS 2023 FOUNDATIONS: CREATURELY LIFE, EMBODIED LOVE

Chastity is the dignity of the body, the ornament of morality, the sacredness of the sexes, the bond of modesty, the source of purity, the peacefulness of home, the crown of concord. ... But chastity maintains the first rank in

³⁹ See Pew Research Center, "Birth Rates Lag in Europe and the U.S., but the Desire for Kids Does Not," Gretchen Livingston, FactTank, Washington, DC, April 11, 2014, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2014/04/11/birth-rates-lag-in-europe-and-the-u-s-but-the-desire-for-kids-does-not/>. See also Richard V. Reeves and Eleanor Kane, "Cohabiting Parents Differ from Married Ones in Three Big Ways," Brookings Institute Report, April 5, 2017, <https://www.brookings.edu/research/cohabiting-parents-differ-from-married-ones-in-three-big-ways/> and Robert Putnam, *Our Kids: The American Dream in Crisis* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2015).

⁴⁰ Wilcox, *When Marriage Disappears* and Reeves and Krass, *Cohabiting Parents Differ*.

⁴¹ Jessica Valenti, "Not Wanting Kids Is Entirely Normal: Why the Ingrained Expectation that Women Should Desire to Become Parents Is Unhealthy," *The Atlantic* (September 19, 2012), <https://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2012/09/not-wanting-kids-is-entirely-normal/262367/>.

⁴² See Melander, "The Child as a Gift of God," <https://resources.lcms.org/reading-study/cr-paper-the-child-as-a-gift-of-god>.

⁴³ Joseph Chinn, "Out-of-Wedlock Births Rise Worldwide," *YaleGlobal Online*, Yale University, March 16, 2017, <https://yaleglobal.yale.edu/content/out-of-wedlock-births-rise-worldwide>. See also Elizabeth Wildsmith, Jennifer Manlove, Elizabeth Cook, "Dramatic Increase in the Proportion of Births Outside of Marriage in the United States from 1990 to 2016," *Child Trends*, August 8, 2018, <https://www.childtrends.org/publications/dramatic-increase-in-percentage-of-births-outside-marriage-among-white-kids-and-women-with-higher-education-levels>.

⁴⁴ Sadly, it is also possible that there are Christians who find childbirth outside of marriage to be unacceptable, but avoid it by means of abortion, not chastity.

virgins, the second in those who are continent, the third in the case of wedlock. Yet in all it is glorious, with all its degrees.⁴⁵

If a report from 1981 often sounds somewhat quaint to our ears today, how much more peculiar, if not bizarre, are the foregoing words from Cyprian of Carthage (c. 200–258) about chastity. The word chastity and its adjectival form, chaste, have become largely foreign even to Christians. At the risk of obscuring our report, however, we will employ the terms, since we believe it is important to recover the concept of chastity for the church to communicate an authentically biblical approach to human sexuality. Chastity has a depth of meaning that goes beyond a narrowly conceived application to sexual moral codes. As Cyprian's words indicate, chastity, within the Christian tradition, is not a grim, sour-faced propriety or Victorian attitude. Rather, it is a particular sort of tranquil beauty and glorious purity.

We in this updated report we intend to uplift the first part of Luther's explanation of the Sixth Commandment. There he read, according to an earlier translation of Luther: "We should fear and love God so that we lead a chaste and decent life in word and deed. ..." ⁴⁶ It is noteworthy that among Luther's explanations of the Second through Tenth Commandments, the explanation to the Sixth is unique. Every other explanation lists certain sins, behavior that we should *not* do according to that commandment, then continues with positive good works that are in keeping with the commandment. The Sixth Commandment's explanation omits any list of sins but focuses instead on leading a chaste life and then on love and honor between husband and wife.

We understand this call to a "chaste and decent" (or, "sexually pure and decent") life to be for every one of the baptized. The chaste life enjoined by the Sixth Commandment is not an alternative to marriage, as if one is *either* chaste or married, but it is distinct from loving and honoring one's spouse in marriage. In the whole course of a Christian life, whether or not one ever marries, he or she is called to uphold chastity.⁴⁷

Chastity is God's gracious will and intention for us because, in a profound way, it is simply a matter of holiness — of sanctification — of the new life that is ours in Christ as it pertains to our embodiment as male and female.⁴⁸ It is in this sense that it is used in the Lutheran Confessions. Note, for example Luther's words from the Large Catechism on the Sixth Commandment:

But inasmuch as there is such a shameless mess and cesspool of all sorts of immorality and indecency among us, this commandment is also directed against every form of unchastity, no matter what it is called. Not only is the outward act forbidden, but also every kind of cause, provocation, and means, so that your heart, your lips, and your entire body may be chaste and afford no occasion, aid, or encouragement to unchastity.⁴⁹

Christian chastity of heart, lips and body is unthinkable apart from the Holy Spirit who alone can sanctify. What may well be unthinkable for fallen man or woman is the very thing that God would have us. His new creatures, to consider and strive for: "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" (ROM. 12:1).

Life as a living sacrifice is an embodied life in Christ Jesus, the true Man. The sanctifying work of the Spirit takes

⁴⁵ Cyprian of Carthage, "Of the Discipline and Advantage of Chastity," § 3, 4, ANF 5:587–92; online at <https://www.ccel.org/ccel/cyppian/cy05.html>.

⁴⁶ Explaining "You shall not commit adultery," Luther's original German reads: "Wir sollen Gott fürchten und lieben, dass wir keusch und züchtig leben in Worten und Werken, und ein jeglicher sein Gemüth lieben und ehren." The language of "chaste and decent" comes from the translation of Luther's explanation to the Sixth Commandment first authorized by the Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America in its 1912 handbook, *A Short Exposition of Dr. Martin Luther's Small Catechism* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House) and then again in *A Short Explanation of Dr. Martin Luther's Small Catechism: A Handbook of Christian Doctrine* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1943). In two subsequent editions of the Small Catechism with additional explanations, a 1986 translation of Luther has used the term "sexually pure" in place of "chaste." The LCMS continues to use the term "sexually pure" rather than "chaste" in its catechistics, for understandable reasons. See *Luther's Small Catechism with Explanation* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1991) and *Luther's Small Catechism with Explanation* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2017).

⁴⁷ For a more detailed discussion of chastity, see section III.C on page 28.

⁴⁸ Explaining "You shall not commit adultery," Luther's original German reads: "Wir sollen Gott fürchten und lieben, dass wir keusch und züchtig leben in Worten und Werken, und ein jeglicher sein Gemüth lieben und ehren." The language of "chaste and decent" comes from the translation of Luther's explanation to the Sixth Commandment first authorized by the Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America in its 1912 handbook, *A Short Exposition of Dr. Martin Luther's Small Catechism* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House) and then again in *A Short Explanation of Dr. Martin Luther's Small Catechism: A Handbook of Christian Doctrine* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1943). In two subsequent editions of the Small Catechism with additional explanations, a 1986 translation of Luther has used the term "sexually pure" in place of "chaste." The LCMS continues to use the term "sexually pure" rather than "chaste" in its catechistics, for understandable reasons. See *Luther's Small Catechism with Explanation* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1991) and *Luther's Small Catechism with Explanation* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2017).

⁴⁹ LC Ten Commandments, 202: KW 414. See also Ap IV 132, KW 141; Ap VII-VIII 31, KW 179; VII-VIII 36, KW 181; XX 15, KW 237; and LC Ten Commandments, 211–16, KW 415, 313, KW 428.

place as He joins us to the Son and through the Son to the Father in the experience of redemption. Thus, to speak of chastity within the context of our sanctification as Christians, we are bound to begin on the foundation of trinitarian theology — that is, with the Triune God “in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins” (col. 1:4).

Whereas the culture around us is increasingly secularized, non-religious, and hostile toward the traditional Christian understanding of sexuality, Christians by contrast view sexuality from a decidedly theological perspective. We are not permitted to treat marriage and sexuality as merely capricious human choices subject to our individual whims, to our emotional or physical gratification, or to social expectations. On the contrary, our sexuality is determined by the will of the God who made us, who saves us, and who sets us apart in His church for loving service to Him and neighbor.

In the present section, then, we will see that how we are created, redeemed and sanctified has implications for how we live spiritually, mentally, physically, even sexually. We cannot separate our sexual identity, views or ethics from who God has made us in creation, what Christ has promised to redeem from sin through His suffering, death, and resurrection, and how the Holy Spirit sanctifies us to live chaste and decent lives in our thoughts and behavior. Reflection upon the theology of the First Article of the Creed reveals that God has made us and everything that belongs to us physically with divine intent and purpose. Reflection upon the theology of the Second Article shows how that pristine creation of God has been damaged by sin yet redeemed in the person and work of Jesus Christ. Reflection upon the theology of the Third Article, finally, underscores how the Christian life, by the power of the Holy Spirit, seeks to conform itself to the image of Jesus Christ in word and deed, and that entails the pursuit of sexual purity through chastity and decency.

A. THE FIRST ARTICLE

Cursed is the person who trusts in mankind.
He makes human flesh his strength,
and his heart turns from the Lord.
He will be like a juniper in the Arabah;
he cannot see when good comes
but dwells in the parched places in the wilderness,
in a salt land where no one lives.

Jeremiah 17:5-6 (CSB)

The foundation for any authentically Christian understanding of human sexuality must begin with the First Article. As we confess the one God who created all things, we confess our own creation. “I believe that God has made me and all creatures; that He has given me my body and soul, eyes, ears, and all my members, my reason and all my senses, and still takes care of them.”¹⁴ A Christian cannot speak of humanity or any aspect of human life — including human sexuality — apart from God. To know ourselves, we have to know God.

Although we have hints of God’s existence and nature in creation, our comprehension is muddled at best (ROM. 1:19-22; 2:13-16). Human reason can never discover God’s true being and attributes.¹⁵ Rather, for us to know God He must reveal Himself to us. Only then can we confess the faith that saves and only then do we know what it means to be His creature or to understand any aspect of human personhood, including our sexuality. The creeds echo God’s self-revelation, as Luther says:

For in all three articles God himself has revealed and opened to us the most profound depths of his fatherly heart and His love for us. For this very purpose He created us, so that He might redeem us and make us holy, and, moreover, having granted and bestowed upon us everything in heaven and on earth, he has also given us his

¹⁴ LSCwE, 16.

¹⁵ FCSD 5, 22, KW 585. See also Commission on Theology and Church Relations, *The Natural Knowledge of God in Christian Confession and Christian Witness* (St. Louis: The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 2013).

blind to its error. “Like Prometheus stealing fire from the gods, modern man has attempted to sever one of God’s greatest gifts, human reason, from its root in the divine reason. The result is a lack of humility, an overreaching pride that supposes humans can solve their various problems by themselves.”¹⁶

In all of this, the Creator God of Scripture is denied in favor of no god or some amorphous god of human imagination. And, since in every case the resulting belief is self-defined, the result is a god of self. It is a claim that in some manner our entire life — from inner being to our bodies — belongs to us and we are accountable to no one. This hubristic elevation of self may feed one’s ego, but the irony is that with the loss of the God of Scripture comes the loss of any true sense of oneself and life in God’s creation — of “me and all creatures.”¹⁷

The creedal confession of faith in God is not mere theism, a belief in some sort of creator. We *name* the one Creator God in the Creed. We speak first of the *Father Almighty*. To speak of almighty power follows directly from acknowledging God as creator. But we also call God Father, which acknowledges a personal bond and love — indeed, a tender love both for the Son and for all His adopted children. He is the Almighty and He is the Father.

We do not confess God as father in some metaphorical sense, but that God is “the God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 PETER 1:3). This confession is no less than an echo of our Savior’s own language (JOHN 8:18). To confess the Son is to confess the Father and, in so doing, to refuse a vague spirituality or insipid theism in favor of a bold sense that the same God who is Spirit must also be confessed as Father, despite every gnostic objection, ancient or modern. Such a confession flows directly from the genealogical origin of the Son in the Father by the Spirit.¹⁸ God is *Father* because He eternally begets the Son by the Spirit.

The First Article of the Creed reflects what Christians have long held as the theological significance of the creation narrative and what Luther time and again identified in his catechisms: God made us — our minds, our bodies, our very sexuality — with design and purpose. He thus intends that it is honorable and good for all people that they use their minds, their bodies, and their sexuality in accordance with that design and purpose. We receive our lives — body and soul — from God alone. Every attempt to claim that we are “in charge” — that our lives are our own to do with them what we wish — founders on the firm confession that we are God’s creatures. Therefore, to misuse, marginalize, belittle, or rationalize away the bodies, sexual identities and unions God has created is to raise doubts about the God who has given us our physicality in the first place. And to misuse what God has made is little more than to deny His work in creation.

The truth of God is not adequately confessed, however, if we stop at the First Article of the Creed. God is indeed our Father but He is more. “I believe in God the Father Almighty . . . and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord.” There we broach the tension and mystery of the catholic faith and its “one God in Trinity and Trinity in Unity.”¹⁹

B. THE SECOND ARTICLE

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities — all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.

Colossians 1:15–20

The creating work of the Triune God is very good (GEN. 1:31). God sees the goodness of His work. The man and woman also see goodness at first. They see that their bodies are naked and they are unashamed, fully exposed in a

¹⁶ CTCR, *In Christ All Things Hold Together*, 61.

¹⁷ LSCwE, 16.

¹⁸ See James Buehner, “The Holy Trinity: The Genealogical Identity of the Church,” in *Luther’s Large Catechism with Annotations*, 307–11.

¹⁹ Athanasian Creed, LSR, 319–20, emphasis added.

Son and his Holy Spirit, through whom he brings us to himself. For, as explained above, we could never come to recognize the Father’s favor and grace were it not for the Lord Christ, who is a mirror of the Father’s heart.²⁰

In both the Apostles’ and Nicene Creeds we talk about “the nature, will, acts, and work of God the Father.”²¹ This is personal: “I hold and believe that I am God’s creature.”²² To speak as a creature is to see ourselves against the spectacle of God’s creative work that surrounds and sustains us in the magnitude of heaven and the microcosm of earth’s tiniest organism.

To be a creature is to be part of, not the master of God’s created world. To confess God’s creation is inevitably also to confess our sin against Him and His creation, including the hubris that sees creation as ours to do with as we will and our tyranny over other creatures, turning everything and everyone into objects and commodities.²³ As creatures, we therefore stand under God and His judgment in “the fear of the Lord.”

Yet, the creedal confession bids us not only to humble fear, but also to grateful wonder and praise. The Psalter abounds in the Creator’s praise as it marvels at God’s glory (PSALM 8), at heaven’s beauty and splendor (PSALM 19), and then, even more, that God deigns to reveal Himself in words. So David teaches that the Lord’s ownership of creation should lead us to seek to know Him personally, to “seek the face of the God of Jacob” (PSALM 24:4).

In such humble awe we also confess “one God” (Nicene Creed). The early church faced explicit denials of the unity of the Godhead both from the pagan religions that dominated their world and from heretical dualistic movements claiming a place within the church. Heresies such as the so-called Gnostic movement denied both the biblical teaching about God (in its tendency to see both a good God and an evil creator force or demiurge) and its teachings about humanity.²⁴

A more contemporary overt denial of the First Article’s confession of God the Father and His creating work is atheism.²⁵ But a more common denial is somewhat more subtle. With the unfortunate rupture between science and theology that is increasingly dominant in the West, a form of “naturalism” has developed that either consigns God to the margins of science or denies His work altogether. It features a world view that may be called “scientism.”²⁶ Based on the great strides in external well-being that science and technology have provided, this perspective draws the false conclusion that human endeavor is the ultimate hope for all humanity and, indeed, for Earth itself. Human reason is viewed as the magisterial lord and arbiter of all truth, of right and wrong, and of life’s meaning.

There is little room for one Creator God in this view of the world. Yet, such a worldview certainly has a god — something “to which we . . . look for all good and in which we . . . find refuge in all need.”²⁷ It trusts science and technology for protection, longevity and happiness. It is oblivious to nature’s testimony to the true God’s orderly work and blind to His beauty. As it does so, it not only worships as a supreme entity the sum of human creativity and intellect, it effectively also makes each person into a little god who is lord of his own values and “truth.” Like all idolatry, it is

²¹ LC Creed, 63, KW 439.

²² LC Creed, 10, KW 432.

²³ LC Creed, 13, KW 432.

²⁴ Commission on Theology and Church Relations, *Together with All Creatures: Caring for God’s Living Earth* (St. Louis: The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 2010), 50–51.

²⁵ The Greek word *gnosis*, Gnosticism’s root, is innocuous, and simply refers to knowledge. The term Gnosticism envelops numerous individual teachers and systems and cannot be easily traced to any one source, and scholars debate its origins. Some scholars show connections between Gnosticism and earlier Babylonian religion, others connections to Egyptian teachings. However, it is certain that Gnosticism has significant Greek influences, although it would be an oversimplification to say that Gnosticism is derived from Platonism. See Volker Hennig Dreyer, “Martin Heidegger and the Origins of Gnosticism” in *Gnosticism, Platonism and the Late Ancient World: Essays in Honour of John D. Turner*, ed. Thomas Rasmussen, Kevin Corrigan, and John Douglas Turner, Nag Hammadi and Manichaean Studies (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 139–65, and also by Bregman, “Neoplatonizing Gnosticism and Gnostitizing Neoplatonism in the American Baroque,” 609–29, in the same work.

²⁶ Contemporary denials of the one God and His creation may be *crass* or *subtle*. Atheism is one of the fastest growing “religious” perspectives in the US today, with the number of people claiming atheism more than doubling as a percentage of the American population since 2009 (Pew Research Center, “10 Facts About Atheists,” Michael Lipka, Fact Tank, December 6, 2019, <http://pewresrch.org/1Vw8Oy/>). The so-called “new atheists” are overtly hostile toward every religion, but especially toward Christianity. While the more recent “newer atheists” see some pragmatic value in religion, all atheism denies any supreme Being and, of course, any notion of one God as Creator and Lord. The reader may be interested in the brief, but cogent evaluations of “New Atheism” and “Newer Atheists” available on CTCR’s website at <https://www.ctcr.org/about/leadership/commission-on-theology-and-church-relations/documents/religious-organizations-and-movements>.

²⁷ Commission on Theology and Church Relations, *In Christ All Things Hold Together: The Intersection of Science and Christian Theology* (St. Louis: The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 2015), esp. 1–12.

²⁸ LC Ten Commandments, 2, KW 386.

pure innocence (GEN. 2:25).

Then God’s good work is spoiled (GEN. 3). Even as God “saw” what was good, so the fall from goodness into sin and disobedience starts with *seeing* and it is seen immediately. Just as God said, with disobedience the eyes of man and woman are opened (GEN. 3:5). From hearts that turn away from the Word comes a corrupted vision that delights in the sight of food that has been forbidden (GEN. 3:6). Our first parents’ visual longing leads them into sin. And, immediately, their eyes are opened to what is not good. With their eyes they see themselves, even their very bodies, to be shameful in their exposure (GEN. 3:7).

They see their nakedness and must hide it. They immediately seek to cover their nakedness in the *presence of one another*. Why this relational shame of a husband and his wife? We need not wait long for an answer. They seek to hide their nakedness, because that physical exposure indicates a far deeper vulnerability — vulnerability before their Creator. Their eyes are now opened to see “like God” sees (GEN. 3:5). They see their shame. They are not only naked and ashamed, but also afraid: “I was afraid because I was naked, and I hid myself” (GEN. 3:10). The shame in one another’s presence reveals a sin at work in them that will persist in all their descendants. They objectify one another sexually, whereas, before they had sinned, their nakedness simply reflected the goodness of their creation as male and female and the delight that this sexual difference entails (GEN. 1:27, 31:22). Now they no longer see God’s good creation in one another, but seeing mere physicality, they judge one another and themselves by some human standard of what ought to be.²⁸

The connection between nakedness and shame — and between sin and fear — is inextricable. What was good, very good, has been spoiled with an unstoppable rot. The rot is now as evident and visible as their nakedness, as odorous as the stench of man’s sweat, and as audible as the cries of a woman in childbirth. But it is in Adam’s rightful fear of judgment that we see how truly deep is sin’s putrid mark. The embodied creature made in the image and likeness of God now bears the leprosy of a decay that flows out from sin’s sclerosis of heart and soul to infect bodily parts that serve iniquity and Satan instead of righteousness. Their bodies now proclaim the message of their consciences. They are no longer “very good.” They are not good at all.

1. Sexual activity as illustrative of rebellion and disobedience

Ironically, sinful humanity is not only marked by the shame of our first parents, but it is also capable of a seemingly impermeable rebellious shamelessness that seeks to deny any legitimate judgment against our wrongdoing (JER. 6:15). Yet, the evidence for sin’s evil cannot forever be denied (ROM. 1:19). The law written on the heart will still testify with a whispered warning to the conscience about right and wrong, the accountability humanity cannot avoid, and the search for excuses among their own internal accusations (ROM. 2:15). Therefore, human creatures cannot hide their sin. Not only consciences, but bodies reveal it with “unpresentable parts” that demand modesty (1 COR. 12:23). Although the very notion of “unpresentable parts” might seem quaint to many and even horribly inhibited by others, even a decedent society normally hides its pornography and sexual views, seeking at least to protect its children from them. So it is that the Word of God gives particular — although by no means exclusive — attention to our sexual embodiment in teaching us about sin.

That shamelessness can easily be illustrated in human sexual activity. So our Lord forthrightly points to the sexual lust that motivates all sexual sin (MATT. 5:27–28; 19:1–9). Likewise, Paul identifies the suppression of God’s created intent and His righteousness with the behavior that foolishly idolizes the creature over the Creator and cites the example of those who “exchange natural sexual relations for unnatural ones” (ROM. 1:26, CSB). Paul also illustrates the foolishness of sin’s rebellious self-destructiveness with sexual immorality (fornication) since it is sin against one’s own body (1 COR. 6:18). So it is that our bodily activity often bespeaks the unrighteousness of the fallen man and woman (MATT. 15:19).

²⁹ It is here where we already see the problem of pornography, whereby the body becomes only an object for self-pleasure, not a visible person intended to reflect God’s goodness. Sexual acts are divorced from any personal connection not only between the actors, but even more for viewers.

2. Righteousness embodied — Christ as the visible Image and Likeness

The depth of human sin and shame is real. The fear of God’s wrath and judgment, so real for our first parents, is warranted. Man and woman ought to fear. God has not abrogated His eternal decree that death follows sin (**GEN 2:17; 3:19; EZEK 18:4; ROM 5:12**). The bathroom mirrors that reveal imperfect bodies — bodies aging and sick and dying — are visual reminders of the mirror of God’s law with its accusation and judgment (**LC I 187; FC SD VI 4, 21**).

Embodied sinful creatures facing disease, decline and death cannot be helped by anyone less than God or by anything less than an embodied Savior. So the stunning truth at the center of the Gospel: the Word — who “was with God” from the beginning, who “was God” from eternity, by whom all things were created, who is source of light and life (**JOHN 1:1–9**) — this “Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth” (**JOHN 1:14**). This reality of a truth that seems impossible must somehow be articulated, as Paul does in Philippians 2:6–8. The eternal Son,

who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

God assumes our likeness, our form — our body. The invisible begotten God is now visible, the living Icon. The Creator is “firstborn of creation” (**COL 1:16**). He is conceived in and born from a Virgin (**MAT 1:18, 20, 23**). God is embodied for our salvation. He is embodied in, for, and like fallen humanity: subject to our diseases, wounds, sorrows and all the vicious works and deeds of sinful humanity. He has stopped at nothing in His assumption of flesh and blood. The Holy One of God (**JOHN 6:69**), who knows no sin, is made sin for us (**2 COR 5:21**). Only a supremely gracious God can or would do something so impossible.

What God has made in His creation, sin has damaged and defaced. Christ in His incarnation, death, and resurrection has not only redeemed us from our sins, including sexual sins, but embodied for us the living image of purity, chastity and decency. We seek to live in our created, fallen, yet redeemed flesh according to the image and example Christ Himself has set for us. As God’s redeemed people, we simply cannot reject His sovereign, immutable design for creation. Instead, in light of our faith in Christ and the regeneration we have received through Word and Sacrament, we view our bodies and sexual activity through the lens of what God has given us in creation and embodied for us in His Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord.

C. THE THIRD ARTICLE

He who is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with him. Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body. Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not our own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your bodies.

1 Corinthians 6:17–20

In the Third Article of the Apostles’ Creed, believers confess: “I believe in the Holy Spirit.” Such a confession of *faith* flows reflexively from the fact that no one can confess the Christian faith without the Holy Spirit (**1 COR 12:3**; see also **1 COR 6:11; EPH 1:13**). The result of the Holy Spirit’s work is cleansing and a new life and spirit (**1 PETER 1:3; PSALM 51:10–12**). New *spiritual* life, however, does not happen apart from physical life. Rather, the Spirit’s gift of life confesses faith in Christ and His work: “Jesus is Lord” (**1 COR 12:3**). Faith itself — spiritual life — ordinarily happens as physical ears hear the “word of Christ” as it is spoken by human tongues (**ROM 10:17**). The new spiritual life of faith begins as bodies receive the physical “washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit” (**1 PETER 3:5**) and as mouths receive bread and wine, the body and blood of Christ by His Word (**LUKE 22:19–20**).⁴⁵

⁴⁵ John W. Kleinig, *Wonderfully Made: A Protestant Theology of the Body* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2021), 10, Kindle Edition. Kleinig adds: “So, paradoxically, my spiritual life, the life that is created and sustained by the Holy Spirit, is always lived in the body. It does not take me away from my body or occur apart from it. Rather, it takes me ever further and deeper into bodily life and into fuller embodiment as a human being. It makes me at home in my body as I live here on earth.”

It consists of people whose very bodies are even “a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God” (**ROM 12:1**). The believer’s sanctity is a bodily and not merely a spiritual sanctity. So it is that Paul teaches:

Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body. Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body. (**1 COR 6:18**)

So, the one holy virginal bride (**EPH 5**) bears children who are also called to a similar purity.

Redeemed humanity is also promised a hope and a future (**JER 29:11**) in spirit, soul and body (**1 THESS 5:23**). The promise assures us of something far greater than some extra years in decent health. Instead, we have been promised “the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.”⁴⁶

This confession is repeated so often by Christians that we may not recognize how ridiculous it sounds to human reason. The problem lies not in the confession of “life everlasting,” but the belief in “the resurrection of the body.” While some religions teach a bodily reincarnation, that doctrine is not the equivalent of resurrection. Most of the rest of humanity holds to some sort of belief that one’s “soul,” however that is conceived, survives death.

That is not the emphasis in the Christian confession. Rather, we boldly confess that a *new bodily life* is to be given. Human reason cannot comprehend the resurrection of the body. Do our eyes deceive us? We see *bodies* that retain beauty and vigor only as long as a seemingly superhuman regimen of diet and exercise is maintained. Even that only postpones the inevitable. Our bodies are ultimately frail on so many levels that everlasting bliss cannot accommodate them. We are perishable, with a “shelf life” much like the food in pantries and refrigerators. How could eternal life include *bodies*, with their frequently corrupted and quirky genes, amoral longings, aging flesh, and vulnerability to everything from obesity to cancer to dementia?

Nevertheless, it is God’s promise that our bodies — so undeniably perishable and mortal — are to rise from death. The resurrection of the body is both an inconceivable and a concretely comprehensible assurance. Job seems almost contradictory as he prophesies: “And after my skin has been thus destroyed, yet in my flesh I shall see God” (**JOB 19:26**). Or, as the Spirit reveals through Paul, the perishable “flesh and blood” of this present bodily life “cannot inherit eternal life.” Nonetheless the dead will be raised *bodily* in a change that defies description other than to declare that perishable, mortal *bodies* will “put on” a *bodily* imperishability and immortality (**1 COR 15:53**).

These teachings remind us that the spiritual and material may be distinguished, but they must not be divorced. The “spiritual body” that Paul describes is not some other-worldly phantasm, but, ultimately, nothing less than the perfected form of human embodiment. It is a fulfilled humanity — the humanity that is exemplified and illustrated in the resurrected Lord Himself, whose resurrection is not a merely spiritual reality: “See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Touch me, and see. For a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have” (**LUKE 24:39**). The risen Christ, who is the “firstfruits” of the resurrection of all flesh, is the assurance that in the coming resurrection of the dead “shall all be made alive” (**1 COR 15:20–23**).

We walk by faith and not by sight in the face of this mysterious and glorious assurance of *bodily immortality and bodily imperishability* held out to God’s redeemed people. Therefore, while affirming the immortality of the soul, the Formula of Concord insists that, “concerning the article on the resurrection Scripture testifies that this very substance of our flesh, albeit without sin, will rise, and that we will have and retain this soul, albeit without sin, in eternal life.”⁴⁷

The people God has recreated by the Holy Spirit through Word and Sacrament seek to live in accordance with His design and intentionality for our lives, minds, bodies even our sexuality. As the church is the pure, unstained body of Christ, renewed by the Holy Spirit, so we individuals and members of that body are renewed daily by the same Spirit, that we might become holy and pure in thought, word and deed. We can never hope to attain in our daily lives here

⁴⁶ Apostles’ Creed, LSB 158.

⁴⁷ FC SD, I 46; KW, 539. Christian anthropology must always distinguish but not divorce soul and body.

This elemental connection between the Spirit’s work and our physical life is further confirmed as the Third Article moves from “I believe in the Holy Spirit,” to “the holy catholic church.”⁴⁸ To confess the Holy Spirit is to confess the church. In leading people to justifying faith, the Spirit creates a *holy* people (**EPH 14; COL 1:22, 3:12**) and a *catholic* people gathered from all the nations (**MAT 28:19; GAL 3:26–28; REV 5:5**). Proceeding from Father and Son as “Lord and giver of life,”⁴⁹ the Spirit brings forth a new humanity, a new creation of universal (catholic) dimensions — to be “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation” (**1 PETER 2:9**).

The church exists entirely because of the Holy Spirit, who — as Luther asserts — “calls, gathers, enlightens, and makes holy the whole Christian church [*Christenheit*] on earth and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one common, true faith.”⁵⁰ The Apology anchors this truth in Ephesians 5 where Paul speaks of the church as the body and bride of Christ, paralleling that relationship with the marriage of man and woman.⁵¹

This image from Ephesians 5 of the church as the unblemished bride of Christ echoes Old Testament language. There God “rejoices over the bride,” Israel (**ISAIAH 62:5; JER 2:2–3A; MOS 2:16, 19–20**).

Just as Israel is restored as Yahweh’s holy bride despite her sin (see **MOS 2:2**), so also the church is the holy bride of Christ only because of His redeeming and cleansing work (**EPH 5:25–27**). And so we confess a *holy* church that is Christ’s bride.

We also confess a *catholic* church. The Apology clarifies the confession that the holy church is catholic:

Moreover, it says “church catholic” so that we not understand the church to be an external government of certain nations. It consists rather of people scattered throughout the entire world who agree on the gospel and have the same Christ, the same Holy Spirit, and the same sacraments, whether or not they have the same human traditions.⁵²

Building on the analogy of the holy church as bride, we may also speak of her catholicity as an indication that this holy bride bears children to the Lord from every corner of humanity (**REV 12:17**). Luther affirms this:

Learn this article, then, as clearly as possible. If someone asks, What do you mean by the words “I believe in the Holy Spirit”? you can answer, “I believe that the Holy Spirit makes me holy, as his name states.” How does he do this, or what are his ways and means? Answer: “Through the Christian church, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.” In the first place, he has a **unique community in the world, which is the mother that begets and bears every Christian through the Word of God**, which the Holy Spirit reveals and proclaims, through which he illuminates and inflames hearts so that they grasp and accept it, cling to it, and persevere in it.⁵³

These assertions about the church reinforce another attribute of the church, her unity. Even in its catholic breadth scattered among all peoples, the one church has in common one Father, Lord, Holy Spirit, Gospel, and sacraments (**EPH 4:4–6**). It is in light of this unity that the church is characterized with particular individual *physical* images as Christ’s bride (**EPH 5**) and His body (**ROM 12:5; 1 COR 12:12–27; EPH 3:6, 4:15–16; 5:23; COL 1:18, 24**). The physicality is important, for the church is always an embodied reality. The one body is made up of embodied persons called into union (communion) with one another.

The Christian confesses a single communion of people made holy here and now by “the forgiveness of sins.”⁵⁴

⁴⁸ More common to the LCMS and to many Lutherans in the past is the confession of “the holy Christian Church.” That tradition may be rightly appreciated as a reminder that Christ is the head of the church (see LSCwE, question 203, A., p. 207). The original texts of the Apostles’ and Nicene Creeds, however, describe the church as “catholic,” which stresses its universality and wholeness (see the footnote in LSB wherever the Apostles’ Creed or Nicene Creed appears).

⁴⁹ Nicene Creed, LSB 158.

⁵⁰ SC II 6, KW 355–56.

⁵¹ Ap VII & VIII 7, KW 175.

⁵² Ap VII & VIII 10, KW 175.

⁵³ LC II 40–42; KW 436; emphasis added.

⁵⁴ Apostles’ Creed, LSB 159.

on earth the pristine innocence and righteousness that Christ has so graciously imputed to us at Baptism through a faith given us by the Holy Spirit. Yet, as the church always renews and reforms itself according to God’s Word, so with the aid of the Spirit we conform ourselves to the image of Christ in all we say and do — and that does not exclude our sexuality, but necessarily includes it as part of the creation God Himself seeks to redeem.

The three articles of the Creed, though they express different actions of God in the world and different works of the individual persons of the Holy Trinity in time and space, nonetheless present a single, comprehensive portrait of God’s plan for His people to live in their bodies according to His design. The God who has created us in our sexually differentiated bodies with their accompanying characteristics and desires, has redeemed us from the sin that has corrupted those bodies and desires through the Son of God. The Son of God furthermore embodies chastity and sexual decency for us. Through His Spirit, God renews us according to the image of that Son so we might live with that same chastity and sexual decency. How we live in such a way against the countervailing cultural winds and sexual pressures of this world, however, will require more disciplined attention — to that we now turn.

III. HS 2023 APPLICATIONS: CHASTE AND DECENT LIFE AS MALE AND FEMALE

The Small Catechism’s call for a “chaste and decent life” with respect to the Sixth Commandment on adultery furnishes us with more than a readily recitable description for purposes of memorization. It involves a conscious awareness of the intended design for marriage and sexuality; the temptations and lusts of the flesh that seek to derail that design; and the goal of a Christlike morality that impacts every area of our lives, sexuality included. To live chastely and decently in the male and female bodies given us by God entails:

- First, a commitment to the sexual identity we have received from God in creation and in His ongoing act of creation that fills and replenishes the earth;
- Second, a commitment to an ongoing conflict with the sinful desires introduced at the fall of our first parents, Adam and Eve, and with the personal and social consequences that the fall into sin has caused for our sexual activity; and
- Third, a commitment to the sexual ethic of leading a chaste and decent life that finds its purest expression in the person of Jesus Christ and guides the lives of all Christians, whether married or single.

A. SEXUAL IDENTITY FROM GOD

As the foregoing section indicates, the foundation for the Christian understanding of human sexuality is one of creaturely embodiment in a life and identity given and restored by the Triune God. We are created and restored for a holy life that glorifies God. This reflects the Catechism’s understanding that many Lutherans learn from childhood in Luther’s explanation of the First Article: “I believe that God has made me and all creatures. He has given me my body and soul, eyes, ears, and *all my members*. . . .”⁷⁵ As His sons and daughters, redeemed by the bodily sacrifice of Christ (“with His holy, precious blood and with His innocent suffering and death”⁷⁶), we are called to new life.

The title for section three now echoes the Commandments, specifically the meaning of the Sixth Commandment, “You shall not commit adultery,” as Martin Luther explained it. The Commandments provide direction and specificity to the way we are to live as God’s holy people, redeemed in Baptism.

The authority behind Luther’s words from his explanation to the Decalogue is not his own, but God’s. In His commands, our Creator leaves no ambiguity about what He expects of His human creatures. To speak about a “chaste and decent life” or a “sexually pure and decent life,” is necessarily to speak from the standpoint of God’s Law. God’s Law is not only to give order and direction, however, but also has the all-important purpose of bringing humanity to repentance, for all have sinned against God and His Law (**ROM 3:23**). It is vital to keep that truth in mind. Otherwise,

⁷⁵ LSCwE, 16; emphasis added.

⁷⁶ LSCwE, 17.

discussing with others matters of confusion about sexual identity and sexual rebellion may be a temptation to indulge pride, as if we Christians are somehow free from sin ourselves.

Human beings are not generic. We are male and female. *HS 1981* therefore affirmed that “The male-female duality as the created pattern of human fellowship requires of us fidelity to our sexual identity, a willingness to be male or female.”⁷⁷ Our bodies with all our members (including our sexual members) are God’s creation, who makes us “male and female” (*Gen. 1:27*). The words of our Lord Jesus in Matthew 19 (v.4) affirm this duality for all time. To reject our created sex is therefore to reject our Creator.

However, there is a measure of truth in the claim that not everyone fits easily in the category of male or female. For example, approximately nine in every 50,000 children born have genital abnormalities that prevent the physician at delivery from determining the infant’s sex with certainty. These children, once referred to as hermaphrodites, are now commonly stated to be intersex rather than male or female.⁷⁸ Both in conjunction with such external, visible abnormalities and apart from any genital abnormality, there are also a number of rare chromosomal disorders that may complicate the matter of sexual identity.⁷⁹

Medically speaking, these are all defects present from birth, akin to other birth defects of a genetic or external nature.⁸⁰ Theologically, an intersex condition or chromosomal abnormality that makes sex determination difficult is not an element of the effects of the fall on creation itself — part of its “groaning” (see *ROM. 8:22-23*).⁸¹ Such ambiguity is not a denial of the biblical doctrine of creation. Neither does it disprove the Bible’s assertion that God creates man as male and female, rather, each of these very real problems is a corruption of male and female. Their rarity and their deeply problematic character rightly reinforce the view of natural reason and natural theology that human beings are male and female. Such defects involve significant tribulation and deep challenges for the afflicted individuals, their families, and the medical community that treats them. And from the church, they require a thoroughgoing compassionate response.

A similar compassionate and supportive response is needed for individuals who suffer from sexual dysphoria or sexual identity disorder. Such persons, who are of one sex physically, may feel out of place in their own body — and may come to be convinced that, internally, they are the opposite sex.⁸² For such genuine confusion and discomfort, the Christian response ought to be loving encouragement. Such an approach, however, should not condone or encourage a misguided desire to reject the body God has given.⁸³ Loving acceptance of one who is suffering is at the heart of the Christian ethos, but it is important to realize that such affirmation can never involve a rejection of biblical teaching. The distinction between love for individuals and acceptance of false beliefs they may hold is vital.

Another level of ambiguity about sexual identity is quite different from the person suffering from an intersex condition or from the psychological condition of sexual dysphoria. The acceptance of what is sometimes called “expressive individualism” — an ideology that sees individual identity as something one chooses for oneself, particularly in terms of gender — has resulted in ambiguity about the whole matter of sexual orientation. This has resulted in the aforementioned revolutionary thinking about gender, at least in the western world. The heart of the revolution is a rejection of the male-female duality in favor of a tendency to view gender as a spectrum and a personal truth — something that can ultimately be decided by the self of a particular individual. As the thinking goes,

⁷⁷ *HS 1981*, 33.

⁷⁸ See Leonard Sax, “How Common Is Intersex? A Response to Anne Fausto-Sterling,” *J Sex Res.* 39, no. 3 (August 2002):174–78. Doi: 10.1080/00224490209552139. PMID: 12476264.

⁷⁹ For example, Klinefelter syndrome (XXY male), XX male, XYY male, Turner syndrome (a female with a missing or altered X chromosome), trisomy (XXX female), XYY female, XY female, and late-onset adrenal hyperplasia.

⁸⁰ Examples of common defects include Down syndrome, cleft palate, and defects of the heart, stomach, eye and musculoskeletal system.

⁸¹ David reflects on the impact of the fall on creation in Psalm 60:1–2: “O God, you have rejected us, broken our defenses, you have been angry; oh, restore us. You have made the land to quake; you have torn its open, repair its breaches, for it trembles.”

⁸² According to the Gallup organization’s 2020 survey, 0.6% of US adults identify as transgender. The total percentage of individuals identifying themselves as gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender has grown steadily from 3.5% in 2012 to 5.6% in 2020. This is almost entirely a result of increasing numbers of young adults identifying as something other than heterosexual with 15.9% of adults born from 1997–2002 (Generation Z) identifying within an LGBT category. Jeffrey M. Jones, “LGBT Identification Rates to 5.6% in Latest US Estimate,” Gallup, February 24, 2021, <https://news.gallup.com/poll/329796/lgbt-identification-rates-latest-estimate.aspx>.

⁸³ See the CTCR report, *Gender Identity Disorder or Gender Dysphoria*, <https://files.kim.org/pdf/53E2B773-CD82-480D-96D4-D31F85B17952>.

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immune from such sexual dilemmas. Bodily life on every level — including our sexuality — groans for redemption. Individual pastoral care acknowledges this. It requires that every sinner, every sinful aspect of our lives, and every result of sin’s corruption of creation be addressed in an individual manner.⁸⁴

B. REBELLIOUS SEXUALITY IN NEED OF REDEMPTION

1. Sexual rebellion, constant and changing

One aspect of rebellious sexuality is the rejection of the male-female distinction in the name of gender fluidity and radical self-determination. This is, in many respects, a new phenomenon — one that the Bible does not explicitly address and that, consequently, previous Christian thought did not directly consider. But both the Scriptures and Christian theology have given ample attention to the underlying reality of a sexual dimension in human rebellion against the Creator. The presence of a specific command against adultery in the Decalogue is the most striking evidence for this (*Ex. 20:14; DEUT. 5:18*). In the commandment God condemns the blatant act of infidelity against one’s spouse or the spouse of another person. But implicit in that same command is a condemnation of the subtle rebellion of the heart that lusts for someone other than that person to whom God has joined us (*MAT. 5:27-28*). That this commandment is first given to Israel is a reminder that rebellious sexuality is a problem for the people of God, and not just for those who are apart from him (see *ER. 78-18*).

Least sexual rebellion be viewed too narrowly as only a matter of marital infidelity, the Scriptures directly address all forms of immorality and sexual impurity. In both the Old and New Testament worlds, prostitution was a widespread phenomenon. The OT faced the serious problem of the Bael cult’s religious practice of sacred prostitution while the NT had to wrestle with the Greek world’s widespread secular prostitution and lax sexual morality. In each case the result was both forbidden sexual conduct and also the sin of apostasy from God. However, in both testaments, the term that sometimes refers only to engaging in prostitution in the Greek and Roman worlds (either as the prostitute or the one who uses her or him) takes on a wider meaning of committing any kind of extra-marital sexual intercourse.⁸⁵ The English term fornication, or sexual immorality, in our translations renders terms that connect illicit sexual behavior to abandoning the true God (e.g., *EZEK. 16:22; 1COR. 6:18*).⁸⁶

It is important to note that the Bible’s condemnation of fornication is *primarily* addressed to sexual acts between men and women, not to same-sex acts. This is a salutary reminder that the heterosexual person as is perverse as any other sinner. Jeremiah is speaking about all humanity when he rightly laments: “The heart is perverse above all things, and desperately corrupt; who can understand it?” (*79a*). Sexual rebellion, then, is certainly not confined to the present-day.

However, each age gives its own shape to human sin, including sexual sin. Luther implies as much in the Large Catechism. He suggests that in the Old Testament world, “adultery was the most widespread form of unchastity,” but claims a somewhat different kind of unchastity in his day with its “shameless mess and cesspool of all sorts of immorality and indecency among us.”⁸⁷ So also in our world, we see sexual rebellion in the forms of a dramatic decline of marriage in favor of cohabitation and short-term and “one-off” sexual connections, high rates of intentional single motherhood, a widespread affirmation of the legitimacy of same-sex acts and same-sex marriage, and other behaviors that heretofore were viewed as abhorrent. So, while we may simply say that sin is at the root of all sexual rebellion in every age, it is also worth asking what other cause may be at work leading to our own age’s sexual rebelliousness.

⁸⁴ A helpful resource for pastoral care of transgender persons is Mark A. Yarhouse, *Understanding Gender Dysphoria: Navigating Transgender Issues in a Changing Culture* (Wheaton, IL: IVP Academic, 2015). See also CTCR, *Gender Identity Disorder*, as well as Paul O. Wendland, “A Pastoral Statement on the Transgender Movement,” available at <http://www.wendland.org/8080/biomechanics/123456789/0507/WendlandTransgender.pdf?response=1&icid=download>.

⁸⁵ The Hebrew term is *zadim*, the Greek word, *porneia*. Kyle Harper, in “Porneia: The Making of a Christian Sexual Norm,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 131, no. 2 (January 1, 2012): 374, says of the Greco-Roman world: “By the first century c.e., *porneia* was the chief vice in a system of sexual morality rooted in conjugal sexuality. Porneia was broad enough to cover sexual sins as diverse as incest and *eros*.” He adds, “But for Hellenistic Jews, in a culture where sex with dishonored women, especially prostitutes and slaves, was legal and respected, the term condemned the cultural differences between the observant of the Torah and Gentile depravity” (174–75).

⁸⁶ For a summary of the very Scripture addresses the whole gamut of sexual sin under the prohibitions of *porneia* (and cognates), see R. Hank and S. Schulz, “*porneia*,” *eS*, TDNT 6:578–95; BDAG, 8:4–55; H. Reiser, *supra*, *Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, ed. Colin Brown (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1975), 1:497–501.

⁸⁷ LC 1:199, KW 201, 202.

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since gender is fluid it must therefore be a matter of individual discovery or choice.⁸⁴

The Census Bureau of the U.S. provides an indication of how this perspective now permeates American thinking. According to a July 2021 survey, more than 10% of all Americans no longer think of themselves simply as male or female but identify themselves sexually in another way. While 88.3% of American adults say they are “straight” (either male or female), 4.4% identify themselves as bisexual, 3.3% say they are either gay or lesbian, 2.1% say they do not know their sexual identity, and 1.9% say they are “Something else” (other than male or female).⁸⁵

Such thinking is routinely fostered by American media and educational leaders. For example, the prominent publication, *National Geographic*, devoted a special issue to the topic of the “Gender Revolution” in January 2017.⁸⁶ The stated goal of the special issue is to “provide a wealth of facts, images, and ideas about gender and how it is expressed in our contemporary world,” but, citing the World Health Organization, it affirms “different identities that do not necessarily fit into binary male or female sex categories.”⁸⁷ A similar desire to focus on gender variation and fluidity led to the term “cisgender” to refer to those who continue to identify with the sex they were “assigned” at birth.⁸⁸

This set of ideas or teachings about human nature must be addressed directly. The rejection of the “binary” view of sexuality — that human creatures are male or female — is a frontal challenge to biblical teaching. While, as noted, some individuals have an intersex condition, the transgender ideological movement against a dimorphic view of humanity is not fueled by the fact of actual physical and/or chromosomal differences. Rather individuals, whose bodies from birth are clearly male or female, make the claim that they have discovered that they are something other than simply male or female: perhaps a male trapped in a female body, or a female trapped in a male body, or something else that is not the sex “assigned” to them because of their actual bodily sex.⁸⁹

The church cannot accept the current claim to autonomy over one’s sexual nature. Neither can the church relinquish the teaching of the Scriptures that views human creatures in a “binary” manner, as male or female. “All flesh,” including animals, is male and female (*GEN. 7:16; SEE ALSO GEN. 9:19-73.9*). This simple, basic truth is what has been affirmed from the beginning of time. The church cannot abandon it now, or ever.

The idea that human creatures can or ought to attempt to remake their sexual identity as something other than male or female is a dangerous falsehood. It is, at its heart, a violation of faith in God, our Creator. As Luther says so simply, “God has made me.”⁹⁰ For a creature to determine that he or she is not really the individual God has made is nothing less than a bid to be one’s own god, one’s own creator.

In summary, then, while we must directly affirm the biblical view of humankind as male or female, we do not wish to imply that our creation as human sexual beings is unaffected by the fall, hence the discussion above about intersexuality and genetic disorders. Moreover, to identify the theological error of the transgender movement does not mitigate the need for a pastoral response to individuals experiencing sexual dysphoria or intersex individuals and their families. The distress at work in such cases dare not be minimized. Nor should we think that Christians are

⁸⁴ For the history behind such thinking, see Carl Trueman, *The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self: Cultural Amnesia, Expressive Individualism, and the Road to Sexual Revolution* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2020).

⁸⁵ Lydia Anderson, Thom File, Joey Marshall, Kevin McElrath, and Zachary Scherer, “New Household Pulse Survey Data Reveals Differences between LGBT and non-LGBT Respondents During Covid-19 Pandemic,” <https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2021/11/census-bureau-survey-explodes-sexual-orientation-and-gender-identity.html>.

⁸⁶ An online guide that summarizes the issue is available at https://media.nationalgeographic.com/stories/16/GenderRevolution_GUIDE_LynsfordFeb.pdf. The print publication accompanies a video documentary hosted by Katie Couric, *Gender Revolution: A Journey With Katie Couric*. The video is encouraged for use in schools, is also available for purchase or for viewing via some streaming services.

⁸⁷ “Gender Revolution Guide,” Introduction. 4. We note that *National Geographic’s* assessment of the so-called “gender revolution” is itself wide and imprecise. Much attention is devoted to the matter of political and socio-cultural inequalities between male and female, such as the lack of educational opportunities for girls in many countries, cultural patterns that encourage women to be wives and mothers rather than pursuing careers outside the home, female genital mutilation, and other examples of what are viewed as injustices against females. The CTCR acknowledges that girls and women have suffered many injustices and inequities and that such suffering continues. However, to address those issues in this report would take us far afield from our central concerns.

⁸⁸ The term is increasingly used beyond the LGBT world. Consequently it is now included in the Oxford English Dictionary: *cis-, prefix: Oxford English Dictionary (oed-ox)*.

⁸⁹ Transgender individuals who seek to remake their bodies into the opposite sex are actually thereby affirming a binary view of humanity. Their discomfort with their “assigned” sex (the sex of their bodies) leads them to seek to become the other sex, not a third sex on a gender continuum.

⁹⁰ Small Catechism, II, First Article.

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In recent decades much of the western world came to assume the legitimacy of a nearly endless sexual “freedom” that is an outgrowth of a more subtle revolution regarding the human self.⁹¹ On its simplest level, many assume no ongoing order that governs the world — no foundation. Rather, individuals must find their own meaning for existence, their own ethical codes, and — above all — their own sense of who they are, their identity.⁹² All preferences and standards are equal, so that no one dare to question the validity and worth of another person’s preferences and standards. An overarching moral or ethical code for all people is viewed as inherently oppressive. Morality is strictly personal, emotional and pragmatic. What is right is what is right and desirable *for me*. What is wrong is what is wrong and undesirable *for me*.

We earlier noted that this view claims “that each of us finds our meaning by giving expression to our own feelings and desires.”⁹³ But such a claim goes beyond this individual claim. It easily accepts a corollary assumption: that anyone or anything that claims authority over me and limits my individual autonomy is oppressive and ought to be overturned. From this it is a small step to reject all biblical moral teachings about the self and sexuality, beginning with the claim of God and His authority over all people. And if God’s authority over ourselves is questioned, the idea that parents or other human authorities can make any claim to speak truths that could rightly limit one’s autonomy is certainly ruled out.

Given such widespread assumptions it is no accident that biblical morality is increasingly viewed as out of order. Indeed, some would argue that Christianity is *immoral*.⁹⁴ And even if many would not engage in such a frontal attack on the Christian faith, there is no doubt that increasing numbers of people want less and less to do with the church and its doctrinal claims about who we are and how we are to live. Many see the church’s teachings on sexual morality to be oppressive demands placed over them — demands that would deprive them of their freedom of self-determination.⁹⁵

This is particularly evident among younger age cohorts. Even people raised in the church are increasingly likely to drop out of church after high school. Among the reasons cited for this drop out are that many younger adults view traditional Christianity as judgmental or hypocritical and disagree with the church’s socio-political positions — such as opposition to gay marriage.⁹⁶

2. Heterosexual rebellion

As much as the LGBT agenda challenges the church today, we should remember that the majority of people continue to be heterosexual in their desires and sexual activity. This fact may give a certain comfort, but it should not blind the church to the fact that widely accepted heterosexual views about human sexuality are also deeply contrary to the Word of God.

C.S. Lewis says, “Chastity is the most unpopular of the Christian virtues. There is no getting away from it; the Christian rule is, ‘Either marriage, with complete faithfulness to your partner, or else total abstinence.’”⁹⁷ Lewis wrote more than half a century ago, but as we have seen, humanity has always rebelled against this uncompromising truth. It is so still today. And, given that the majority of people are attracted to the opposite sex, the human rebellion against God’s will for human sexuality most often takes the form of *heterosexual* fornication.

⁹¹ See Carl R. Trueman, *The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self: Cultural Amnesia, Expressive Individualism, and the Road to Sexual Revolution* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2020).

⁹² Trueman, *Triumph of the Modern Self*, 76–78.

⁹³ Trueman, *Triumph of the Modern Self*, 46. This report does not deny that individuals are unique in some ways and therefore develop likes and dislikes, find some things more personally meaningful than others, choose priorities for themselves, and so forth. Such subjective aspects of personal identity are not at issue.

⁹⁴ Christopher Hitchens, *God Is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything* (New York: Twelve, 2007).

⁹⁵ See, for example, Barna, “Signs of Decline and Hope Among Key Metrics of Faith” (March 4, 2020), <https://www.barna.com/research/changing-state-of-the-church/>.

⁹⁶ See, for example, Aaron Earls, “Most Teens Drop Out of Church When They Become Young Adults,” LifeWay Research, (Jan. 15, 2019), <https://lifewayresearch.com/2019/01/15/most-teens-drop-out-of-church-as-young-adults/>. For more extensive consideration: David Kinnaman and Gabe Lyons, *UnChristian: What a New Generation Really Thinks about Christianity and Why It Matters* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2007), 36, 89–118; and David Kinnaman and Aiyah Hawkins, *You Lost Me: Why Young Christians Are Leaving Church and Rethinking Faith* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011), 149–68.

⁹⁷ C.S. Lewis, *More Christianity* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1952), 91.

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a call for repentance — ongoing, constant repentance. Our lives as sexual beings makes that abundantly clear. Gay or straight, bisexual or transgender, all human beings live with a universally corrupted sexual desire whatever their “sexual identity” may be. So the call does not end, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (MATT. 3:2).

God calls us to repent, to turn and be saved (ISAIAH 45:22), because our redemption has come (LUKE 21:28). God’s redemption for His fallen world comes by a bodily sacrifice: “not with gold or silver, but with His holy precious blood and with His innocent suffering and death.” To hear this call to repentance rightly is to know that it is constant, that “we daily sin much” — all of us, and in all manner of ways. But, with repentant faith in the Father of all mercy and grace who so freely bestows forgiveness, His children also become recipients of the Spirit’s gifts — most especially patience and longsuffering and a forgiving spirit in our relationships with one another.

5. Tension for the redeemed

That there is redemption in Christ — by His death and resurrection — is the foundation for living in the way that is right. It is the basis for every Christian hope. Even for the redeemed, however, there is no complete relief from the scourge of sin. Rather, believers live in a unique tension — sinner and saint, life in constant repentance.

It is easy to divorce bodily life from life in the Spirit. The NT often uses the term “flesh” and refers to living “in the flesh” to refer to a sinful life. Speaking to believers, Paul contrasts life in the flesh from life in the Spirit: “Those who are in the flesh cannot please God. You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you” (ROM. 8:8–9a).¹³⁰ There is an aspect of human rebellion that is manifestly *physical*.

The infirmities of the fallen flesh, however, reveal a weakness that is more than skin deep — running to the heart and center of our whole being as living souls. Genesis 3 connects physical death to the spiritual rebellion of our first parents, that is, to their disobedience, not to the mere physical act of eating fruit. So our Lord is hardly pointing to the muscle in our chest when He says, “For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander” (MATT. 15:19).

For us to speak of sexuality in rebellion against God, then, is not to place the seat of human sin in one’s sex. Rather, the physical acts of adultery and other forms of sexual immorality are inextricably bound up with an internal, psychological, or, ultimately, *spiritual* weakness — one that marks our soul, our deepest inner life. Malachi therefore rightly addresses something more than physical behavior as he condemns marital unfaithfulness: “Did he not make them one, with a portion of the Spirit in their union? And what was the one God seeking? Godly offspring. So guard yourselves in your *spirit*, and let none of you be faithless to the wife of your youth” (MAL. 2:16). Faithfulness in bodily conduct flows out of one’s spiritual life.

St. Paul reminds believers that bodily life is the realm in which the Holy Spirit works. “Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body” (1 COR. 6:19–20). John Kleing explains: “So, paradoxically, my spiritual life, the life that is created and sustained by the Holy Spirit, is always lived in the body.”¹³¹

Life in the Spirit cannot be divorced from bodily life, but it must be distinguished. We are spiritually alive (ROM. 6:1), but our life here and now is lived in a fallen “body of death” (ROM. 7:24). We may speak of a redemption that is already accomplished in our justification by grace through faith: “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law” (GAL. 3:13, note the past tense). Yet, at the same time, Paul speaks of us eagerly awaiting the completion of the Holy Spirit’s redeeming work of full bodily redemption. Only the return of Christ and the completion of His new creation — His new heaven and earth — will complete our redemption.

The “redemption of our bodies” (ROM. 8:23) is not yet, but it is certain, for Christ has taken our body of death for His own — reconciling us “in his body of flesh by his death” (COL. 1:22) and in exchange bestowing on our mortal bodies His resurrection (1 COR. 15). Our present “flesh and blood” cannot receive this new bodily life for “the perishable cannot

¹³⁰ Note also Paul’s ongoing contrast between life in the Spirit and life in the flesh in Rom. 7 and 8 as well as in Gal. 5:13–26.

¹³¹ Kleing, *Wonderfully Made*, 10. He adds: “Since the spiritual life is produced by the Holy Spirit for people with bodies, Christian spirituality is embodied piety.”

of joy (GEN. 3:16), to covetousness instead of thanksgiving (GEN. 5:21), to violence instead of tenderness (PSALM 112). While God intends desire for good, it too often culminates not only in sexual immorality, but in idolatry itself (COL. 3:5).

The desires of fallen humanity flow out of the human heart and wreak havoc in human behavior (MATT. 15:19–20A). Murder comes from hatred’s desire for revenge. Adultery comes from dissatisfied desire with one’s spouse or jealous desire for another’s spouse. Every kind of fornication flows out of desires for some forbidden behavior or someone God has withheld from us. Theft flows from desire for the things that are not one’s own. Desire crouches at the neighbor’s door (GEN. 4:7), primed to do harm, not good.

To desire something is to will it. All of this, therefore, is simply to acknowledge the bondage of the human will. Before redemption, all are spiritually dead (EPH. 2:1; COL. 2:13) and human will or desire is bound to seek only what God forbids and has not given or intended.

God’s Word testifies that the natural, unregenerated human mind, heart, and will are not only completely turned away from God in all divine matters, but are also perverted and turned toward every evil and against God. Likewise, they are not only weak, impotent, incapable, and dead to the good, but through original sin they have also been tragically perverted, poisoned through and through, and corrupted. The result is that by character and by nature they are very angry with God, rebellious against him, hostile to him, and far too energetic, vigorous, and active in everything that is displeasing and repugnant to God. Genesis 8:21: “The inclination of the human heart is evil from youth.”¹³²

Fallen humanity, so “very angry with God, rebellious against him, hostile to him, and far too energetic, vigorous, and active in everything that is displeasing and repugnant to God,” requires redemption, regeneration, new birth, “a new and right spirit.” “But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved” (EPH. 2:4–5; CF. JOHN 3:3–8; 1 PETER 1:3, 23; TITUS 3:5).

The new birth and new life given in Christ, the Christ-life, is a holy life (EPH. 1:4; 2 TIM. 2:22). “As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, ‘You shall be holy, for I am holy’” (1 PETER 1:14–16).

In such a condition human desire is being restored. “The living spirit of a believer, which has been created and is kept physically alive by God’s Spirit, has also been recreated and revived for eternal life with God by His Spirit.”¹³³ The Holy Spirit is at work bending the believer’s desire toward God and His gifts and purposes. His work is to make us the “obedient children” Peter speaks of. Obedience begins within, as the Spirit turns us away from the passions that seek to grasp and covet and selfishly claim for the self and turns us toward the holy desire to please God.

To have godly desire restored is also to be “holy in all your conduct.” Holy obedience begins within, but it flows outwardly in holy conduct.

This is the life we see in Christ Jesus. He is holy: “in him there is no sin” (1 JOHN 3:5; CF. HEB. 4:15) even though, “For our sake [God] made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.” (2 COR. 5:21)

2. Chastity and Christlikeness

a. The chastity of Jesus

Christ has fulfilled the law in our stead. “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” (ROM. 5:18–19; CF. GAL. 3:13, 4:4–5). In Christ — in the life, death, and resurrection of the Son of God — lies the salvation of the world. The law’s condemnation ends with His obediently providing the atoning sacrifice for the sins of the world (His vicarious satisfaction of the law’s righteous demand).

inherit the imperishable” (1 COR. 15:50). But our mortal, perishable bodies “will be changed” (1 COR. 15:53) and “clothed with immortality.” For these reasons the believer lives within both a now and a not yet: “So then, I myself serve the law of God with my mind, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin” (ROM. 7:25).

What the apostle says is echoed in the lives of all the baptized, caught in the midst of this “now but not yet” reality — trusting Christ and His life and righteousness even while thoughts, words, and deeds betray that faith. Despite our confession that “the good I want to do I do not do” and the wickedness of guilt for all we have done and said and thought that is wrong (ROM. 7:14–26) — despite all of that we nevertheless live in a sure hope of freedom from the enslaving power of sin and death because, by faith, we have received the promises of forgiveness, life, and salvation — of redemption in its fullness (ROM. 8:23–24).

Thus, as Kleing suggests,

Scripture paints two pictures of bodily life on earth. On the one hand, it shows us how God regards the human body, the body that he creates in his image, redeems by the incarnation of his Son, and sanctifies for life with him through the Holy Spirit. On the other hand, it also shows us how completely it has been corrupted by rebellion against God, how badly it has been misused to damage other people and the world around it, and how tragically it is doomed to die.¹³²

We have looked at the deep rebellion that is at work in human sexuality as it is subjected to the fall into sin. What might a positive statement of the Christian sexual life look like?

C. A CHASTE AND DECENT LIFE

Only by the work of the Holy Spirit can there be sanctification. So also, only by the Spirit can there be the sanctity called for in the Sixth Commandment, that “we lead a sexually pure [chaste] and decent life in what we say and do.”¹³³ Chastity, by definition, refers to the virtue of sexual purity, and it is to be practiced by all Christians, whether married or single. Chastity precludes any sexual activity outside of the parameters ordained by God. For the married, chastity restricts all such sexual activity to that between husband and wife; for the unmarried, chastity means to refrain from any sexual activity whatsoever until they are married and thus can be active in a manner pleasing to God.¹³⁴

1. Desire and the Christian

Sexual desire is an aspect of God’s good creation. Adam’s exclamation: “This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh” (GEN. 2:23) is a word of joyful thanksgiving for this good gift. The desire of woman for man and man for woman remains a gift, even in a fallen world, as expressed in Scripture: “Oh, that you would kiss me with the kisses of your mouth! For your love is better than wine” (SONG OF SONGS 1:2, 3; CF. 7:10). Before the fall — before humanity’s inward turn toward the self (*incurvatus in se*) — desire was response to a gift given. So Adam’s exclamation, “This at last!” (GEN. 2:23) drips with a joyful desire to have and to hold the Creator’s gift of Eve. Such desire for one who is present (and a present from God!) emerges also for the redeemed in delighted desire for a spouse God has given (PSALM 5:18). For, even as the fall continues its heavy hand on Christians, the sanctifying Spirit is nevertheless leading them out of their inward turn.

Yet, where sin reigns unopposed, desire is horribly twisted. Sin makes desire a bitter ally, for now it is no longer delight in a gift given, but a demand for what is not present. Desire for what we do not have leads to tension instead

¹³² Kleing, *Wonderfully Made*, 16.

¹³³ LSCwE, 14 and 93.

¹³⁴ Historically speaking, celibacy refers to the state of singleness, applying both to those who have never been married and to those who have been married but subsequently divorced or widowed. Celibacy may be by choice or circumstance; it may be temporary or permanent. Continence, on the other hand, refers to absolute restraint from any sexual activity. Those who are married may practice continence by refraining from sexual activity, either by agreement or due to some other unavoidable necessity, such as health concerns or distance due to travel. Those who are single practice continence so long as they are single; that is the ideal shape of their chastity. The celibate must practice continence in order to be chaste. The married may practice continence, yet what makes them chaste is limiting all sexual activity to marital relations alone. On these terms and their historical use, see the relevant entries in Carl F.H. Henry, ed., *Baker’s Dictionary of Christian Ethics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1973).

Thus, our Lord’s obedience means that all the commandments have been perfectly fulfilled for us. This includes the command: “You shall not commit adultery.” We see in Jesus a perfect chastity. He is a man, tempted as we are in every way (HEB. 4:15) — and so to all “the works of the flesh” including “sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these” (GAL. 5:19–21). Yet, His is “a chaste and decent life in word and deed.”

Note well that Christ’s chastity does not lie in His not marrying, but in His sexually pure life. He surprises His disciples with His willingness to interact with women about every aspect of their lives. As He encounters a woman at Jacob’s well in Samaria, her entire life is open to the Messiah (see JOHN 4:1–42). Another woman trusts that she can come to Jesus with the most intimate of problems and is healed (MATT. 9:20–22). His relationships with women can therefore be deeply intimate, but they are always honorable. Even when intensely personal, they are without even a shadow of anything amorous or concupiscent. So His followers include many women believers, a fact that shows His attentiveness to their needs, His openness to them as disciples, and their eager willingness to support His work (MARK 15:14; LUKE 8:2; 23:27). Despite the Gnostic and Hollywood fantasies about Jesus’s relationship with Mary Magdalene,¹³⁷ the Gospels reveal Him not as Mary’s husband, but as her healer from the demonic and her gentle Lord, evident in His tender compassion toward her on Easter morning (LUKE 8:2; JOHN 20:11–17). The devotion of the women followers is so evident that they are mentioned a number of times especially after Jesus’ condemnation, crucifixion, death and resurrection (e.g., LUKE 23:49; 55; 24:10, 22, 24).

All of this shows the powerful effect of the loving, chaste relationship Jesus had with women. In His chastity He treats women not as sexual objects but as in every way “heirs with [men] of the grace of life” (1 PETER 3:7) and thus bestows the highest dignity on women.

b. Chastity as embodied love

As Christ’s own people and His disciples, we too are called to a holy chastity. Ours flows out of faith in the One who has fulfilled the law on our behalf, so it is not a chastity of merit. It is a matter of glad obedience because of our redemption, not an obligation for us to earn redemption. The law never ceases to condemn us, nevertheless, the chaste life of the believer springs from the love for God who is love (1 JOHN 4:10).

Where there is faith, there is love. Love is faith enacted (GAL. 5:6) by obedience to the commandments (1 JOHN 5:2). Chastity is an embodied love, an example of love shaping actions and behavior. Faith knows God’s gift of bodily life, His redemption of our bodies in Christ, and His sanctifying of our bodies by His Spirit. Our baptismal washing is the sign of the Spirit’s presence and work — sanctifying the justified. “But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God” (1 COR. 6:9).

The believer is not “washed ... sanctified ... justified” for no reason. And this Spirit-work does not involve only our spirits as faith is given and nurtured. It is also a *bodily* work. The Spirit’s indwelling makes each believer’s *body* “a temple of the Holy Spirit within you” (1 COR. 6:19). Paul thoroughly expounds this (1 COR. 6:12–20):

“All things are lawful for me,” but not all things are helpful. “All things are lawful for me,” but I will not be enslaved by anything. “Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food”—and God will destroy both one and the other. The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. And God raised the Lord and will also raise us by His power. Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Never! Or do you not know that he who is joined to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For, as it is written, “The two will become one flesh.” But he who is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with him. Fleec from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body. Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.

¹³⁷ The Gnostic Gospel of Philip and the purported fragment called the Gospel of Jesus’ Wife suggest that Jesus and Mary Magdalene were married. Dan Brown’s popular novel and movie, *The Da Vinci Code*, makes the same claim. These and other Gnostic writings date long after the New Testament and while Brown’s *The Da Vinci Code* implies that there is good evidence for the contention, the claim is completely without merit. See also Susan Haskins, *Mary Magdalene: Myth and Metaphor* (NY: Harcourt, 1993).

¹³³ FC SD II, 17, KW 547.

¹³⁴ Kleing, *Wonderfully Made*, 14.

Note the concerns the Apostle raises. First, the Corinthians evidently are exulting in being “justified by faith apart from works of the law” (ROM. 3:28). However, because of that teaching some falsely assume that their bodily life is now of little importance. Paul portrays the character of sin as an enslaving force. Set free “spiritually” they fail to see that they have willingly embraced slavery. As Luther says, they have foolishly chosen “a free choice which is not free, which is as sensible as calling fire cold and earth hot.”¹³⁸

Paul contrasts two opposing purposes or meanings of bodily life as sexual beings: one is focused on fornication (*porneia*; τὴ πορνεία; sexual sin, immorality, 1COR. 6:13). “Some of the Corinthian Christians seem to have defended their right to continue consorting with prostitutes.”¹³⁹ This is not to say that everyone in the Corinthian church was participating in prostitution, but it recognizes that by tolerating those who did, Corinthian believers disconnected bodily behavior from their identity in Christ. Sexual behavior was of no greater significance than eating. “When hungry, eat what you want. When desiring sexual release, satisfy the desire as you wish.” In effect, whatever the body wants, it should have. It is a matter of serving — serving the self as a body.¹⁴⁰

The contrasting understanding of bodily life, including sexuality, focuses on the body as God’s creation, subject to him. The body is intended “for the Lord” not for self-satisfaction. So the Apostle unfolds this understanding. First, the bodies of believers — not just their “soul” or “spirit” — will be raised with Christ because embodied believers are members of Christ, the risen Lord (1COR. 6:15).¹⁴¹ Paul asserts this in contrast to an apparent Corinthian slogan that God will destroy the body with its implication that bodily life and actions are unimportant.¹⁴² Here the resurrection means that the body has enduring significance and to join one’s body to a prostitute is to join Christ with that prostitute. This is the profound truth of Genesis 2:24 about sexual intercourse: “The two will become one flesh.”

The standard — fidelity in marriage or sexual abstinence outside of marriage — determines sexual morality. Thus the command is: “Flee from sexual immorality.” It is deadly, says Paul. It is of a different character than other sins because they are “outside the body,” but sexual sin is sin against the body (1COR. 6:18). The full meaning of this verse is a matter of great debate.¹⁴³ One certainty must be stressed, however, and one misperception should be identified. The misperception is the belief that sexual sin is the greatest of all sins. Paul speaks only of the character of sexual sin, not its gravity in comparison to other sins. The certainty is the emphasis in verses 19 and 20 that sexual sin denies the high purpose of the believer’s body: that the believer’s body is God’s temple, purchased by Christ for the purpose of glorifying God.

Thus, Paul has argued, not only does the sexually immoral person sin against the church and her spiritual union with the Lord (1COR. 6:15–17), but he also defiles his own body. This body, which has been consecrated by God as a temple of his Holy Spirit (1COR. 3:16–17), which has been bought for a price, and which is destined for resurrection, has now been torn from its spiritual union with Christ and joined in an unholy union. Again, that sinful desecration takes place in all sinful liaisons—in any sexual act besides that between husband and wife.¹⁴⁴

On the deepest level, the contrast of serving bodily desires versus chastity will always be between serving God and serving Satan. The human quest for sexual fulfillment is indeed a form of idolatry. Luther is again on the mark. Whom will we serve? “Thus the human will is placed between the two like a beast of burden. If God rides it, it wills and goes where God wills, as the psalm says: ‘I am become as a beast [before thee] and I am always with thee’ [PSALM 73:22]. If Satan rides it, it wills and goes where Satan wills; nor can it choose to run to either of the two riders or

¹³⁸ *Bondage of the Will*, LW 33:67.

¹³⁹ Gregory I. Lockwood, *1 Corinthians*, ConcC (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2010), 214.

¹⁴⁰ The echoes of incipient Gnosticism seem evident, a perspective that would coincide with the Stoic-Cynic view that the “wise” need no external curbs on their behavior. See Lockwood, *1 Corinthians*, 214.

¹⁴¹ Lockwood, *1 Corinthians*, 217–19; cf. Acts 9:4; Rom. 7:4; 12:5; 1 Cor. 12:27; Eph. 3:6; 4:12, 5:23; Col. 3:15.

¹⁴² Lockwood, *1 Corinthians*, 215.

¹⁴³ On the possible nuances of meaning, see Lockwood, *1 Corinthians*, 219–20.

¹⁴⁴ Lockwood, *1 Corinthians*, 220.

II. Chastity as sacrificial love

Our Lord issues a sobering call to His disciples: “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me” (MAT. 16:24). Paul speaks of a bodily sacrifice in Romans 12:1: “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.” This call should not be softened or trivialized as a small thing. It impacts everything in life, including our sexuality. The Bible’s call to a chaste and decent life demands the sacrifice of human desires, pleasures, and even a certain level of physical relief and release. It entails a cross that will include the denial of many wants and some needs. For all believers of every age, it means the denial of every desire for sexual fulfillment and pleasure that contravenes the bond of husband and wife.

An immediate objection follows: that it is unfair to the unmarried if the only acceptable setting for sexual activity is between husband and wife. Yes, biblical teaching exclusively allows for sexual activity in the bonds of marriage and withholds it from all who are unmarried. The married and the unmarried are not treated equally in that respect. “The union of husband and wife extends to the most intimate sharing in the act of sexual intercourse. The complete physical sharing of husband and wife is characterized by relaxation, enjoyment, and freedom from guilt.”¹⁴⁵ And this is not just temporally, but also spiritually beneficial. “For it is better to marry than to burn with passion,” writes Paul (1COR. 7:9). Only the married man and woman can provide to the other the healing purpose of marriage in the restraint of sin. “Sexual appetites need to be controlled and disciplined. Marriage functions under God’s ordinance to domesticate our passion and channel it in ways which, to some extent, bring it back into accord with the Creator’s order.”¹⁴⁶

This sexual good is denied to the unmarried by the Christian ethic of marriage and sexuality. Although countless unmarried men and women long to be married, for many their desire for both the temporal and spiritual blessings of godly marriage remains unfulfilled. Many who have not received a gift like Paul’s — a chaste celibacy that he happily commended to all who could receive it — instead “burn” without a husband or wife, with no opportunity to rejoice in a sexual relationship that is godly, fulfilling, and life-giving.

Such a reality cannot be denied. It also may not be used to support violation of the commandments. It is not uncommon for Christians with same-sex desires to argue that they ought to be able to marry in order to fulfill their sexual desires and not “burn with passion.” As already noted, this cannot be conceded.¹⁴⁷ Every commandment creates greater and lesser challenges to individuals, based on their personal setting. Those who are oppressed by unjust authorities will face a greater temptation to dishonor authority than those who have “good and gentle” individuals in authority over them (1PETER 2:18). So, too, in the realm of sexuality, all people spend part of life in the unmarried state and thus have the command of chaste celibacy to obey during their single years. Yet, Scripture does not hesitate to require chastity of every Christian. Meilaender states:

Nevertheless, without underestimating the anarchic power of sexual appetite, we need not characterize chastity as impossible for the unmarried, and we have every reason to encourage those who are unmarried—whether by choice or by accident of one’s personal history—to seek to cultivate within themselves the discipline to live in ways that honor our creation as sexual beings.¹⁴⁸

Can celibacy be a cross and a burden? Yes. And, as such, it is an encouragement to pursue godly marriage for the Christian who burns with desire. But it is also a specific call to take up one’s cross along the way of holy living — an avenue of presenting one’s body as a living sacrifice.

¹⁴⁵ *HS* 1981, 14.

¹⁴⁶ *HS* 1981, 21.

¹⁴⁷ A more personal approach that encourages a biblically faithful response to homosexual desire is evident in Rosaria Champagne Butterfield, whose conversion led her to repudiate her former lesbianism as “a case of mistaken identity.” See *Openness Unhindered: Further Thoughts of an Unlikely Convert on Sexual Identity and Union with Christ* (Pittsburg: Crown & Covenant Publications, 2021), 156. Kindle Edition. See also Mark A. Yarhouse and Olga Zaporozhets, *Conly Obedience* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2019).

¹⁴⁸ Meilaender, “Sixth Commandment,” 238.

to seek him out, but the riders themselves contend for the possession and control of it.”¹⁴⁵

So it is that Lewis’ simple standard for Christian conduct remains true, despite its unpopularity: either faithful marriage or total abstinence.¹⁴⁶ While popular western culture has made the fulfillment of any and all sexual desires the key to a fulfilled life, the Word of God makes the discipline of sexual desire a matter of life and death.

To say the body is “for the Lord” therefore means that sexual activity is not something in the realm of free choice for the believer, like deciding whether to have cereal or eggs for breakfast. It is a matter of right and wrong — and sexual sin is no mere peccadillo. So any “immorality” is forbidden to the believer as contrary to a bodily life for the Lord.

Yet, the exclusive focus on the forbidden misses the constructive purpose of Paul’s instruction. He concludes, “So glorify God in your body” (1COR. 6:20). In love for God who bestows our bodies, the Christian is called to see that embodied life is the realm in which God is glorified — thanked, praised, served and obeyed.¹⁴⁷ Chastity is, therefore, love embodied for God and the neighbor. Freed from the self-absorption of lust and its actions, the chaste and decent life is one in which God’s love for us can be returned with a life more directly devoted to Him and our neighbor.

I. Chastity as obedient love

To be justified by grace through faith is to be “in Christ” (ROM. 8:1). A chaste and decent life flows from unity with Christ by faith. This faith desires to serve the God who justifies — to serve Him as redeemed, embodied people. Faith aspires to the kind of sanctification that will “glorify God in your body” (1COR. 6:20). In his letter to the Colossians, the Apostle Paul exhorts believers as those who have been “reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him” (COL. 1:22). Having received Christ as Lord by grace through faith, we “walk in him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving” (COL. 2:6–7). Then, in the third chapter, he portrays specific facets of the new life of those who “have been raised with Christ” and are therefore to “seek the things that are above” (COL. 3:1).

And what does it mean to “seek the things that are above”? To put to death “earthly” things (COL. 3:5). Here he first names “sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.” But included with them are “anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk” together with lying to one another. This manner of life is ours since we “have put off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator” (COL. 3:9–10). Life in Christ is a putting off with the old self, on with the new self. Paul then turns away from the earthly things toward the things of the new self, “the things that are above,” namely: “compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and ... forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you” (COL. 3:12–13). And then, “above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony” (COL. 3:14).

Note then how Paul portrays the life that has been “raised with Christ” and seeks “the things that are above.” It disciplines the body by restraining the old self; a discipline that repudiates all immorality, sexual or otherwise (3:5). It then discards the old self’s corrupt heart and lips (COL. 3:8–10). But to take off all these soiled things leaves us in need of new garments, which God alone can supply by his Spirit — the virtues listed in Colossians 3:12–13 bound together in love’s perfect harmony.

Here we see that the chaste and decent life is bound inexorably with love’s “perfect harmony.” It is the “no” to cross sins that allows love’s beautiful virtues to shine.

¹⁴⁵ *Bondage of the Will*, LW 33:65–66.

¹⁴⁶ See p. 30, above.

¹⁴⁷ See SC II, First Article.

3. Chastity in marriage and apart from marriage

The NT teaches chastity and a godly life for both the unmarried and the married believer, but it has a different shape in these two settings. More than 16 centuries ago Gregory of Nazianzus said: “How great is the difference between pastoral counsel for the married and the unmarried.”¹⁴⁹ That difference is acute when one considers the topic of how a sexually pure and decent life is to be lived.

a. Chastity in marriage

Jesus, in forbidding divorce for His followers, seeks to preserve not only marriage, but also sexual fidelity within it. He shows that infidelity destroys a marriage, having divided what God has joined together (MAT. 19:1–9). What is true from the beginning (MAT. 19:8) continues in marriages today. Husbands and wives are called by God to a full and faithful love that takes to heart that God has joined them together. His creation of marriage is the establishment of a man-woman relationship in which the two are one flesh. As the woman is created from the man, so also in every marriage are the man and woman one flesh.

God’s Word exalts marriage: “House and wealth are inherited from fathers, but a prudent wife is from the Lord” (PROV. 19:14). The gift of marriage and children is known to be a great blessing from God Himself (PSALM 128:3–4). In light of this precious gift, it is no wonder that God harshly condemns all that destroys marriage in Malachi 2:14–16:

[T]he Lord was witness between you and the wife of your youth, to whom you have been faithless, though she is your companion and your wife by covenant. Did he not make them one, with a portion of the Spirit in their union? And what was the one God seeking? Godly offspring. So guard yourselves in your spirit, and let none of you be faithless to the wife of your youth. “For the man who does not love his wife but divorces her,” says the Lord, the God of Israel, “covers his garment with violence, says the Lord of hosts. So guard yourselves in your spirit, and do not be faithless.”

These verses from Malachi remind us that in making a man and woman one in marriage, God establishes a life-long covenant between them — one of fruitful love that, where God provides, results in godly offspring. To love is in stark contrast with divorce, which is here labeled a form of violence. There can be no mistake that marital chastity is grounded in a loving, faithful, procreative, and therefore sexual bond.

Chastity within marriage, then, is a matter of sexual purity within a relationship that is inherently active sexually. This is at the heart of biblical teaching on chastity. In Paul’s first epistle to the troubled Corinthian church, he devotes a lengthy chapter to practical matters of human sexuality both in and outside the context of marriage. His directions may be startling to the sensibilities of people today. He refers, for example, to what may have been a common saying among some Corinthian Christians: “It is good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman” (1COR. 7:1).¹⁵⁰ Paul, however, does not condemn sexual relations or urge everyone to be celibate. Although he says that “it is good to remain single, like I am” (1COR. 7:8) he affirms that the majority of people are called to the vocation of marriage. This is the case, says Paul, “because of the temptation to sexual immorality.”¹⁵¹ In the flight from sexual immorality (1COR. 6:18) it is evident then, that for the married couple, their sexual relationship is to be marked first and foremost by fidelity in every way. God intends for marriage to be the calling wherein husband and wife serve one another. This includes them not withholding themselves sexually from their spouses (1COR. 7:5). The development of a healthy, joyful sexual life is a significant aspect of chastity in marriage.

Marriage also, however, involves times of continence, or abstinence from sexual activity. Paul refers only to the idea of spouses refraining from sexual activity in order to devote themselves to prayer (1COR. 7:5). But other times when sexual activity is not possible or practical are also part of the pattern of married life — during an illness, during

¹⁴⁹ Orat. II, 28.

¹⁵⁰ See Lockwood, *1 Corinthians*, 224–25, on the matter of whether the quotation in 7:1 is Paul’s own assertion or a saying by the Corinthians. Lockwood, with many modern commentators, believes the statement was a Corinthian saying rather than Paul’s expression.

¹⁵¹ The Greek is *dia te porneias*, which literally is “because of the immorality,” using a plural in place of a singular “immorality.” The plural may look back to some of the kinds of sexual immorality Paul has already addressed in the epistle including incest, adultery, homosexuality, and prostitution. Lockwood suggests that visiting prostitutes was the most prevalent immorality. See Lockwood, *1 Corinthians*, 228, 231.

a period where one spouse must be away from the other, because of prolonged infirmities, due to disparities in the physical effects of aging, and so forth. There will also be times when a spouse withholds himself or herself intentionally. Whether this is for understandable or necessary reasons or not, the other spouse is not free to take this as an excuse for sexual immorality. It is simply a reality of a fallen world that marriages will experience periods — even long periods — during which sexual activity between spouses does not occur. All of this is part of the challenge of chastity for the married.

b. Chastity for the unmarried

Even if every Christian were to marry, none would be married throughout life. Marriage may be delayed for those who will marry (as it is increasingly today). And every married couple eventually will be separated from one another by death. And, of course, many people will not marry, some by choice and others by circumstance. In our broken, fallen world, marriage will too often end because of divorce.

For the unmarried, chastity is still required. And without the outlet of sexual relations in marriage, chastity will be a matter of self-control — that is, abstaining from sexual relationships and acts. For some, self-control is a gift — a charism (1 Cor. 7) to echo Paul. For such persons, like Paul,¹⁵² to be unmarried will not be a sacrifice. Rather, they will be freed from a whole realm of familial duty and responsibility that demands time and attention, to dedicate far more of themselves to serving Christ and His church.¹⁵⁴ This is the great strength and promise of celibate chastity.

For others who are unmarried, however, sexual self-control is not given as a gift. Rather, they face an ongoing desire for sexual relations and a sexual relationship (they “burn,” to quote Paul). To them, as noted before, Paul counsels marriage in 1 Corinthians 7. He does so rather matter-of-factly, seeming to see the decision to marry as something easily accomplished. In part this is because he is addressing some believers who are betrothed or have otherwise made marriage plans. But to counsel marriage today is somewhat different. We have earlier noted that a growing number of adults in North America are unmarried. Many — especially many Christians — want to be married but are not. Moreover, they want to marry in the Christian faith to a husband or wife who shares their beliefs and who is committed to a biblical understanding of marriage, to the gift of children, and to the responsibility to nurture those children in faith.

The church’s response to those who experience an unfulfilled desire for marriage must begin with a recognition of the problem. A chaste and decent life in a highly sexualized world is challenging to everyone, and especially to those without the gift of celibacy who long for a spouse. To recognize the needs of the single person is critical.

Church preaching and teaching can be of some benefit. One basic truth is worthy of note: Scripture is more inclined to address individual Christians as “brothers” (with “sisters” implied) than it is to speak to individual spouses or families. This at least suggests that we take more seriously this fact: all of us are brothers and sisters in Christ — that is our highest Christian identity, even higher than that we may be a Christian husband or wife, as significant as that is.

The church may also be able to help diminish unrealistic expectations about marriage. In light of the heavily romanticized views of marriage today, there is a tendency to expect that marriage demands the discovery of some sort of “soul mate.” Church teaching can counter this with the reminder that the foundation for marriage is not primarily an emotional connection or some kind of love-at-first-sight bolt out of the blue, but a commitment to live long fidelity according to the Word of God. In light of that, a more down-to-earth view of seeking a spouse could result. Romanticized distortions of marriage, writes Stanley Hauerwas, should “remind us that if we are to sustain marriage as a Christian institution, we will not do it by concentrating on marriage itself. Rather, it will require a

¹⁵² In 1 Cor. 7, Paul refers to the unmarried as being in the same circumstance as he is. Whether Paul was himself a widower or had never married cannot be determined conclusively. Luther believed him a widower. Lockwood, with Luther, argues that rather than translating the phrase “to the unmarried and the widows,” it would be better to read “to the widowers and the widows.” See 1 Corinthians, 234–36.

¹⁵⁴ Paul refers to “worldly troubles” (1 Cor. 7:28), anxiety about pleasing one’s spouse, and divided interests (1 Cor. 7:28, 32–34).

Given such teaching from our Lord and Paul’s similar counsel in 1 Corinthians 7 to the unmarried, the church ought to emphasize the positive dimension of unmarried, celibate life. The unmarried have a special opportunity for service to the Lord. To embrace this is in keeping with the apostle’s reminder that “the present form of this world is passing away” (1 Cor. 7:31) and this manner of “undivided devotion to the Lord” (1 Cor. 7:35). The church ought to recognize the importance of this teaching and not be hesitant about asking unmarried Christian men and women to assume responsibilities and utilize their individual gifts and abilities.¹⁶³

Such high regard for celibate chastity gets scant attention in the church today. To all the unmarried, whether celibacy is received as a gift or embraced out of obedience, this is a reminder of the meaning and high purpose of the single life for believers. While the Reformation rightly warned against the dangers and abusive results of enforced celibacy, the church today can benefit greatly from a reminder of the great potential and value when unmarried Christians devote themselves wholeheartedly to the Kingdom and its work. As Luther himself says in his 1522 treatise on marriage:

One should not regard any estate as better in the sight of God than the estate of marriage. In a worldly sense celibacy is probably better, since it has fewer cares and anxieties. This is true, however, not for its own sake but in order that the celibate may better be able to preach and care for God’s word, as St. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 7:32–34. It is God’s word and the preaching which make celibacy—such as that of Christ and of Paul—better than the estate of marriage.¹⁶⁴

He adds elsewhere, “To be sure, there are some (albeit rare) exceptions whom God has especially exempted, in that some are unsuited for married life, or others God has released by a high, supernatural gift so that they can maintain chastity outside of marriage.”¹⁶⁵

c. Chastity as witness

The chaste and decent life is an important witness to the world. In a life of chastity others will see individuals whose life and values stand in sharp contrast from the heavily sexualized lifestyle of American media and culture. Rather than the pursuit of sexual pleasure for its own sake, they will see people with a higher meaning and purpose — men and women whose joy is not a kind of bitter self-denial, but one of fruitful service that honors God and values other persons as His creatures, not objects for the pursuit of personal pleasure.¹⁶⁶ In chaste unmarried believers, this witness can be uniquely powerful (1 Pet. 3:9).

Such a witness also points to the future hope of the Christian faith. We obviously know life in the new creation only in part, but among the glimpses of that new world where we are still embodied, we see a form that is far beyond our earthly bodies, imperishable, glorious and spiritual (1 Cor. 15:42–44). In this new creation of the resurrection, we “neither marry nor are given in marriage” (Matt. 22:30). Despite the mystery in such words, we are led to expect something beyond the sexual and marital existence we now know. To live toward such a reality in the present age is not to despise any earthly blessing and pleasure of the present-time, but it is to see even something as precious as marriage to be only a passing gift.

Life for the Christian in this present age, despite all its seemingly “new” challenges, is ultimately no different than life for every earlier generation of the church. The God who has graciously redeemed us in the incarnation, death, resurrection, and ascension of His Son calls us to faith active in love (Gal. 5:6). Love for God sees Him as our supreme good and His Word as the one unshakable truth. It rejoices in being His creatures and delights in His commands. It

¹⁶³ An example of this may be the encouragement of unmarried men to accept calls to serve in ministries where families with children might be reluctant to serve.

¹⁶⁴ LW 45:46–47.

¹⁶⁵ LC 16, 211; KW 414–15.

¹⁶⁶ Note this significant footnote (#4) from *HS 1981* on page 6:

This Scriptural assertion implies that the subject of human sexuality includes much more than the male/female relationship in marriage. While it has been necessary to limit this study to a basic discussion of the male/female duality as it pertains to marriage and certain other problems, such as homosexuality, the Commission recognizes that more could and needs to be said about how our creation as sexual beings affects a whole variety of relationships such as between parents and children, friends of the same sex as well as friends of the opposite sex, male and female colleagues, employers and employees, and many other personal encounters between the sexes.

community that has a clear sense of itself and its mission and the place of family within that mission.”¹⁶⁷

Even if Christians were to adopt a more thoughtful and biblical way of approaching marriage, there will still be the reality of many unmarried believers who have an unfulfilled longing for marriage but are required to exercise the discipline of a celibate lifestyle nonetheless. There is no avoiding the difficulty this entails. For too many, their unfulfilled desires will result in willingness to engage in sexual liaisons apart from marriage. For others, lusts will push them toward pornography and masturbatory behavior. For still others, their unsatisfied longing for a spouse will result in loneliness, despair, and depression.

A chaste and decent life in a highly sexualized world is challenging to everyone, and especially to those who long for a spouse. Recognition of the needs of the single person is critical. Many single Christians have said that their church is so focused on families that they feel out of place. Others may fall into the trap of letting their sinful behavior alienate them from the communion of confessing sinners and forgiven saints. At a minimum, therefore, this calls for honest conversations and for exploring settings for fellowship and support for the unmarried.

These are challenges for responsible pastoral care. A combination of compassion and fidelity to the high standards of God’s Word is called for from pastors who hear the confessions of those who are caught in sinful behavior brought on by loneliness and lust. Additional counseling and support groups may also be available for recommendation. It is worth noting that resources are available to encourage unmarried chastity for Christians with same-sex attraction.¹⁶⁸ Similar resources are available for heterosexual Christians.¹⁶⁹

Such considerations may appear to make life for the unmarried Christian nothing more than a grim acceptance of a burden. In our Lord’s teaching about the permanence of marriage, however, another thought emerges. To be sure, Christ is not averse to blunt teaching about the demands of the Christian life. Indeed, because He emphatically forbids divorce the disciples say that “it is better not to marry” (Matt. 19:10). His response acknowledges a certain truth in that assertion:

But he said to them, “Not everyone can receive this saying, but only those to whom it is given. For there are eunuchs who have been so from birth, and there are eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by men, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. Let the one who is able to receive this receive it.” (Matt. 19:11–12)¹⁷⁰

“Eunuch” is seldom used today, but in the biblical world eunuchs were fairly common. Eunuchs were men who were sexually unable to marry either because of a lifelong condition or because of castration.¹⁷¹ Jesus refers to such men as the first two examples of eunuchs. Then He adds a third kind of eunuch: “eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. Let the one who is able to receive this receive it.”

Jesus is obviously not commending self-castration. So what is He saying? At the very least, He says this much. Eunuchs — people who are not sexually active — have the opportunity to devote themselves to God’s kingdom. To do so is commended by our Lord, even though other Jewish teachers at that time viewed marriage as required for all people so that the command to be fruitful and multiply would be fulfilled. But Jesus here teaches that to be unmarried and chaste is not only godly, but is, indeed, a way of life that ought to be “received” if that is possible.¹⁶²

¹⁶⁷ Stanley Hauerwas, *A Community of Character: Toward a Constructive Christian Social Ethics* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981), 174, but see also 155–66.

¹⁶⁸ See the resources noted above in fn. 150.

¹⁶⁹ See, e.g., Adriane Dore Heins, *Hells, My Name Is Single* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2014); and Joshua Cinton, *His Secret Addiction: Every Man’s Struggle* (Saysville, 2012).

¹⁷⁰ Jesus’ words in Matt. 19:11–12 are challenging. As Jeffrey Gibbs has noted, the referent of the phrase “this saying” is debated. Does it refer to Jesus’ teaching about divorce being contrary to the will of God from the beginning, or does it refer to the disciples’ assumption that in light of that teaching it is better not to marry? Jeffrey A. Gibbs, *Matthew 11:2–20:34*, ConcC (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2010), 953–56.

¹⁷¹ In some pagan religions, castration was viewed as the highest offering one could make to the gods. This was obviously contrary to biblical teaching and both the OT and later Judaism therefore strongly condemned any such practice so vehemently that the Law forbade eunuchs from even entering the temple courts (Deut. 23:1). Jesus refers first to lifelong eunuchs (“from birth,” literally, “from the mother’s womb,” *exin gra emenouchi haitines ei kollassi metros gnomethen haitis*), then to the castrated (*hai exin emenouchi haitines emenouchethen hypo tou anthropoln*).

¹⁷² See Instone-Brewer, *Divorce and Remarriage in the Bible*, 148.

blooms and bears fruit in love for the neighbor.

Faith active in love is seen in every realm of life, including sexuality and marriage. Valuing God above all else, the Christian life sees our creation as male and female as gift and seeks to glorify God with the body He has given to each of us. It heeds the call to chastity in every circumstance. Christians view marriage as the typical vocation for most men and women and seek to honor Christ within it when that gift is given. Christians delight in the way God provides both relational and procreative blessings within marriage. Christians delight in the otherness of male and female, the help they give one another in joy and adversity, and the fact of a one-flesh union within which God grants the gift of children. Knowing God is the author of life by procreation, believers will welcome children and give thanks for them.

In the face of sin’s present power, we see God’s love in the way wives and husbands help to restrain sin in each other as their closest neighbor in Christ. We also see the importance of virtuous single men and women who at every stage of life and for whatever reason they are single embrace a life of sexual self-restraint either permanently or until such time as God gives them a spouse.

In brief, the Christian view of human sexuality is love for God overflowing in love for the neighbor.

We love because he first loved us. If anyone says, “I love God,” and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. And this commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother. (1 John 4:19–21)

CONCLUSION

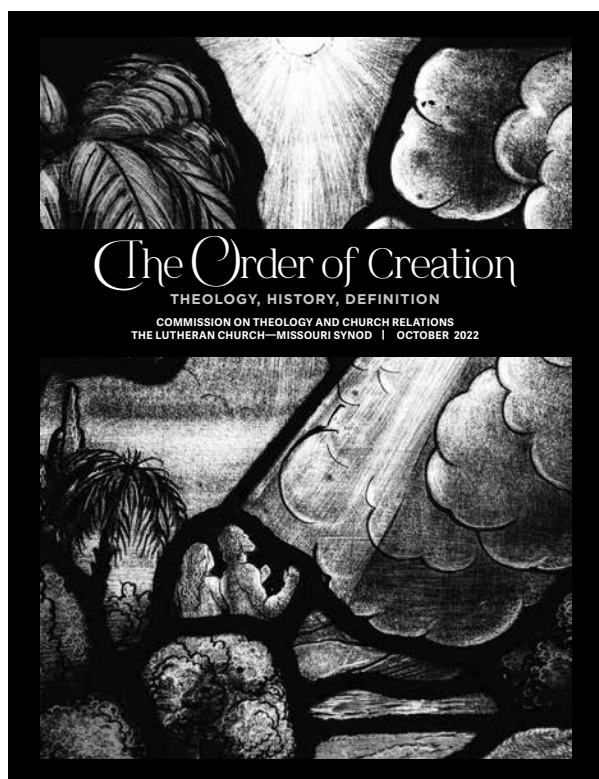
God’s intention for human sexuality does not change. It does not evolve with time, nor does it adapt to cultural, social, legal, political or medical-scientific views of it. Perceptions of human sexuality may change, but God’s design for it does not. Christians, however, bear witness to the truth of God’s revelation about how this sovereign Creator God has made us, redeemed us, and sanctifies us. God has given us our bodies. He has redeemed us from the sin that has complicated how we view our bodies. He seeks to renew our hearts and minds so that we live in accordance with how He has made us.

In responding to resolutions from recent Synod conventions to update *Human Sexuality 1981*, the Commission has ultimately found nothing wrong or demanding correction. It has, rather, sought to do just what the resolutions requested: bring the teachings of that report into conversation with a vast array of new challenges to traditional Christian understandings of marriage and sexuality. Attitudes toward gender identity and dysphoria, homosexuality and homosexual marriage, and societal pressures regarding sexuality, among others, have changed markedly in the last four decades. While we categorically affirm the teachings of *Human Sexuality 1981*, we also must acknowledge the manifold differences that exist today and will face our children in the decades to come.

What this report puts forward, however, places its emphasis upon countering these current movements with the one thing that provides a firm basis for faithful Christian morality and sexual ethics: theology. We offer a biblical theology of human sexuality that revolves around a creedal, Trinitarian framework and presents our sexual identity, our sexual activities, and our sexual thoughts in light of the God who has created us, the God who redeems us from sin, and the God who sanctifies us as His people who live according to His Word. No other foundation will do. It will, as St. Paul says, “become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire” (1 Cor. 3:13). Any foundation other than God’s Word — “gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw” will ultimately fail. God’s Word, will not. “All flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls, but the word of the Lord remains forever” (1 Peter 1:24–25).

Likewise, in keeping with the venerable tradition of Luther’s catechism, the Commission urges the Christian ethic of “a chaste and decent life” as a model for how Christians should live in a culture that denies its basic moral foundations. All Christians — male and female, married and single, adult and youth, widowed and divorced — should value chastity in all their sexual dealings. Chastity should govern how we view our sexual identity and sexual activity, our sexual thoughts and sexual behaviors, our relationships with brothers and sisters in Christ, with husbands and wives in the flesh. Above all, it finds in Jesus Christ — the incarnate, crucified, and risen Lord, the Savior of sinners and all

creation, the author and perfecter of our faith — the perfect example of chastity and decency. This Lord Jesus laid aside His rightful heavenly glory, withstood the temptations of the devil, became the perfect sacrifice upon the cross, rose from the dead, and accomplished the forgiveness of our sins. He has done what no sinful human being could. God's Word urges us to lead holy lives, by doing as Christ Himself did and taught us to do (*1PM 5:1-10*). Yet, more than that, God's Word also offers forgiveness. God's Word offers forgiveness to those who have sinned. God's Word offers forgiveness to those who have sinned sexually. God's Word finally offers the healing truth of who we are and how we were created, that through repentance and faith we might in the Holy Spirit's power seek to live chaste and decent lives sexually until Christ returns to end all temptation and sin forever.



The Order of Creation

THEOLOGY, HISTORY, DEFINITION

THE TERM "ORDER OF CREATION" is not found in Scripture. This does not mean it is unbiblical, let alone that we should not consider it a Lutheran idea that, properly understood, contributes to our understanding of God's wise and benevolent design for His creation. On the contrary, the order of creation is a theological concept that Lutherans — among others — have used to make sense of New Testament references to the story of creation as a basis for relationships today, particularly those relationships between men and women in the church and in the Christian home. While it is tempting to dismiss this concept as antiquated or to view it through the lens of current cultural debates regarding gender, marriage and sexuality, the theology behind the order of creation seeks to state clearly the traditional, biblical Christian view of a Creator God who has established and who governs all things according to His loving, unchanging will. This includes the fundamental goodness of all He has made, the creation of man and woman in the image of God, the distinctiveness of man and woman, the indissoluble bond of man and woman in matrimony, and the Christian home and Christian church as reflections of God's divine order for humanity, among many other relationships that touch the whole of Christian life. With the current virulent cultural assault on traditional Christianity, it is important — maybe now more than ever — to ground our moral views not in historical precedent, judicial or legislative politics, or pragmatic reasoning, but in God's institution at creation and what He has revealed about it in Holy Scripture.

It is in this light that the 2016 convention of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod passed Resolution 5-14 ("To Reaffirm Biblical Teaching on Man and Woman in the Church"), which requested that the Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR) produce "a biblical, confessional, and historical study of the concept of the order of creation, examining its relevance to various questions about the service of men and women in the church and society today and also taking into account continued disagreements and discussion in the Synod about the service of women in certain lay positions and offices of leadership (e.g., congregational chairman or vice-chairman).¹ Implicit in this resolution are two different but related sets of questions. First, what is the order of creation, and where does it come from — Scripture, Luther, Lutheran theologians, the Synod? Second, what role does the order of creation play in how Christians organize our churches and homes, and what implications might it have for society more broadly, including the involvement of women in various occupations, politics, the military or law enforcement? While both sets of questions have been addressed in various ways during the recent history of the Missouri Synod, it is the contention of this report that answering the first set of questions by clarifying the theology of the order of creation will resolve many of the tensions inherent in the second set of questions.

This report, then, seeks to fulfill the requirements of 2016 Resolution 5-14 through a substantial biblical, theological and historical study of the order of creation. The first section will present a brief survey of the biblical references for the order of creation, its use in Luther and post-Reformation Lutheranism, and its development among theologians inside and outside the Missouri Synod in recent centuries. The second section will detail the term's formal adoption by the Missouri Synod in 1956 and its application to various ecclesiastical matters by Synod conventions and the CTCR since then, including women's suffrage, women's ordination and women's service in the church in various ways. On the basis of this historical review, the document will then seek to provide a succinct definition of the order of creation (and related terms) consistent with the Synod's historic usage and understanding, which may help to facilitate and support responsible catechetical instruction, charitable Synod discussions and faithful public witness.

¹ Proceedings of the 66th Regular Convention (St. Louis: The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 2016), 162–63.

Abbreviations used:

AC	Augsburg Confession
Ap	Apology of the Augsburg Confession
CCM	Commission on Constitutional Matters
CTCR	Commission on Theology and Church Relations
FCSD	Formula of Concord: Solid Declaration
KW	Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert, eds. <i>The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church</i> (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000).
LC	Large Catechism
LSB	<i>Lutheran Service Book</i> (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2006).
LSCwE	<i>Luther's Small Catechism with Explanation</i> (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2017).
LW	<i>Luther's Works, American Edition</i> , ed. Jaroslav Pelikan, Helmut T. Lehmann and Christopher Boyd Brown, 75 vols. (Philadelphia and St. Louis: Augsburg and Concordia Publishing House, 1955–).
SA	Smalcald Articles
SC	Small Catechism

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I. Order of Creation in Scripture, Luther and Lutheran Theology

While the term "order of creation" is not found in Scripture, it is nonetheless a biblical concept. This theological term describes repeated instances where the New Testament appeals to the creation and fall in Genesis 1–3 as precedent for conduct in the church and Christian home. The order of creation is then complemented by the "order of redemption," a term that traditionally refers to the new creation initiated by Christ's death and resurrection and the consequences that new creation has for life in the temporal realm. The order of redemption does not negate the order of creation, but it provides a new perspective from which to view the order of creation and freshly envision how we might live in accordance with God's design for humanity. At the same time, the order of creation as God established it in the Garden of Eden can never be fully restored due to the effects of the fall into sin. Only after Christ's return will God finally remove forever the wicked adversaries of his creation — sin, death and the devil — though nowhere does Scripture promise that the order of creation will be restored in exactly the same way as it existed before the fall.

The order of creation as a theological theme is derived from numerous New Testament passages. The primary two instances occur in 1 Corinthians 11 and 1 Timothy 2. In 1 Corinthians 11:3, St. Paul says that "the head of every man is Christ, the head of a wife is her husband, and the head of Christ is God." He then goes on to ground this — and the custom of women wearing head coverings in worship — in the sequential ordering of creation, beginning with man, followed by woman: "For a man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God, but woman is the glory of man. For man was not made from woman, but woman from man. Neither was man created for woman, but woman for man. That is why a wife ought to have a symbol of authority on her head" (1COR. 11:7–10). St. Paul makes a similar comment in 1 Timothy 2:11–14, "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 and became a transgressor." In this passage, however, he intones not only the sequence of creation, but also the sequence of the fall — man was created before woman, woman was deceived before man.

A parallel passage that incorporates both of these arguments, yet without explicit reference to creation, is found in 1 Corinthians 14: "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. If there is anything they desire to learn, let them ask their husbands at home. For it is shameful for a woman to speak in church" (1COR. 14:33–35).² While no passages in the Gospels directly refer to the order of creation, Christ Himself does cite creation (over the Mosaic Law) as precedent for God's intention that marriage be indissoluble:

He answered, "Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'? So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate." They said to him, "Why then did Moses command one to give a certificate of divorce and to send her away?" He said to them, "Because of your hardness of heart Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so. And I say to you: whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery." (MATT. 19:4–9; SEE MARK 10:2–9)

In these examples, the New Testament does not appeal to natural law ("the work of the law is written on their hearts," ROM. 2:15); the moral, sacrificial or civil regulations of the Mosaic Law; or ancient Greek or Roman custom. On the contrary, it appeals to the divine arrangement — revealed throughout Scripture — of human relationships as they were constituted at creation and, ultimately, confounded by the fall. After the creation of man and woman on the sixth day of creation in Genesis 1, God gave humanity authority over all animals of land, sky and sea (GEN. 1:28), and He placed all vegetation — fruit and plant life — under humanity to be used for food (GEN. 1:29).³ God first gave animals to

² It should be said, however, that the New Testament does not always describe male headship or female submission in terms of creation. St. Paul just as readily uses the relationship between Christ and the church as basis for both headship and submission (EPA. 5:22–31). In a similar way, St. Peter grounds submission of Christians to the Emperor, or submission of servants to masters, in Christ's own unjust suffering (1PETER 2:13).

³ CTCR, *Together with All Creatures: Caring for God's Living Earth* (St. Louis: The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 2010), 40.

Adam that they might be his helpers, and Adam named them (GEN 2:18-20).⁴ Finally, God formed Eve out of a rib taken from Adam's side that she might be what the animals could not be: "a helper fit for him" (GEN 2:18). Together as man and wife, Adam and Eve were given dominion over all creation, and the relationship between them had no parallel within that creation.⁵ This orderly design, however, became disfigured when the fall in Genesis 3. Eve was deceived by the serpent, ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and gave the fruit to Adam, who ate of the fruit (GEN 3:5-7), which God had specifically commanded him not to eat (GEN 2:16-17). As a result of their disobedience, sin entered the world and, along with it, God imposed certain clear consequences. He tells the woman, "Your desire shall be for [or, *contrary to*] your husband, but he shall rule over you" (GEN 3:16).⁶ He declares that man's own stewardship of creation and daily labor shall become onerous "because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, 'You shall not eat of it'" (GEN 3:17). While the exact practical implications of Genesis 1-3 for a fallen — or redeemed — creation may be uncertain, St. Paul finds in them precedent for the specific subordination of wife to husband in the home and for the proscription against women publicly teaching and exercising authority in the church (see 1COR 11:14; 1TIM 2: above).

An explanation of the term "order" is merited. The meaning of "order" is not always altogether clear when describing the order of creation and can lead to misunderstanding in its own right.⁷ Order translates the Greek word *taxis*, which has the sense of an "arrangement." It is used to classify objects, such as one might find in the sciences with the term taxonomy. Likewise, it is the root of the forms often used in the New Testament to describe "submission" (*hypotage*) or its verbal analogue, "to submit" (*hypotasse*). Thus, one will often find these Greek words translated "subordination" or "to be subordinate," because the root is "order." The "order" in the order of creation, then, has primarily to do with the classification of living beings in accordance with God's created design for them — men, women, husbands, wives, parents, children, animals, vegetation. In the case of human beings, the first and primary distinction made by God Himself in creation is that of men as men and women as women. All humans fall into one of these two classifications, and the proper relationships between all humans are fundamentally shaped by that divinely instituted distinction.

⁴ Because they alone were made in God's image, they were not simply another category of earthly creatures but were given dominion over the birds, fish, and land animals. Although the word "image" itself does not mean "to rule over," this unique status gives the human creatures resulted in their having dominion over the animals. In order to exercise this dominion as responsible stewards of the earth, they were given wisdom and the capacity to make judgments." CTCR, *The Creator's Tapestry: Scriptural Perspectives on Man-Woman Relationships in Marriage and the Church* (St. Louis: The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 2009), 9. "The image of God appears closely tied to the commission to exercise dominion. The narrative of Genesis 1 moves in this direction. First, God gives them the same command as He does to other creatures, namely: 'Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth.' He then gives them the additional commission to 'subdue' (i. subjugate) and have dominion (rule) over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth" (p. 20). The first word, *kabash*, carries with it an element of forcefulness when used elsewhere in the Old Testament. Before the fall, human beings reflect and pattern themselves after God's own relationship to the world. In that regard, *kabash* may refer to the setting of boundaries even as God did so during the first three days. *Dominion, rule, means among other things, the gracious rule of a shepherd king. Humans are given the responsibility of protecting and guiding creation in order to maintain shalom. Psalm 72 describes the rule of a righteous king under whose rule everything flourishes, from the human realm to the nonhuman created realm."* CTCR, *Together with All Creatures*, 40.

⁵ For whatever differences exist between them, man and woman in their common humanity bear the image of God, which distinguishes them from all other created beings. The concept of the image of God — what it is and precisely what it entails for man and woman in contrast with one another or the rest of creation — has long been a contested subject and one that is beyond the scope of this document.

⁶ The English Standard Version (ESV) changed the translation of the Hebrew preposition "cf" from "for" to "contrary to" when it codified its permanent text in 2016. In doing so, it adopted a minority position among English and other translations. Though "contrary to" had previously been an alternate translation in the ESV footnotes, the change was ostensibly made to parallel a similar Hebrew construction in Genesis 4:7, where God questions Cain for fearing that his offering would not be accepted and says, "And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is for you, but you must rule over it." For a discussion of this parallel, see Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1-17*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1990), 201-2. In 2009 *Creator's Tapestry*, the CTCR used the ESV's then-current translation of "for," but included a footnote explaining how the translation choice might affect the interpretation of the passage: "That she will physically desire her husband, even though he 'rules her' (representing) her, is not that she will desire to dominate her husband, but instead he will rule over her (compare GEN 4:7)." 19-24. While the grammar and exact translation of this construction are not certain, the reality it reflects in either case is the same: the sin that entered with the fall fundamentally disordered the relation between man and woman God instituted at creation, and, because of that, sin, man and woman thus act against their orderly design in relation to one another.

⁷ With the perfect harmony of marriage destroyed, competition and conflict now corrupt the husband and wife relationship. The painful effects of sin will be evident in her vocation as woman and wife." CTCR, *Creator's Tapestry*, 19.

⁸ "Order" in English can denote a rank — one over the other. It can mean a classification — one fits here, another there, almost in a sense of orderliness. It can indicate a command — that of giving an order. We can speak of a "church order" (*Kirchenordnung* in German). Order can also imply a sphere or realm, and this seems to be the most accurate representation within Lutheranism in the nineteenth century. The official introduction of the term into the Missouri Synod in 1936 defines it as a "relative position in a series," that is, as one thing relating to another in a succession. For these considerations, see Carl Braaten, *No Other Gospel: Christianity among the World's Religions* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 119. See also Edward H. Schroeder, "The Orders of Creation — Some Reflections on the History and Place of the Term in Systematic Theology," *Concordia Theological Monthly* 43 (1972): 169.

Moreover, this divine ordering of relationships between men and women in the church and in the Christian home cannot possibly be ascribed to any superior or inferior quality inherent in males and females.¹² Were that the case, St. Paul could not apply the same argument to the relationship between the Father and the Son, as he does in 1 Corinthians 11. The term Paul uses for the husband (*kephale*) as head of the wife is the same term he uses for God the Father as head of the Incarnate Son (1COR 11:3). To regard the one submitting as inherently inferior is essentially to deny the equality of the Son with the Father which Scripture (PSL 24) and the creeds expressly teach.¹³ As the Commission stated in its report, *Creator's Tapestry*:

At a first glance, we may think that Paul is lining up some kind of power structure, an organizational chart with God at the top, woman at the bottom, and man as Christ's comediator in the middle. This hierarchical understanding of "headship" — a superior over an inferior — will not mesh with God's design, for even Christ has a head. Jesus Christ, God's incarnate Son, willingly submitted Himself to God his Father for the sake of His body the church. ... The relationship between God the Father and Christ demonstrates that submission to a head must not be seen as something servile or degrading but as a calling to willing and joyful service (HEB 12:2; 1COR 15:20).¹⁴

For a wife to submit to her husband or for woman to submit to man in the church in these New Testament passages is to reflect God's design inscribed upon creation as it pertains to those relationships. Submission does not degrade the female, nor does it elevate the male, but rather reflects the Creator who established this order in creation.

This also raises the question of whether this natural arrangement referred to by the order of creation is eternal and will be maintained in the new heavens and new earth. The New Testament does not fully define what our created, human relationships will look like after Christ's return, only that all things that exist will be utterly transformed. That could mean that the order of creation *itself* will be transformed and ultimately replaced by a different arrangement. At the same time, it could mean that the creation as it *currently exists* will be transformed through the eradication of sin and its effects. The point is that we cannot know with certainty since Scripture does not straightforwardly depict post-resurrection anthropology but employs much metaphor and symbolism. The same holds true for images of the natural realm in the life to come, such as the wolf and the lamb, calf and lion, cow and bear, cobra and adder (SAAM 116-9). Scripture includes them in prophecy regarding the new heavens and new earth, yet that does not necessitate that these species, let alone every individual animal or species, will share in the eternal kingdom. On the contrary, such passages evoke for us the restoration of innocence and complete transformation of life as we know it using memorable, symbolic images. Biblical prophecy does not necessarily describe in actual detail the composition of the universe after the Second Advent. While we cannot say with exact certainty how the beings and relationships God ordered at creation will exist after Christ's return, this does not affect the ordering of that creation as we experience it now and as we live in accordance with God's design for it.

Just as the term "order of creation" is not explicitly found in Scripture, but is a concept used to make sense of biblical passages that appeal to the narrative of creation and fall as precedent for conduct in the church and home, so too, Luther and subsequent Lutherans did not necessarily use the term "order of creation," choosing instead analogous terms to express the same idea of authority structures inscribed on the created order. That came in numerous forms for Luther. Under the heading of the Fourth Commandment in his Large Catechism, Luther describes the honoring of father and mother as applying to submission to three sources of authority, or "fathers":

¹² CTCR, *Human Sexuality* (St. Louis: The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 1981), 31. "It will be inappropriate to ask for some special reason why the man ought to exercise headship over the woman, other than the reason that God ordained the hierarchy which exists in marriage." This comment implies that the function of headship and subordination within marriage is a consequence of an explicit Scriptural command rather than a logical deduction from observable traits independent of God's Word.

¹³ The Athanasian Creed notes that the persons of the Trinity are in "glory equal," and "eternal with each other and coequal," while the Son is "equal to the Father with respect to His divinity, less than the Father with respect to his humanity" (138, 319-20).

¹⁴ CTCR, *Creator's Tapestry*, 32. See also Peter Brunner, *The Ministry and the Ministry of Women* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1971), 30. "Despite individual differences of various forms of subordination, the subordination of the woman to the man is mysteriously bound up with the subordination of the church to Christ and Christ to the Father. What is 'subordination' for the Lord Jesus Christ is reflected in the subordination demanded of the woman, and she may see it in the light of the relationship between the church and Christ and between the Father and the Son."

That is not to say that the relationship between men and women as individuals, let alone their union as husband and wife, can simply be reduced to their designation by God in creation as "male" or "female." Indeed, the purpose for such an orderly creation of men and women is ultimately the marital union — and through it, the propagation of children.⁹ It is for this reason that God designed man and woman biologically in the way that He did. Man and woman are designed to form a union of self-giving love with one another. Adam describes his wife as "bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh" (GEN 2:23). God commands man that he "shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh" (GEN 2:24; MAT 19:5-6; MARK 10:7-8). Through this union, man and woman shall "be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth" (GEN 1:28). Together in this union, they are to "subdue" the earth and exercise dominion over plant and animal life (GEN 1:28-29).

Though man and woman have definite roles in this creation and though the curse of sin has indelibly damaged the perfect exercise of these roles, nonetheless men and women in marriage are not independent of one another, nor is their relationship defined in terms of opposition, control or manipulation. As St. Paul says, "In the Lord woman is not independent of man nor man of woman; for as woman was made from man, so man is now born of woman" (1COR 11:10-12). Likewise, through the marital union of man as man and woman as woman, the two become united in one flesh sexually, and they are no longer independent agents operating as they please. "For the wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. Likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does" (1COR 7:4). While the order of creation clearly distinguishes between man and woman and the complementary roles they play in marriage, those roles do not exhaustively define man and woman and they also do not encompass the entirety of marriage.

Similarly, the sense of the term "submission" or "to submit" does not express a relationship of power. It is not the husband who compels or requires submission; he freely receives it. The direction to submit is given to the woman, not the man. Nor does the man coerce submission of the woman.¹⁰ As the CTCR report on *Women in the Church* stated in one of its summary principles: "Subordination, when applied to the relationship of women and men in the church, expresses a divinely established relationship in which one looks to the other, but not in a domineering sense. Subordination is for the sake of orderliness and unity."¹¹ This relationship and the proper understanding of divinely ordered submission has, however, been affected by sin. The curse pronounced upon Eve in Genesis 3:16 means that the godly practice of the order of creation has been tragically twisted and complicated by sin. Man sins by exercising his domestic authority coercively or abusively, just as he sins by failing to exercise it properly and lovingly, or by abdicating it to another. This is why the New Testament urges him to carry out his divine responsibilities in the home faithfully, caring for his wife spiritually (EPH 5:25-29) and treating her respectfully (COL 3:19; 1PETER 3:7). Woman, for her part, may militate against the authority of man or seek to exercise that authority herself. Thus, the New Testament urges her to submit to her husband spiritually as the church submits to Christ (EPH 5:22-24) with a gentle and quiet spirit (1PETER 3:4). Any and all misuse or rejection of these divinely ordered roles is a direct consequence of sin.

⁹ This is not meant to imply that single men or women are somehow acting contrary to the created order. St. Paul himself is explicit about the role of singleness in the life of the Christian and the ministry of the church: "I want you to be free from anxiety. The unmarried man is anxious about the things of the Lord, how to please the Lord. But the married man is anxious about worldly things, how to please his wife, and his interests are divided. And the unmarried or betrothed woman is anxious about the things of the Lord, how to be holy in body and spirit. But the married woman is anxious about worldly things, how to please her husband. I say this for your own benefit, not to lay any restraint upon you, but to promote good order and to secure your undivided devotion to the Lord" (1COR 7:32-38).

¹⁰ CTCR, *Creator's Tapestry*, 26. "The original Greek verb for 'submitting to' is appropriately translated 'subject yourself to' another. The word (*hypotasso*) is a combination of the Greek preposition *hypo* ('under') and the verb *tasso* ('to arrange'), signifying an ordered place or arrangement. Foreign to this good and common word in the Scriptures are negative thoughts of inferior human ability or worth, of lesser intelligence or competence. Still more foreign are ideas of oppressive behavior or coerced servitude — as if to make of someone a mere doorman or slave. Rather, viewed in its full biblical context, and particularly when it describes Christian conduct in life's callings, the word signifies willingly yielding to the other, an attitude of looking to another of putting first the desires of another, of seeking another's benefit." CTCR, *Women in the Church: Scriptural Principles for Ecclesial Practice* (St. Louis: The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 1983), 31. "There are also differences in the way subordination and governance are conducted. Governance in a subordinate relationship can be oppressive — a relationship that works for the benefit of the ruler and to the detriment of the subordinate. This relationship is characterized by obedience to command, a 'lording it over' or other attitude. But a person can be subordinate without ever having to command. Neither the Scripture is ever said that power or authority (nomos) or rule is given to the man over the woman. All of the passages which speak of the subordination of the woman to the man, or of wives to their husbands, are addressed to the woman. The verbs enjoining subordination in these texts are in the middle voice in the Greek (reflective). The woman is reminded, always in the context of an appeal to the grace of God revealed in Jesus Christ, that she has been subordinated to man by the Creator and that it is for this reason that she should willingly accept this divine arrangement. The Scriptures never tell the man that he is to 'keep his wife in subjection' (unlike the exhortation concerning children in 1TIM 3:4) by the issuance of commands. People can be subordinate by serving others, by cooperating with another's purposes, or by following another's teaching. The more love and commitment to the interest of others (PHL 2:4) are present in the relationship of the man to the woman, the more this subordinate relationship conforms to the Scriptural ideal."

¹¹ CTCR, *Women in the Church*, 32.

So we have introduced three kinds of fathers in this commandment: fathers by blood, fathers of a household, and fathers of the nation. In addition, there are also spiritual fathers—not like those in the papacy who have had themselves called "father" but have not performed a fatherly function. For the name of spiritual father belongs only to those who govern and guide us by the Word of God.¹⁵

Not only domestic heads of households, but civil rulers and pastors of the church count as "fathers," with the latter two deriving their authority from the institution of the family in the Garden of Eden and the resulting parental responsibility for children ("For all other authority is derived and developed out of the authority of parents").¹⁶

In a similar manner, Luther speaks of three "orders," or "estates," as spheres of authority that correspond to these three "fathers": the political (*politia*), the ecclesiastical (*ecclesia*) and the domestic (*oeconomia*).¹⁷ Luther explains them several different ways. He expressly calls them "orders" in his 1528 Confession *Concerning Christ's Supper*: "But the holy orders [*die heiligen Orden*] and true religious institutions established by God are these three: the office of priest, the estate of marriage, the civil government."¹⁸ Later, in his 1539 *On the Councils and the Church*, he uses the term "government" (*Regiment*) for all three:

The first government is that of the home, from which the people come; the second is that of the city, meaning the country, the people, princes and lords, which we call the secular government. These embrace everything — children, property, money, animals, etc. The home must produce, whereas the city must guard, protect, and defend. Then follows the third, God's own home and city, that is, the church, which must obtain people from the home and protection and defense from the city. These are the three hierarchies ordained by God, and we need no more; indeed, we have enough and more than enough to do in living aright and resisting the devil in these three.¹⁹

While Luther does not directly identify creation or fall as precedent for these orders in the present, he nonetheless clearly sees the domestic, civil and religious spheres as having a divinely instituted order with divinely instituted authorities implying submission to the part of others within those spheres.²⁰

When Luther addresses the account of creation and the fall in his lectures on Genesis, he explains the emergence of each of these three orders in sequential order. The first institution of creation for Luther was the church, by which he means God's Word calling forth faith and worship from Adam already in the Garden of Eden before the formation of Eve.²¹ The domestic estate followed, though the civil estate would have to await the fall. Commenting on Genesis 2:16, Luther says,

¹⁵ LC IV 158; Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert eds., *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000), 408.

¹⁶ LC I 141, KW 405.

¹⁷ Luther's view can be found as early as his 1519 treatise on the Sacrament of Baptism, LW 35:39.

¹⁸ Luther may be using the term "orders" here as an alternative to the monastic or religious orders of the day. He follows this with a further description: "All who are engaged in the clerical office or ministry of the Word are in a holy, proper, good, and God-pleasing order and estate, such as those who preach, administer sacraments, supervise the common chest, sections and messengers or servants who serve such persons. These are engaged in works which are altogether holy in God's sight. Again, all fathers and mothers who regulate their household wisely and bring up their children to the service of God are engaged in pure holiness, in a holy work and a holy order. Similarly, when children and servants show obedience to their elders and masters, here too to pure holiness, and wherever is thus engaged is a living saint on earth. Moreover, princes and lords, judges, civil officers, state officials, notaries, male and female servants and all who serve such persons, and further, all their obedient subjects — all are engaged in pure holiness and leading a holy life before God. For these three religious institutions or orders are found in God's Word and commandment, and wherever is contained in God's Word must be holy, for God's Word is holy and sanctifies everything connected with it and involved in it." (OF 2:284-463).

¹⁹ LW 41:177. Luther also uses as a synonym the term "hierarchy" which he inherits from the Middle Ages, where he had less to do with ranks of authority than with a mystical ascent toward divine life. The meaning is altogether different for Luther, who uses it to refer to the existing church and domestic and civil structures. On this, see Wilhelm Mauser, *Luther's Lehre von den drei Hierarchien und ihr mittelalterlicher Hintergrund* (Munich: Verlag der Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1970), and F. Eberhard Czani, *An Essay on the Development of Luther's Thought on Justice, Law, and Society* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1959), 173-78.

²⁰ The Lutheran Confessions, like Luther, make no direct reference to the order of creation as a topic in its own right. However, in addition to Luther's own discussion of the three "fathers" in the Large Catechism, the German text of the Augsburg Confession does speak specifically of the "estates" (German *Stände*, or "walks of life"), which refers to domestic, ecclesiastical and political spheres, and thus "orders" instituted by the Creator. "The gospel does not overthrow secular government (*Regiment*), public order (*Politik*), and marriage (*Ehestand*) but instead intends that a person keep all this as a true order of God (*Gottesordnung*) and demonstrate in these walks of life (*Stände*) Christian love and true good works according to each person's calling." AC XVI 5, KW, 50.

²¹ It is in this sense that Lutheran theologian Oswald Bayer refers to "the church as order of creation" (*status ecclesiacus, Kirche als Schöpfungsgesamtheit*). Oswald Bayer, *Martin Luther's Theology: A Contemporary Application*, trans. Thomas H. Trapp (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 126-39. For Luther's explanation of Adam hearing the Word, obeying God's law and worshipping the Creator in the innocence of Eden, see LW 1:104-6.

Here we have the establishment of the church before there was any government of the home and of the state; for Eve was not yet created. Moreover, the church is established without walls and without any pomp, in a very spacious and very delightful place. After the church has been established, the household government is also set up, when Eve is added to Adam as his companion. Thus the temple is earlier than the home, and it is also better this way. Moreover, there was no government of the state before sin, for there was no need of it. Civil government is a remedy required by our corrupted nature. It is necessary that lust be held in check by the bonds of the laws and by penalties. For this reason you may correctly call civil government the rule of sin.²²

The order of civil government comes into existence only after the fall as a means to restrain sin. God instituted government for that purpose, and it thus continues to be inscribed onto the creation as we know and experience it.²³ Consequently, one cannot encounter the created order without encountering all three of these orders in some form or fashion, no matter how unintelligible they may be to sinful humanity apart from God's revelation.

Turning to the relationship between men and women before sin, the distinctiveness of man and woman was a feature of creation and included male headship and female submission. The relationship of male headship to female submission, however, was adversely impacted by the fall, not by abolishing it, but by distorting it. Now, fallen man is predisposed to assert his headship coercively over woman, and fallen woman is inclined to chafe at her submission to man. Luther, using imagery customary for his day, described the curse pronounced upon Eve in Genesis 3:16:

This punishment, too, springs from original sin; and the woman bears it just as unwillingly as she bears those pains and inconveniences that have been placed upon her flesh. The rule remains (*regnum manet*) with the husband, and the wife is compelled to obey him by God's command. He rules the home and the state, wages war, defends his possessions, tills the soil, builds, plants, etc. ... If Eve had persisted in the truth, she would not only not have been subjected to the rule of her husband, but she herself would also have been a partner in the rule which is now entirely the concern of males. Women are generally disinclined to put up with this burden, and they naturally seek to gain what they have lost through sin. If they are unable to do more, they at least indicate their impatience by grumbling. However, they cannot perform the functions of men, teach, rule, etc. In procreation and in feeding and nurturing their offspring they are masters. In this way Eve is punished; but, as I said in the beginning, it is a gladsome punishment if you consider the hope of eternal life and the honor of motherhood which have been left her.²⁴

In this case, Luther somewhat equivocates between woman's submission to man as a dictate of creation — "the rule remains with the husband" — and as a consequence of the fall — "if Eve had persisted in the truth, she would ... not have been subjected to the rule of her husband."²⁵ Whether he roots this alone in the creation account of Genesis 1–2 or, in certain respects, in the fall account of Genesis 3, the creation as we know and experience it in the present, according to Luther, is no different: innate to this creation are realities designed by God — before or after the fall — which entail relationships of authority and submission, including between husband and wife in the home and man and woman in the church.

Lutheran theologians in the two centuries after the Reformation followed Luther's lead. They continued to affirm the authority of the husband and father in the domestic sphere, the pastor in the ecclesiastical sphere, and the prince or magistrate in the civil sphere, though such responsibilities tended to overlap because of the state churches of the day and their rigorous application of Scripture to civil law.²⁶ Where Luther's successors commented on Genesis 1–3,

²² LW 1:104.

²³ Luther and Melancthon both argue that the state's use of force to preserve obedience is an outgrowth of Adam's use of coercive authority after the fall to exercise his headship over woman. See Mickey L. Mattos, "Order in the Home: The Reception of Luther's Orders Teaching in Early Lutheran Genesis Commentaries," *Reformation & Renaissance Review* 14, no. 2 (2012): 110–26.

²⁴ LW 1:202–3.

²⁵ We note this again elsewhere in Luther's Genesis lectures: "Hence it follows that if woman had not been deceived by the serpent and had not sinned, she would have been the equal of Adam in all respects. For the punishment, that she is now subjected to the man, was imposed on her after sin and because of sin," LW 1:115.

²⁶ Joel E. Harrington, *Reordering Marriage and Society in Reformation Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 48–108.

creation after the fall.²⁷ In similar, but clearer way, Künneth speaks of an order of preservation as God's ongoing creative work (*creatio continua*), or the means through which God preserves not simply creation in the abstract, but the original order which God instituted at creation and which remains inaccessible to fallen humanity apart from God's revelation.²⁸ In this sense, the order of creation is parallel to natural law, yet it is only perceptible and appropriated by virtue of the order of preservation. While Künneth's explanation was more explicitly Lutheran and emphasized revelation to a greater degree, both used the order of preservation as a direct rejoinder to the misuse of the order of creation by theologians sympathetic to National Socialism. The order of preservation provided them a way to view the order of creation and its potential applications after the fall into sin from the perspective of the Christian standing under the authority of God's Word rather than as a strictly philosophical or political idea accessible naturally to all human beings apart from faith in Christ or submission to Holy Scripture.

Order of creation terminology also makes its way into the *Christian Dogmatics* of the prominent late-19th, early-20th century Missouri Synod theologian Francis Pieper, presumably through his arduous study of theological currents in Germany. Pieper makes two passing references to the "order of the creator" (*Schöpferordnung*), by which he had in mind the order in which man was created by God before woman, and both references pertained to the position of women relative to men in contemporary society. In the first case, he explains passages regarding subordination of women in the New Testament as having their origin in both creation and fall: "It is the plain teaching of Scripture that in relation to the man, the woman is in a position of subordination. Both the order of creation and the order established after the fall assign her that position."²⁹ Shortly thereafter, Pieper defends the conception of the home as "the sphere of woman's dominion and teaching activity" against those who consider this view a relic of a different time or place. He claims that according to 1 Corinthians 14 and 1 Timothy 2, it is a "universal, permanent order, for Paul gives as the reason for vetoing any public teaching of the woman in the church (1) the order of creation, that Adam was made first, after him Eve; and (2) the role that woman played in the Fall," namely, the deception of Eve.³⁰

The most direct precedent for the Missouri Synod's official adoption of the term "order of creation," however, came through a 1950 dissertation by Austrian theologian Fritz Zerbst, published in English by Concordia Publishing House in 1955.³¹ Zerbst had written the book in response to concerns over the legitimacy of women serving congregations in emergency situations as assistants to the pastors, including in certain exceptional cases the right to preach or even celebrate the Sacrament of the Altar.³² Central to his argument was the distinction between the order of creation and the order of redemption. The order of creation provides the conceptual background to St. Paul's insistence in several New Testament letters that women should not speak or exercise authority over a man (1 COR. 11:1–16; 2) and that wives should submit to their husbands (EPI. 5, COL. 3:1–16; 3). He ultimately concludes that if a woman were

²⁷ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall: A Theological Exposition of Genesis 1–3*, trans. Douglas Stephen Bax (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), 139–40. "The Creator is now the preserver; the created world is now the fallen but preserved world" (139). "All order of our fallen world are God's orders of preservation that uphold and preserve us for Christ. They are not orders of creation but orders of preservation" (140). Ultimately, Bonhoeffer would augment this with his notion of four "mandates" — work, marriage, government and church — which provide Christian an ethical principle for life in the present world yet could only be understood through faith in Christ. See, for example, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, trans. Richard Kraus, et al. (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005), 68f.

²⁸ Walter Künneth, "The Concept of the Order of Preservation," in *Faith and Action: Basic Problems in Christian Ethics: A Selection of Contemporary Discussions*, ed. Heinz Hartl Schrey (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1970), 282–92, and Yoder, *Ordering in Gemeinschaft*, 189–200. According to Künneth, "the thesis of the divine order of preservation does not represent the result of empirical perceptions, nor does it represent an idea which is the result of metaphysical speculation. Man is denied immanent recognition of the orders as an order of God" ("Concept of the Order," 282); and "the fundamental recognition of world order as God's order of preservation is not a product of human wisdom but it is dependent on revelation, and every deeper development of this judgment is bound by revelation" ("Concept of Order," 283).

²⁹ Franz Pieper, *Christliche Dogmatik*, 4 vols. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1917–1924; 1627; for the English, see Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, trans. Theodore Engelder, 4 vols. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1950–1957), 1:524.

³⁰ Pieper, *Christliche Dogmatik*, 1:629; English 1:526. The term "order of creation" also appears in John T. Mueller's *Christian Dogmatics: A Handbook of Doctrinal Theology for Pastors, Teachers, and Laymen* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1934), 179, in reference to the chronology of the six-day creation narrative, not the relationship between men and women. Mueller does, however, refer to a "divine order" that "must not be subverted," since it is "the will of God that the woman should not usurp authority over the man by ruling over him" (209). Similarly, Edward Koehler does not address the order of creation or the primal headship of man over woman nor the complication of that headship after the fall. By contrast, however, he speaks of the "dominion and rule" of humanity over other creatures, and how that "dominion of humanity over nature was curtailed" due to sin. See Edward W.A. Koehler, *A Summary of Christian Doctrine: A Popular Presentation of the Teaching of the Bible*, rev. ed. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1939), 50–52.

³¹ Fritz Zerbst, *Das Amt der Frau in der Kirche: eine praktisch-theologische Untersuchung* (Vienna: Evangelischer Presseverband in Österreich, 1950); English translation, *The Office of Woman in the Church: A Study in Practical Theology*, trans. Albert G. Merken (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1955).

³² These measures had taken shape due to the financial and demographic devastations of Weimar Germany and World War II, though by the 1950s cases for women's ordination had begun to proliferate throughout northern Europe, most notably Sweden. See Zerbst, *Office of Woman*, 7–13, for the historical background.

most followed Luther's view that male authority in both home and church was rooted in creation, while the misuse of that authority by men in the home and the church, as well as the state's coercive authority to punish sin, came about as a result of the fall.³³ The 17th-century Lutheran theologian Johann Gerhard, however, implied that women may not have been subject to submission apart from the fall:

A woman should not teach nor dominate the man because the beginning of sin came from the woman. But the manner of teaching in which the woman taught the man turns out badly here, for she did not so much teach or lead him as she deceived him. In punishment for this deception she was subjected to the man, and the genuine domination of woman over man is incompatible with this divine judgment.³⁴

Yet Gerhard can in other places describe submission as part of creation itself:

Therefore, when the apostle says that woman is the glory of man, but man is the image and glory of God, he is not denying that woman also was created after the image and likeness of God in the principal sense. Instead, he is speaking of the sense in which the dignity of the image had been placed secondarily and principally, that is, the position of domination whose high status properly befitted man, for the woman was made subject to the authority of man.³⁵

Nonetheless, Luther and the Lutheran tradition affirmed a divine order built into creation that remains in effect for all structures of society — the home, the church and the civil sphere — even where those structures are impacted by sin and we as sinners fail to act in accordance with God's design for us.

When did the order of creation as a specific term enter the discussion? Though Luther and his successors understood divinely instituted authority in a way conceptually similar to the order of creation, specific use of that language only began to emerge among German Lutheran theologians in the 19th century. The terminology and its applications were diverse. It could be referred to as "orders of creation" (*Schöpfungsordnungen*) or "orders of the creator" (*Schöpferordnungen*). Theologians described the concept as "fundamental forms of human community" — chiefly, though not exclusively, those of the family — and the relationships that govern them.³⁶ It could refer with varying degrees to the state as a political entity, the land or territory in which one lives, one's network of family relationships, or even one's ethnicity. These forms are accessible to all people by reason and experience, not strictly revelation. Much of this was articulated against the breakup of traditional European institutions like the Holy Roman Empire or the state churches of Germany due to the spread of constitutional democracies in the mid-19th century.

The order of creation debates continued into the 20th century, where the idea was most controversially abused by the "German Christian" movement to support its racial politics, identifying nationality and race as intrinsic parts of the human community created by God.³⁷ Certain German theologians responded directly to this misapplication of the order of creation and offered a different perspective. In particular, Lutheran theologians such as Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Walter Künneth responded with their own interpretation of the order of creation that took into consideration the consequences of the fall. Bonhoeffer used the terminology "order of preservation" in arguing that due to sin the order of creation is no longer intelligible to all peoples, so God has provided an order of preservation that sustains

³³ Mattos, "Order in the House," 115–23. This would also account for the male's sinful abuse of his authority through verbal or physical violence.

³⁴ Loc. XIII.36, in Johann Gerhard, *On Original Sin, On Actual Sin, and On Free Choice*, trans. Richard J. Dinda (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2014), 21.

³⁵ Speaking in reference to 1 Cor. 11:7, Loc. XLVI.107, in Johann Gerhard, *On Creation and Angels, On Providence, On Election and Reprobation, and On the Image of God in Man before the fall*, trans. Richard J. Dinda (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2013), 301.

³⁶ Nathan Howard Yoder, *Ordering in Gemeinschaft: A Critical Appraisal of the Erlangen Contribution to the Orders of Creation* (New York: Peter Lang, 2016), 2–8, 52–54.

³⁷ This approach missed the order of creation by claiming that German ethnicity and land — *Blut und Boden* ("blood and soil") — were established by God and could take preeminence over the shared religious identity Christians had across many nations and many races. For more on this, see Robert P. Erickson, *Theologians under Hitler* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1985), and Yoder, *Ordering in Gemeinschaft*, 90–105.

to receive the office of pastor, she would "completely reverse the order of creation" by assuming the role of "head" of the man.³⁸ The biblical case against women's ordination for Zerbst depends upon the relationship of headship and submission instituted at creation and subsequently reiterated in the New Testament. Interestingly enough, Zerbst never clearly defined the order of creation or order of redemption, nor did he address the implications of the order of creation for the civil or domestic realms.³⁹ Yet it was his thorough argument against female clergy on the basis of the order of creation that would lead to the term's adoption within the Missouri Synod, while also leaving some ambiguity about how it should apply to matters other than the pastoral office.

To summarize: The concept order of creation, though not found by name in Scripture, has in the Lutheran tradition been used as a way of referencing or summarizing Scripture's own rationale for assigning specific roles of authority to men in the church and in the Christian home. First, the New Testament appeals to the account of creation and the fall in Genesis 1–3 as the basis for male authority in the public teaching and liturgical conduct of the church. Second, Luther and subsequent Lutheran theologians understood this authority as applicable to the realms of the home, the church and the government as instituted and preserved by God Himself in His created order. Third, 19th- and 20th-century German theologians, including Lutherans, debated how the concept related to those same spheres of authority and how sin affected the way Christians perceive them and live in accordance with them. Finally, the application of the order of creation to specific questions about the roles and relationships between men and women in the church would ultimately suggest the adoption of that terminology by the Missouri Synod.

II. Order of Creation in the Missouri Synod

The Missouri Synod officially endorsed the language of the order of creation — and, with it, the language of the order of redemption — at its 1956 convention in St. Paul, Minnesota through the report of the Committee on Woman Suffrage. The committee delivered a report drawing heavily on Zerbst's dissertation. It argued that Christians live simultaneously within two orders — the order of creation and the order of redemption — and that these orders are governed by what God has instituted through them: either the "horizontal" relationships between all created beings, including men and women, or the vertical, redemptive relationship between God and man. The committee's definition of both orders provided far more clarity than Zerbst's and reveals to some degree the narrowness of their intended application.⁴⁰ It dismisses any attempt to protest the order of creation using Galatians 3 — that there is no distinction between male and female in Christ — by claiming that this does not override what God has established in creation.⁴¹

The report concludes that, because the order of redemption does not abrogate the order of creation, then likewise the order of redemption does not support the formal adoption of women's suffrage, which it argues is prohibited by the order of creation. The submission of woman to the headship of man in the order of creation, which according to Zerbst undergirds St. Paul's prohibition of women teaching or exercising authority over men in the church, then determines the role women have in the governance of the local congregation. To that end, 1956 Resolution 03-22 argues that, while Scripture does not specifically address whether women should participate in voters' assemblies, surrendering male headship to women in congregational matters is "anti-Scriptural," and thus commends the

³⁸ Zerbst, *Office of Woman*, 81.

³⁹ The translator, Concordia Seminary professor Albert Merken, provides this brief description of terms in a footnote: "Order of creation" (*Schöpfungsordnung*) and "order of redemption" (*Erlösungsordnung*), as employed by the author of this book with reference to the positions assigned by God to man and woman, must be understood in the sense of an arrangement of things in order, as in ranks, rows, or classes. In some sentences of the book 'indistinct' and 'indifference' express more clearly the intended meaning of *Schöpfungsordnung* and *Erlösungsordnung*" (Zerbst, *Office of Woman*, 11 n9).

⁴⁰ The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, *Proceedings of the 28th District Synod* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1956), 566.

⁴¹ 1956 Proceedings, 556.

traditional position of male voters' meetings as "Scripture-sanctioned and time-tested."⁴² It explicitly cites the distinction between the order of redemption and the order of creation as meriting further attention, while resolving that all members should study "the God-pleasing place of woman in home and church with renewed diligence and zeal," all congregations that practice male voters' assembly should continue in that practice, and all congregations that practice women's suffrage should reconsider their position.⁴³

The question of women's suffrage would be revisited again between 1968 and 1970, with implications for an understanding of the order of creation. In 1968, the CTCR published a report on women's suffrage.⁴⁴ While the report repeatedly affirms the distinction between the order of creation and the order of redemption, it does not base its decision regarding women's suffrage on the structures of male headship and female submission.⁴⁵ Instead, it argues that since Scripture does not address voters' assemblies at all, then no biblical passage directly forbids women's suffrage. If there is no "clear passage" prohibiting it, then the Synod "cannot adopt binding legislation" on the matter. The relevant New Testament texts deal with "public teaching in the church," or the pastoral office. Suffrage — whether it be a male voting or a female voting — does not imply occupying the pastoral office.⁴⁶ This logic was likewise applied (generally speaking) to women holding congregational offices.⁴⁷

The 1968 CTCR report laid the foundation for the adoption of women's suffrage at the 1969 convention. 1969 Resolution 2-17, "To Grant Women Suffrage and Board Membership," commended both the CTCR study and the earlier 1956 report, then resolved that since Scripture does not prohibit suffrage at the congregational or Synod level, the Synod and its member congregations have freedom to adopt it as they wish — provided that such policies do not allow women to hold the office of pastor or exercise authority over men. The resolution did cite the order of creation, but only as prohibiting the holding of certain offices in the church "if this involves women in a violation of the order of creation."⁴⁸ In 1970, the LCMS Commission on Constitutional Matters (CCM), in providing direction to congregations considering the adoption of women's suffrage, interpreted this resolution to say that women may not serve as elders, chairs or vice-chairs of the congregation, since such offices are either identified with the functions of the pastoral ministry (in the case of elders) or may exercise authority over the men (in the case of chairs or vice-chairs). "[S]uch offices might indeed be in violation of what has been called the order of creation or of preservation."⁴⁹ It adds, however, that this conclusion is reached not by divine right — *de iure divino*, or Scripture — but by human right — *de iure humano*, or practical arrangement — and is thus subject to revision and change. Consequently, the Synod's use of the order of creation to prohibit women's suffrage shifted to prohibiting leadership of women in the church only where this involved a direct violation of the order of creation, such as when women "hold the pastoral office or serve in any other capacity involving the distinctive functions of this office" or "when holding any other kind of office or membership on boards or committees in the institutional structures of a congregation" which necessarily involved violations of the order of creation.

⁴² 1956 Proceedings, 570. It may seem curious today that women's suffrage would lead to the adoption of the term order of creation. Opponents of suffrage argued that, for a woman to vote in the congregational assembly is to exercise a degree of authority over both the pastor and other men in the congregation, and that was certain to raise questions over how these pivotal New Testament texts are interpreted and applied. In this sense, the debate provided the perfect opportunity to consider whether there are broader ecclesiological implications to the Pauline prohibition of woman speaking, teaching or exercising authority in the congregation. Synod, at that time, found in Zerbelt's use of the order of creation a helpful framework to say that participation in a voters' assembly runs counter to the way in which God made women and the way in which He made women to relate to men.

⁴³ 1956 Proceedings, 570. As an indication of gravity of the issue, the convention proceedings expressly indicate that the 10 negative voters were asked to give the Secretary of Synod their reason for voting that way. 1956 Proceedings, 571.

⁴⁴ When the CTCR was formed in 1962, it absorbed the functions of the standing three-person Committee on Woman Suffrage and thus inherited its task of addressing this issue in response to repeated requests by Synod (1959 Res. 3-08, 1965 Res. 2-36, 1967 Res. 2-03).

⁴⁵ In several places, the report provides the order of preservation as a synonym for the order of creation. Though entirely undefined in the report, this parallel term also made its way into the subsequent 1970 Commission on Constitutional Matters' opinion (see below).

⁴⁶ CTCR, *Woman Suffrage in the Church* (St. Louis: The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 1968), 10. The Commission did not reject or reinterpret the order of creation to reach its conclusion. Instead, it put forward a positive argument in favor of women's suffrage by appealing to the democratic notion of franchise, even claiming that parliamentary procedure itself prevents women from exercising authority over men in the way the New Testament warns.

⁴⁷ CTCR, *Woman Suffrage in the Church*, 10–11, note the significant cautions in this discussion.

⁴⁸ 1969 Res. 2-17, Proceedings, 88. Sufficient ambiguity resulted that this would continue to be a point of contention in subsequent decades.

⁴⁹ LCMS Commission on Constitutional Matters, "Suggestions for Congregational Constitutions or Bylaws Regarding the Privileges of Women (Voting and Holding Office)," January 22–23, 1970.

church to the lines laid out from 1968–1970: the pastoral office and the distinctive functions of that pastoral office.

Questions regarding the order of creation would arise again in 1994 with the publication of the CTCR's *Service of Women in Synodical and Congregational Offices*.⁵⁰ The report utilized the 1970 CCM distinction between *de iure divino* and *de iure humano* to argue that the pastoral office and its functions were divinely instituted by Holy Scripture, and those functions were to be carried out in accordance with the requirements and prescriptions laid out by Holy Scripture, including the prohibition of women serving in this way. Other offices established by the church, however, are ultimately according to human right and without mandate from Scripture. This allows for the possibility of women holding such humanly instituted offices, provided that doing so does not include performing the distinctive functions of the pastoral office. The 1994 report made no explicit mention of the order of creation, as the 1969 resolution had. This led to a dissenting opinion from several members of the CTCR, arguing that the report did not account for the role of the order of creation in its presentation. In fact, the dissent states, when the report cites 1969 Resolution 2-17, it quotes the statement regarding the prohibition against women carrying out the distinctive functions of the pastoral office and refers to the allowance that they may hold congregational and Synod offices but does not include the rationale qualifying their holding of such offices: It is prohibited "if this involves women in a violation of the order of creation." To the minds of the dissenters, this "violation of the order of creation" is what precludes women holding certain congregational and Synod leadership positions.⁵¹

The Executive Committee of the CTCR subsequently drafted a rejoinder to the dissent. It rejects the notion that the report failed to include the order of creation as a guiding concept simply because there was no explicit mention of it, pointing to the order of creation in 1985's *Women in the Church* and calling it "the guiding concept" which informs this entire report and its argumentation regarding women serving in the church.⁵² It also claims that the order of creation as articulated in the New Testament prohibitions against certain activities of women (as stipulated in 1COR. 14 or 1TIM. 2) applies specifically to church and worship contexts. "If those dissenting believe that 'more general' applications of the order of creation are mandated by the Scriptures with respect to the service of women in offices brought into being by the church, what are these specific applications and what is their Scriptural foundation?"⁵³ The CTCR would continue articulating this same position: that the order of creation primarily pertains to the ordination of men alone and to male headship in the Christian home due to clear scriptural passages, but its implications for the service of women in humanly instituted offices of the church is not made explicit by Scripture.

In a 2006 report, the CTCR points out that Scripture clearly teaches the order of creation but not necessarily how the order of creation applies to certain practical issues. Scripturally speaking, the order of creation relates to the pastoral office (citing 1COR. 14:38–39 and 1TIM. 2:11–15), so the church is bound to affirm that women cannot hold this office or the responsibilities inherent in it. "The order of creation is clearly taught in Scripture and has important implications for the service of women in the church — specifically with reference to the pastoral office and its distinctive functions." But it concludes, "the CTCR also believes, however, that we are bound to Scripture alone as the norm when it comes to making doctrinal judgments about the specific implications and applications of the order of creation for the service of women in the church."⁵⁴ Thus, the Commission responds that disagreement remains not about the order of creation as such or about its relation to the pastoral office, but rather how the order of creation should influence the discussion beyond what Scripture expressly states. A 2014 CTCR report further acknowledges that the order of creation has not received sufficient attention at times, but adds that the degree to which that sufficiency is determined may depend upon what one expects from the order of creation:

⁵⁰ *The Service of Women in Congregational and Synodical Offices* (1995 Workbook), 310.

⁵¹ "Dissenting Opinion on *Women in Congregational Offices*," 1995 Workbook, 312.

⁵² "Response to the Dissenting Opinion on *The Service of Women in Congregational and Synodical Offices*," 1995 Workbook, 315.

⁵³ 1995 Workbook, 316.

⁵⁴ "CTCR Response to Expressions of Dissent," 2007 Workbook, 406.

In the face of increasing theological and cultural pressures during this pivotal period in American history, the order of creation took on fresh relevance for the Missouri Synod: It was applied expressly to the question of the ordination of women. The Missouri Synod had been involved in a theological committee of the Lutheran Council of the USA, which included representatives of both the American Lutheran Church (ALC, with which the LCMS was in fellowship, albeit tenuously) and the Lutheran Church of America (LCA), on the topic of women's ordination. In 1970, both the ALC and the LCA approved the ordination of women, leading to the LCMS' 1971 objection to the ALC's action, its declaration of "fellowship in protest" in 1977, and ultimately its dissolution in 1981.⁵⁵ The order of creation and the New Testament texts supporting it provided the Missouri Synod a firm exegetical and theological basis for rejecting the ordination of women and limiting the pastoral office and its distinctive functions to men. While disagreement over the order of creation's implications for the role of women in the life of the congregation or in church governance would repeatedly arise, the Synod continued to affirm that the order of creation unequivocally prohibited women from occupying the pastoral office or carrying out its distinctive functions.⁵¹

In 1985, the CTCR published a report titled *Women in the Church*.⁵² In the report, the CTCR specifically focused the order of creation on the question of women's ordination. It affirms that the order of creation also applies to the relationship between men and women in the church: "Distinctive identities for man and woman in relation to each other were assigned by God at creation. These identities are not nullified by Christ's redemption, and they should be reflected in the church."⁵³ The report argues that, in the context of the church, male headship and female subordination imply a reciprocal relationship that is maintained "for the sake of orderliness and unity."⁵⁴ But it restricts the ecclesiological function of this headship and subordination to the question of pastoral ministry and the distinctive functions of the pastoral office.⁵⁵

It is in this light that the report lays down a principle regarding the application of the order of creation that directly reflects the Synod's position: "The creational pattern of male headship requires that women not hold the formal position of the authoritative public teaching office in the church, that is, the office of pastor."⁵⁶ Further commenting on the "distinctive functions" of the pastoral office as articulated in 1969, the report identifies four specific activities: "1) preaching in the services of the congregation; 2) leading the formal public services of worship; 3) the public administration of the sacraments; 4) the public administration of the office of the keys."⁵⁷ Ultimately, *Women in the Church* affirms the 1956 position of the order of creation yet limits its principal relevance for the

⁵⁵ For more background to these developments, see Gracia Grindal, "Getting Women Ordained," *Lutheran Quarterly* 32 (2018): 281–306, John H.P. Beumann, *Ministries Examined: Laity, Clergy, Women, and Bishops in a Time of Change* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1987), 78–139; and Raymond Tiemeeyer, ed., *The Ordination of Women: A Report Distributed by Authorization of the Church Body Presidents as a Contribution to Further Study, Based on Materials Produced through the Division of Theological Studies of the Lutheran Council in the U.S.A.* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1970).

⁵⁶ This has been repeatedly stated in a variety of resolutions since, including 1971 Res. 2-04, "To Withhold Ordination of Women to the Pastoral Office," 1977 Res. 3-15, "To Reaffirm the Synod's Position on Women with Reference to the Pastoral Office," 1988 Res. 3-10, "To Reaffirm Position of Synod on Ordination of Women," and 1998 Res. 3-25A, "To Affirm Position of Synod That Only Men May Hold the Pastoral Office."

⁵⁷ In the intervening years, there was little direct discussion of the order of creation. The CTCR's 1981 report, *Human Sexuality*, had a shorter treatment of the topic under the rubric of "Headship within Marriage"; it was limited to the "hierarchy of function" (*Human Sexuality*, 31).

⁵² CTCR, *Women in the Church*, 27.

⁵³ CTCR, *Women in the Church*, 32.

⁵⁴ For instance, it argues that the "teaching" and "exercising authority" of 1 Timothy 2 are "intentionally linked" and do not apply to functions outside the pastoral office. It is not permissible to apply them abstractly, but both "teaching" and "exercising authority" relate strictly to the specific functions of the pastoral office. CTCR, *Women in the Church*, 36.

⁵⁵ CTCR, *Women in the Church*, 37.

⁵⁶ CTCR, *Women in the Church*, 42. In light of these distinctive functions, the report raises no objection to women addressing the congregation outside the worship service in an area of their expertise, holding offices in the congregation, or serving as acolytes and ushers, while it expresses reservation about other instances that may involve confusion with the pastoral office. In the case of participating in the public services of the church, such as reading the lessons or distribution of the elements in Holy Communion, the document argues against it. With respect to reading the lessons, the report says, "The reading of the Scriptures is most properly the function of the pastoral office and should therefore not ordinarily be delegated to a lay person, woman or man" (CTCR, *Women in the Church*, 45). 1989 Res. 3-14, 1989 Proceedings, 118, cited this same passage, concluding that "congregations of the Synod proceed with care and sensitivity in making decisions permitting the lay reading of the Scriptures, recognizing decisions in this regard lie in the area of Christian judgment." It is worth noting, however, that the distinction drawn in *Women in the Church* and in this resolution is between pastoral reading and lay reading, not between male reading and female reading. Yet, in both cases, the argument is not made on the basis of the order of creation, but on the basis of the pastoral office and the distinctive functions reserved to it.

Finally, it should be noted that while the Commission affirms that "the order of creation is clearly taught in Scripture," and while it acknowledges that questions about the understanding and implications of this issue have not been sufficiently addressed and articulated, it also recognizes that questions about exactly "how to apply" the order of creation to specific questions of practice and polity (beyond its application to the pastoral office and its distinctive functions) are very difficult to address with complete certainty, clarity, and consensus on the basis of Scripture alone. In other words, the Bible does not spell out explicitly "where to draw the line(s)" when it comes to exactly how the Biblical principle of the order of creation applies to all matters of congregational polity and practice.⁶³

On matters where Scripture clearly prohibits a certain practice or directly applies the order of creation to a concrete situation (as with its application to the pastoral office and its distinctive functions), we must stand firm and remain united. Where it does not, the CTCR maintained, we have freedom to discuss and debate these matters in Christian charity without disagreement over questions of application threatening our unity and fellowship.

Two more extensive and recent CTCR reports touch on the topic as well. The 2009 *Creator's Tapestry* did not treat the order of creation at length, but does provide a clear clarification of the order of creation's terminology, conceding that it is not a biblical term strictly speaking and suggesting that "future study of this terminology, its history, its potential for misunderstanding, and its value as a means of communicating biblical truth effectively may be of benefit."⁶⁴ Despite this caution, it nonetheless proposes that the order of creation should be reflected in the church and in the home, though it makes no reference to the civil sphere. The 2017 report *Women and Military Service: A Lutheran Perspective* includes a short description of the contours of the order of creation and the biblical citations supporting it. The section begins by asserting the relevance of the order of creation for both marriage and for the order of the church. It acknowledges that "God's Word does not make explicit every implication or application of the order of creation for life in the civil estate," yet nonetheless emphasizes that the order of creation assumes "essential realities" for male and female that "remain and must not be ignored or denied," and that they have import not only for family and church, but also "other vocations and areas of society."⁶⁵ At the same time, it notes that the entrance of sin into the world has damaged the relations instituted at creation: "It is important to note that sexual distinctions and roles were not created because of sin but are strained and abused as a result of sin."⁶⁶ Moreover, it underscores the need for restraint in appealing to the order of creation in realms where Scripture does not:

Less clear is how Scripture's teaching about the order of creation may be relevant or properly applied to various questions in the left-hand kingdom, since (as noted earlier) Scripture does not make explicit every implication or application of the order of creation for life in the civil estate. Here we must be cautious to say neither more nor less than Scripture itself says, nor expect or insist that Christians equally committed to the authority of Scripture will reach exactly the same conclusions about how the order of creation may or may not apply to such questions.⁶⁷

It is for this reason that the report allows for difference in opinion based upon conscience.⁶⁸ The report does affirm the relevance of the order of creation for civil matters yet exercises a degree of restraint by not urging a theological inference (as opposed to a clear statement of Scripture) upon the consciences of the faithful in a way that may be unnecessarily divisive of fellowship.

⁶³ CTCR, *Review of 2005 Task Force "Guidelines for the Service of Women in Congregational Offices"*, 6.

⁶⁴ CTCR, *Creator's Tapestry*, 52.

⁶⁵ CTCR, *Women and Military Service: A Lutheran Perspective* (St. Louis: The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 2017), 7.

⁶⁶ CTCR, *Women and Military Service*, 9.

⁶⁷ CTCR, *Women and Military Service*, 11.

⁶⁸ While it opposes the conception of women into the military by appealing to the basic biblical and theological contours of the order of creation, as well as natural law and human reason, it also allows that, given the "distinction between the two kingdoms, the inherent complexities of biblical interpretation, and the absence of specific and explicit mandates regarding the service of women in the military," Christians may "very well support and defend the informed consciences of women who have carefully considered their station in life and Holy Scriptures on this issue who wish to voluntarily serve in our nation's military" (2016 Res. 5-11A), even when this may include serving in positions of combat. "Women in Military Service," 14.

The Missouri Synod's official treatment of the order of creation may be summarized thusly: The concept was officially adopted in 1956 in declining proposals for women's suffrage; its use shifted beginning in 1968–1970 to safeguard the biblical proscription of women assuming the pastoral office or its distinctive functions, before becoming a subject of debate over the role of women in church governance in the 1990s and finally the role of women in society more generally in the 2010s. Questions about the precise definition of this term and its specific applications and implications would then lead to the 2016 resolution precipitating the current report.

III. Defining the Order of Creation

The concept of the order of creation is indeed found in the Scriptures; in the writings of Luther and subsequent Lutheran theologians; and in reports, resolutions and statements about its specific use and application in the Missouri Synod. Nonetheless, a completely clear and exact definition of the order of creation or its corollary, the order of redemption has remained elusive. For instance, the 1956 report proposing the order of creation as the basis for refusing women's suffrage defined the concept this way:

Order of Creation designates the particular position which by the will of the Creator any created object occupies in relation to others. Thus man has a position in creation different from that of all other animate and all inanimate creatures (ἄνθρωπος). On the level of life in this world husband and wife, parents and children, have their own assigned position in relation to each other (Table of Duties). The triad Father-Mother-Child is one that even atheistic evolutionists cannot escape, although they believe neither in Creation nor in Redemption. This triangular relationship belongs to the very structure of existence.⁶⁹

By contrast with what the report later calls these "horizontal, earthly relations" of the order of creation, it defines the order of redemption this way: "Order of redemption is employed to denote the relationship of man to God in the new life established by God the Redeemer and Sanctifier."⁷⁰

This bears comparison to the definition given in the CTCR's 1985 report *Women in the Church*. The 1985 report treats the order of creation almost identically with the 1956 convention report: "This [order of creation] refers to the particular position which, by the will of God, any created object occupies in relation to others. God has given to that which has been created a certain definite order which, because it has been created by Him, is the expression of his immutable will. These relationships belong to the very structure of created existence."⁷¹ However, the report's definition of the order of redemption departs in one important way from its 1956 precursor, as the term "refers to the relationship of the redeemed to God and to each other [italics added] in the new creation established by Him in Jesus Christ (Gal. 6:15; 2 Cor. 5:17). This new creation constitutes participation in a new existence, in the new world that has come in Christ. It is a relationship determined by grace."⁷² The simple interpolation of the words "and to each other" changes the distinct historical-vertical axes of the 1956 report. It in turn introduces a degree of ambiguity into the question of precisely how the order of redemption relates to the order of creation. In what ways does the order of redemption govern the relationships between Christians differently than the order of creation does? The report states that the order of creation establishes "individual identities to each sex," and that they are not "interchangeable," but must "remain distinct." But are there now two types of relationships between men and women in the church — those governed by the order of creation and those governed by the order of redemption? How are we to know which one applies, apart from the prohibition of women serving in the pastoral office? Moreover, does the order of redemption have any implication for the roles of women in relation to men within society, politics or domestic life?

⁶⁹ 1956 Proceedings, 566.

⁷⁰ 1956 Proceedings, 566.

⁷¹ CTCR, *Women in the Church*, 21.

⁷² CTCR, *Women in the Church*, 21.

- **Order of Redemption:** *The set of relationships between all created things and God, which God has effected through the life, suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.* While this redemption has certain implications for all creation, it principally concerns the standing of fallen humanity before God as a consequence of saving faith in Christ and with the hope for a restored, renewed creation in the life and world to come (Gal. 3:26–28; 1 Cor. 12:13; 1 Peter 2:9–10). This order of redemption does not abrogate the order of creation yet points beyond it to the consummation of God's eternal plan for salvation (2 Cor. 5:1–5; Rev. 21:1–7). Through regeneration by the Spirit and obedience to the Holy Scriptures under this order of redemption, Christians are able by faith to better understand the order God has established in creation and to live out their vocations in the world in a way that embodies that order, albeit incompletely and imperfectly (Eph. 5:22–33; 1 Peter 2:17–3:7).⁷⁶

IV. Concluding Remarks

Since 1956, the concept of the order of creation has proven somewhat controversial and, at times, poorly defined, with different interpretations arising from different circumstances. The central concerns over the order of creation, however, have largely revolved around practical applications. What roles may women occupy in the church? What positions and offices are reserved exclusively for men? How should the practice of the church reflect what God has instituted in creation? What, if anything, can we say on the basis of Scripture about how the order of creation applies in the civil sphere? The Synod has over time, after extensive study and discussion, changed its stance on certain of these practical applications under the auspices of Christian liberty. Despite these varied practical applications, the Synod has maintained a basic, consistent consensus that resists polarized opinions on matters where Scripture has not expressly spoken. It was in this spirit that the 2016 LCMS convention, in the same resolution requesting this report, identified three specific areas where the order of creation does come to bear on matters of church practice:

- (1) "That the term 'elder,' in view of the use of this term in the Scriptures, in the history of the church, and in the Synod's history, be reserved for that humanly instituted office in the congregation which has as its assigned duty the assisting of the pastor in the public exercise of the distinctive functions of this office" (i.e., Office of the Public Ministry);
- (2) "That lay assistance in the distribution of the elements in the celebration of Holy Communion, in order 'to avoid confusion regarding the office of the public ministry and to avoid giving offense to the church,' [1989 Res. 3-10] be limited to lay men"; and
- (3) "That, while situations exist in which the service of women in leadership positions in the congregation is desirable or even necessary, men be encouraged to continue to exercise leadership in their congregations even as they are encouraged to exercise their God-given leadership in a God-pleasing manner in their homes."⁷⁷

These positions did little more than reiterate what the Synod had said since 1969. Though reasoned disagreement may exist on the consequences of the order of creation for church structure or governance, Scripture's teaching regarding the order of creation clearly rules out the ordination of women or their service in ways that may be confused with the pastoral office or involve the performance of its distinctive responsibilities.

Whatever questions (even disagreements) may continue to exist over certain practical applications of the order of creation, these ought not, in our view, prevent us from seeing and affirming the principal benefit of this theological concept for the church. St. Paul indeed saw a direct relevance of the order of creation for specific areas of church practice, in particular preaching, teaching and conduct of worship in the Christian church, as well as spiritual headship in the Christian home. Yet he articulates these positions to Christians sharing the same fundamental biblical worldview as his, with its affirmation of an eternal Creator God who made all things with order, beauty and

⁷⁶ This report has focused largely on the biblical, theological and historical foundations of the order of creation, not the order of redemption. The definition here draws upon that given in the 1956 report of the Committee on Woman Suffrage and the 1968 CTCR report on *Woman Suffrage in the Church* cited above. The reader is referred to those sources for further explanation.

⁷⁷ 2016 Proceedings, 163.

A further ambiguity was introduced with the term "order of preservation," used by both the 1968 CTCR report on women's suffrage and the 1970 CCM guidelines for women in congregational and Synod offices, albeit without definition. In both cases, "order of preservation" appears as a synonym for "order of creation," yet that is not how the order of preservation had been used in prior theological discussion. Preservation applied to the postlapsarian condition — how relationships within marriage, for instance, existed despite the impact of the fall and the damage it caused. Thus, one might reject the order of creation's relevance entirely in deference to the order of preservation, through which God continued governing a fallen society. Is the order of preservation different from the order of creation? Is it merely a way of expressing how the order of creation operates after the fall? If the order of preservation is entirely distinct, how might it help us better understand the consequences of the fall for what God instituted perfectly at creation or how we should apply the order of creation in a fallen world?

Lastly, there remains a question of how the order of creation relates to natural law.⁷³ At times, the order of creation has been viewed as a close parallel to natural law, or the law written on human hearts.⁷⁴ However, the single figure most influential for the Missouri Synod's formal incorporation of the language of order of creation, Fritz Zerbst, explicitly denied that natural law was to be viewed as synonymous with the order of creation. Rather, he saw them as complementary concepts — natural law for the broader society originating in human nature, order of creation for the Christian originating in Holy Scripture.⁷⁵ Are natural law and the order of creation the same? If they are different, and if natural law is accessible to all, but the order of creation is strictly revealed by God's Word, how does this distinction impact the way we can apply it beyond the Christian church and home? How might this affect the way we talk about the ecclesiastical or domestic applications of male headship versus possible social or political applications?

While the order of creation has clear theological, historical and denominational precedents, it has lacked a clear and precise definition. The same is true for the order of redemption (and the order of preservation). The evolving use, differing descriptions and repeated resolutions appealing to the order of creation on divisive matters have only exacerbated the ambiguity already implicit in terms that have lacked clear and consistent definitions. Without agreed-upon definitions for these terms, members of the Synod continue to talk past one another. For this reason, we offer below definitions of the order of creation and order of redemption that we believe are consonant with what the Synod and the CTCR have said in the past (rooted in Scripture, Luther and subsequent Lutheran theology). We do so in the hope of clarifying what we mean when we talk about these orders and facilitating continued fraternal discussion about the implications and applications of these orders for our life today in home, church and society.

- **Order of Creation:** *The set of relationships among all created things that God has instituted in His creation.* These natural relationships assume orderliness, with God entrusting to some responsibilities that involve the benevolent exercise of authority in their relationship with others — husbands in relationship to wives, parents to children, civil authorities to subordinates, humans to animals and vegetation — and in turn subordinating some to others (Gen. 2:24–25; Ex. 20:24; Rom. 12:1–2; 1 Cor. 11:3). The fall into sin has damaged the order of creation, including our perception and application of it (Gen. 3:16–19; 1 Tim. 2:15). Scripture is not definitive about its future in the new heavens and new earth. Nonetheless, its affirmation by Christians supports male headship and female submission in ways Scripture makes explicit for relationships within the Christian home and within the church (1 Cor. 11:3–9; 14:33B–35; 1 Tim. 2:11–13).

⁷³ On natural law, see CTCR, *The Natural Knowledge of God in Christian Confession and Christian Witness* (St. Louis: The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 2013), 28–32.

⁷⁴ CTCR, *Women and Military Service*, 12–16, seeks to keep natural and human reason distinct from the order of creation, but never fully defines the respective terms.

⁷⁵ "The will of the Creator concerning marriage and the relation between husband and wife must, however, not be confused or identified with natural law. Natural law proceeds from possibilities inherent in man, from his 'nature,' from biological facts, and the like. Natural law can serve as a basis for the temporary establishment of definite sociological structures for human life. Theology, however, always operates with the will of the Creator as the deciding factor and is, therefore, essentially concerned with the ethical side. Because of this the New Testament indeed demands no change of the social order, but it does call for a change in the ethical behavior of human beings. Natural law knows nothing of accountability unto God, and it has, therefore, led to the most varied solutions of the question concerning the sexes. For the Christian, however, the all-important factor is the one will of the divine Creator, according to which there is only one fundamental order, though this order may under various social circumstances assume various forms. Whereas this fundamental order has its origin in the will of the divine Creator, the affairs of mere point to manifold ways to this order and express it in marriage laws, in the possibility of finding a place for both man and woman in the political economy, and in other ways. Thus natural law sees effects, but not the cause; and vice-versa, theology must look from the Cause or Author to the creatureal facts" (Zerbst, *Office of Women*, 111f).

design, with interactive and inter-dependent rhyme and reason, which informed how they were to live in accordance with that divinely designed intentionality. We can no longer assume that most people — even Christians — hold this worldview in 21st-century American culture. Thus, it is all the more imperative that we as Lutherans, who confess unreservedly the authority of Holy Scripture, likewise affirm the God who reveals himself as Creator in Holy Scripture and what Scripture says about the implications of His created order and design for how we live in a sinful world that does not share those assumptions. The relevance of the order of creation for us, then, has not only to do with the practical applications we draw from it, but more importantly with the theological beliefs it reflects. As 20th-century German Lutheran theologian Peter Brunner once stated in the context of the controversy of his day over the ordination of women:

Above all else, we must take into account the theological doctrine of the sexual difference between man and woman. It is extremely necessary for the church to interpret the natural state doctrinally if she wants to present the message of the New Testament in a relevant fashion. She cannot be satisfied to borrow the insights of biology, psychology, philosophy, sociology, or medicine. Texts such as Eph. 5:22–23, Col. 3:18ff, and 1 Peter 3:1–7 show that the church must say something about what it means to be man or woman before God; it must say something that can be said by no one else in the world, because what it says is said in the light of this understanding of the Gospel. How is this to be said? What must be its content? It is my opinion that the question whether or not women should be ordained to the ministry depends on the theological doctrine of the nature and relationship between the God-given sexes.⁷⁸

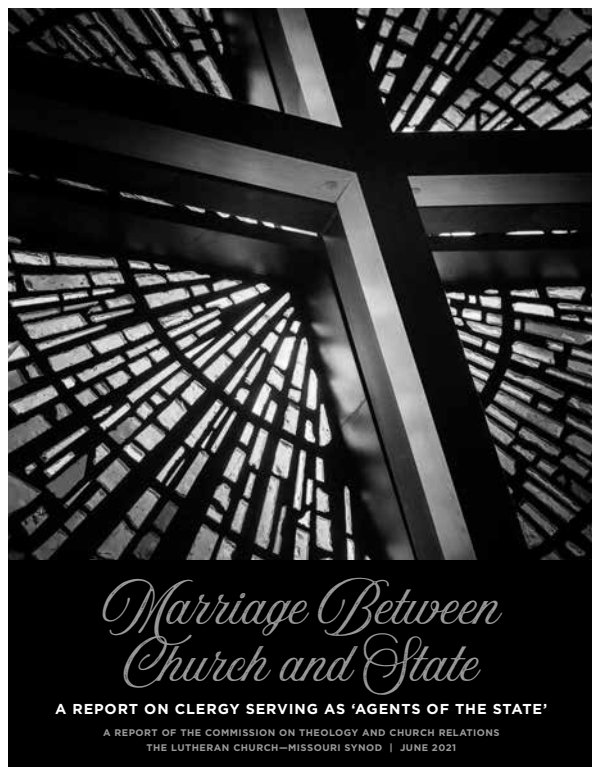
In short, what we say about the order of creation is a consequence of what we believe about the God who ordained it at creation. The order of creation is not strictly or even primarily about certain "rules" or "guidelines" for how we live or who may do what in the church. It is finally about the Creator and Lord, how He has made us as His creation, and how what we believe about this creation reflects what we believe about the Creator who made it.

To affirm the order of creation, then, is not simply to affirm and uphold specific practical applications (though those are real consequences and worth consideration). To affirm the order of creation is to join together in a bold theological confession of God as creator and us as His creation. The order of creation confesses that God alone is the creator of all things that exist, and He made them out of nothing (*creatio ex nihilo*). The order of creation confesses the goodness of God's creation, that everything He has made is fundamentally "good"; as Genesis 1 reiterates time and again, and is not to be discarded or regarded as worthless by us. The order of creation confesses that God has made all of humanity, all of humanity bears His image, and therefore all of human life is to be valued and protected. The order of creation confesses that God has made humans male and female and for them alone has instituted marriage, that in the indissoluble bonds of matrimony we might care for the earth and populate it. A rightly understood concept of the order of creation can only help us confess in a consistent, unified way, among other things, the biblical qualifications and distinctive functions of the pastoral office; God's natural design for marriage and sexuality; and the marked contrast between the church and an increasingly secularized society when it comes to living in accordance with how God has created us. This report has sought to clarify our historic understanding of the order of creation through a biblically and theologically informed study, so that ultimately, we might know its foundations better, explain it more coherently and teach it more faithfully in accordance with Holy Scripture.

⁷⁸ Brunner, *Ministry and the Ministry of Women*, 13.

Marriage Between Church and State

A REPORT ON CLERGY SERVING AS 'AGENTS OF THE STATE'¹



Marriage Between Church and State

A REPORT ON CLERGY SERVING AS 'AGENTS OF THE STATE'

A REPORT OF THE COMMISSION ON THEOLOGY AND CHURCH RELATIONS
THE LUTHERAN CHURCH—MISSOURI SYNOD | JUNE 2021

Defining Marriage

As we review the 1981 report, several questions may emerge. The first is, who defines marriage? The obvious answer for Christians, as is evident throughout the 1981 report, is that God alone defines it. He does so "from the beginning" (Matt. 19:4, 8) in the simple assertion of Genesis: "Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh" (2:24).² In this verse, Scripture claims — even as we confess — that God Himself gives marriage as part of His primordial creating work. As the "therefore" in 2:24 makes plain, marriage comes from God the Creator. As He begins this world, He begins marriage. It is His act and, therefore, His alone to define.

The "definition" from Genesis 2:24 begins, importantly, with a man and a woman. It then stresses three elements — leaving parents, holding fast ("cleaving") and becoming one flesh (physical union). God defines marriage by way of this description. That the definition endures is evident as our Lord Jesus affirms this very verse in Matthew 19, and His apostle, Paul, echoes the same words in Ephesians 5.

The definition of marriage in Scripture does not employ the kind of terminology used by law codes today. Scripture's language is *descriptive* — emphasizing verbs as noted above. The verbs describe the actions that, cumulatively, result in the bond of a man and a woman in marriage. Does this *merely describe* a form of marriage in biblical times, like a reference to Aaron's robe in Exodus 28:4, or does it *prescribe* an enduring pattern for marriage? Some Christians who support same-sex marriages and other redefinitions of marriage argue that Genesis 2:24 is only descriptive.³

Such a view does not square with the Lord's teaching in Matthew 19:1–6. Jesus declares that what was true in the beginning, when God made male and female and joined them together, continues to be the case when He quotes the conclusive verse from Genesis 2:24 that begins with the term "therefore" (2:27–7), and then employs verbs with a continuing sense (see Matt. 19:5). The

continuing force of this standard for marriage is doubly certain when Jesus emphatically concludes His answer in verse 6: "So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate."

All of this, of course, is in answer to a hypothetical question about divorce that the Pharisees have devised to trick Him. Jesus' answer indicates that, far from being merely descriptive, Genesis 2:24 has enduring validity in its understanding of marriage. Rather than allowing for modifications to a merely descriptive view of marriage long ago, Jesus instead takes people back to that description so that they will understand the enduring essence of marriage. The following verses in Matthew 19 (vv. 7–12) include Jesus' condemnation of divorces that reflect only the hardness of heart of humanity; and not any propensity for God to redefine marriage.

Paul echoes the same words from Genesis 2:24 in Ephesians 5. His discussion of marriage in verses 22–33 views earthly marriage in parallel with the marriage of Christ and His Bride, the Church. As Christ and His Bride are, so the husband and wife are to be. Again, this is not merely descriptive, for how could it be when every earthly marriage includes a fallible, sinful husband and a fallible, sinful wife? No, the emphasis here is entirely prescriptive. The husband is to pattern his care and conduct toward his wife according to Christ, just as the wife is to pattern her marital relationship according to Christ's holy Bride.

Consequently, on the basis of the words of our Lord, we must echo and reaffirm the understanding of HS1981 regarding the Bible's view of marriage: "Marriage is the lifelong union of one man and one woman entered into by mutual consent."⁴ Ephesians 5 reminds us of God's will for how this lifelong union is to be lived out in the lives of men and women in whom the Holy Spirit's sanctifying power is at work.

The State and Marriage

Where does "the state" fit into the words of Genesis 2:24? As HS1981 shows, by obliging us to honor and obey parents, God also obliges honor and obedience to other human "authorities." As the 2017 edition of the Small Catechism explains: "Other authorities (legal guardians, pastors, teachers, employers, government officials) also serve as God's representatives for the support and pro-

IN ITS 1981 REPORT *HUMAN SEXUALITY: A THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE*, the LCMS

Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR) spoke of the important relationship between the divine institution of marriage and the *institutionalization* of marriage within earthly societies — its character as an "earthly estate."⁵ To state that marriage is a divine institution is to say that God Himself brings about marriage. He joins together the couple and thereby *effects* their marriage. But He acts by means of human beings and institutions. HS1981 reminded us that the "essence of marriage" — the source of its validity as a divinely instituted earthly estate — is mutual consent, the "commitment of a man and woman to a permanent sharing of their lives."⁶

Such a commitment inevitably has a public dimension: It is recognized by others to be a marriage. Such public recognition means that marriage must meet particular customary expectations. For example, both Christians and non-Christians have ordinarily sought the blessing or approval of parents before being married.⁷ This and many other customs and laws restrict what is and is not a marriage. In our context, legal restrictions clearly indicate that marriage is subject to civil authority. These restrictions

"ordinarily serve human well-being — a purpose for which God has established civil authority (Rom. 13:4a)."⁸ Their intent is to safeguard spouses and children, but they also "encourage thoughtful, reflective commitment and thus protect the interest not only of society but also of those who think they are in love." For all these reasons, any cavalier or "unjustified disregard" for marriage laws is a sin against the Fourth Commandment.⁹

Therefore, although marriage is established by God, the 1981 report declares that marriage is not "primarily an ecclesiastical matter." Indeed, in the first centuries of the church, marriage was viewed as a secular act. This does not negate the reality of marriage as a divine institution. Rather, it is a reminder that "as a divinely ordained earthly estate [marriage] can be legitimately contracted in the civil realm."¹⁰ However, the secular or civil aspect of marriage rightly does not in any way discourage the long-standing Christian practice of solemnizing the vows of marriage in the context of public worship with the Word of God and prayer. Such "consecration signifies that marriage is holy because it is God-ordained and that it can be received with thanksgiving (1 Tim. 4:5)."¹¹

As a divine institution that God enacts by means of human authority, marriage stands firmly between the human and the divine, or, as we may put it today, between church and state. The church is responsible to God to uphold and teach rightly what He does in bringing together a man and woman in marriage. The state is responsible to God to order and safeguard marriage for the well-being of the individuals and communities under its authority. Christians, therefore, seek to obey both God and man with regard to marriage. To be obedient to God requires honor and obedience to the human authorities God establishes (Rom. 13:1–7). Such honor is a necessary concern in a Christian consideration of marriage.

¹ In correspondence dated April 22, 2015, LCMS President Rev. Dr. Matthew Harrison first raised the potential of a request for the CTCR to consider the matter of whether clergy should continue to serve as agents of the state in the matter of marriage. Since that time, the LCMS Southeastern District asked for guidance with regard to marriages that do not secure legal recognition (SED overture 02-18-09) and President Rev. Dr. Donald Fendow of the LCMS Minnesota North District also raised questions pertaining to this same matter (correspondence dated April 16, 2018).

² Commission on Theology and Church Relations, *Human Sexuality: A Theological Perspective* (St. Louis: The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 1981), 10–11. Download the report at <https://files.lcms.org/wl7d4d-cwPaaUvLMUfHmahFvTjQjUw9jyY5>. In 1981 the CTCR prepared *Human Sexuality*, a detailed report addressing foundational matters of gender, marriage and sexuality, as well as then-current problems facing the Christian understanding of those topics. (Hereafter abbreviated as HS1981). An update to the report is currently being undertaken by the Commission.

³ HS1981, 10.

⁴ HS1981, 13.

⁵ HS1981, 10–11.

⁶ HS1981, 11.

⁷ HS1981, 11.

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tion of our life on earth."¹² In the Large Catechism, Luther speaks of the distinctiveness of honor: "Honor includes not only love, but also deference, humility, and modesty directed (so to speak) toward a majesty concealed within them."¹³ Then he applies the Fourth Commandment not only to "fathers by blood," but also to "fathers of a household, and fathers of the nation" and then to "spiritual fathers" (economic, governmental and pastoral authorities respectively).¹⁴

This means that, since God has instituted marriage as a human institution, temporal authorities may shape various aspects of that institution.¹⁵ We might say that God's *primary* definition of marriage — a man and woman who consent to a lifelong union — may be supplemented by secondary, humanly defined elements. Humans, therefore, also define marriage, but only in a secondary way. This distinction between "primary" and "secondary" definitions should not be misunderstood. We note that marriage as a divine institution does not depend on special revelation. Rather, natural law leads all of humanity to marriage. Although marriage may differ in some ways, according to various times and cultures, nevertheless men and women have consented to marital bonding in a manner that is recognized publicly (by a tribe, a community, a nation, etc.). Despite great variety, marriage is nevertheless marked by public acts that enable its acknowledgement as such within an individual

society.¹⁶ Our nature itself — as created by God — leads humanity into marriage according to right reason. "The great variety within marriage, however — how it is contracted, what it implies regarding property, and so forth — is an indication that in a fallen world reason's guidance is never infallible. Hence, many secondary elements accrue to marriage in its various cultural manifestations and may or may not be beneficial.

Some kinds of secondary definitional elements are purely cultural in nature. The kinds of garments and accoutrements expected to be worn for a wedding (see Is. 61:10; Matt. 22:11–12) are one example. More importantly, certain rituals are typically part of localized, secondary definitions of marriage.¹⁷ The provision for the exchange of a dowry is a significant example because it was (and is) so often included in marriage customs. But, in addition, the employment or absence of verbal commitments, the specific commitments that might occur between husband and wife and their respective families, rules about divorce, and many other aspects of marriage have varied over time.¹⁸ Among the more significant changes that have taken place is that, while throughout nearly all human history marriage was understood primarily as an economic tie between families, only in the past few centuries (and especially in the western world) has marriage come to be understood primarily from a romantic standpoint.¹⁹

¹² In much of human history, marriage is not subject to the sort of civil authority to which we are accustomed. Nevertheless, even in pre-literate cultures without any written law codes, marriage exists and does so under the authority of cultural or customary restrictions that have a force equal to written law. The human authorities that administer and support such customs thus hold their "office" from God (Rom. 13:1–7) as much as any other governing authority. This reality testifies to the natural law — the law written on the human heart (Rom. 2:12–16).

¹³ Note this line from Luther's *Marriage Booklet*. "So many lands, so many customs," says the common proverb. For this reason, because weddings and the married estate are worldly affairs, it behooves those of us who are 'spiritual' or ministers of the church in no way to order or direct anything regarding marriage, but instead to allow every city and land to continue their own customs that are now in use." See *Marriage Booklet 1*; KC 367–68.

¹⁴ Stephanie Countz shows some of the various understandings of marriage and how it has developed worldwide through the centuries. See *Marriage, A History: How Love Conquered Marriage* (New York: Penguin Books, 2005).

¹⁵ "For most of history it was inconceivable that people would choose their mates on the basis of something as fragile and irrational as love and then focus all their sexual, intimate, and altruistic desires on the resulting marriage" (Countz, *Marriage*, 15). She notes this does not exclude love between spouses (which clearly often developed within marriage) or imply that people did not fall in love. She does, however, cite widespread examples of the prevailing bias against marriage for love and, in some cases, against too much affection between spouses (17–23).

³ 272 is the Hebrew verb translated "shall leave" in the ESV; 722 is the verb translated "hold fast"; and 727 is translated "shall become." The verbs are in the imperfect (similar to future) tense.

⁴ For example, Austen Hartke and Emmy Kegler, *Reconciling Scripture for Lutherans* (ReconcilingWorks: Lutherans for Full Participation, 2019). The CTCR website provides two separate responses by individuals to this booklet. See Thomas Egger's (<https://files.lcms.org/wl7d4d-cwPaaUvLMUfHmahFvTjQjUw9jyY5>) and Timothy Salek's (<https://files.lcms.org/wl7d4d-cwPaaUvLMUfHmahFvTjQjUw9jyY5>) reactions.

¹⁵ HS1981, 10.

This repudiation of married life may serve as an extreme example of how civil law might thoroughly corrupt the understanding of marriage. Any state that would endorse such a repudiation would create a moral crisis of monumental proportion for faithful Christians, who would be compelled to retain the substance of marriage even though they *could not* retain it in any legal manner. They would, thereby, be compelled by conscience to engage in a form of civil disobedience. A faithful church would also, of necessity, be required to make this a matter of public confession and action as it supported, enabled and encouraged men and women to make lifelong vows of fidelity and love. And, while engaging in such acts of civil disobedience, both individuals and churches should, if necessary, willingly suffer the consequences of such confession and practices.

In our judgment, the current understanding of marriage in the U.S. as illustrated above from Wex (see page 7) is not a complete rejection of marriage. The marriage of a heterosexual couple is fully consistent with it, although from a Christian perspective the definition certainly confuses marriage by allowing same-sex couples to be married. It does not, however, require a heterosexual couple who wish to marry to disobey civil marriage law in order to uphold biblical teachings and practices.

A marriage according to a biblical understanding would not be invalid, nor would it be subject to penalty under this view of marriage. Indeed, the marriage of a Christian couple would continue to enjoy legally insured benefits under U.S. marriage law, such as reduced taxes and provisions for easy inheritance, sharing in pensions and Social Security, and other benefits. It is important to realize that none of those benefits changed for the heterosexual couple when homosexual couples were given access to them. This legal understanding, regrettable as it is, does not require a Christian couple to engage in civil disobedience in order to marry.

2. Does the state prescribe or impose individual marriages upon individual Christians?

It seems completely unrealistic that any current jurisdiction in the United States would impose marriage under any circumstances. When marriages have been imposed in the recent past, that has typically occurred in cases when an unmarried girl or woman became pregnant and marriage between her and the man who impregnated her was imposed by parents or communities, but not by force of civil law or statute.

3. Does the state prescribe unbiblical definitions of marriage for the church, impose any unbiblical practices upon the church, or in any way seek to prevent the church's obedience to God in the church's marriage practices?

Again, the answer to the question is no, but we answer here with somewhat less confidence. We are thankful that, despite some threatening signs, no church or Christian minister has yet been compelled to go against conscience in performing weddings. That seems unlikely in the near term, but the threat of state sanctions against churches or ministers who refuse to allow same-sex weddings or refuse to perform them is by no means unrealistic in the long term.

Should Christians Decline Legal Marriage? or Can Christians Conscientiously Object to Legal Marriage?

The Christian citizen may well have strong objections to the post-Obergefell understanding of marriage that has been imposed on the United States. However, what does such a change imply for how we, as Lutheran Christians, engage in marriage? If the legal understanding of marriage has changed, shall we encourage laity to continue to secure licenses for their marriages? Shall we encourage clergy to continue to perform marriage ceremonies only for couples who have secured a license?

In the view of the Commission, any decision to refuse to secure a marriage license at this time is both unwarranted and unwise.⁴³ Because of our answers in the preceding section, we believe that it is unwarranted for Christian couples to refuse to secure legal marriage on the grounds that the definition of marriage has changed in the U.S. and elsewhere. While the definition has changed, it is not redefined in such a way that it excludes a positive Christian understanding of marriage. We cannot endorse any convincing moral argument for a couple to refuse licensure.

There may be Christian couples who decide not to secure a marriage license according to their own consciences. While no one can bind consciences, we

⁴³ "Church" in this context does not mean only the LCMS. It refers to all religious bodies that confess the Christian faith in the Triune God. Church is, in this context, the whole Christian church on earth as it lives under a particular state — the various "denominations" and "non-denominational" churches who share a creedal understanding of God.

⁴⁴ We realize that in some states one can secure a legal marriage apart from a license where common-law marriage or another form of marriage registry apart from a license is possible.

cannot encourage a refusal to marry legally. Rather, to such a couple we believe a strong caution is in order. First, the Fourth Commandment enjoins all Christians to obey governing authorities *unless obedience results in disobedience to God*. Second, we note that the purpose of marriage laws is to preserve and protect those who marry. Marriage laws provide legal protections against abuses of marriage in matters such as inheritance and divorce and are intended to provide some benefits and protection also for the children that are born or adopted in a marriage. They also make provisions for other important benefits, such as reduced taxation and shared Social Security and pension benefits, that enable a couple to live more economically and help surviving spouses to meet their own and their children's needs at the death of a spouse.

Such a refusal to secure legal marriage not only foregoes important protections, but it also imposes significant obligations. Here we simply repeat what the Commission said in 1967 after acknowledging that there are times when a Christian might engage in civil disobedience:

However, when a Christian disobeys a law which he considers to be in conflict with the higher law of God, he should:

1. be quite sure that all legal means of changing the law have been exhausted;
2. consult with men of good conscience to test the validity of his judgment;
3. carry out his act of disobedience in a nonviolent manner;
4. direct his act of disobedience as precisely as possible against the specific law or practice which violates his conscience;
5. exercise restraint in using this privilege because of the danger of lawlessness.⁴⁴

The couple that refuses to secure a marriage license on the grounds of conscience is essentially engaged in an act of civil disobedience. They are refusing to acknowledge the state's laws for marriage. They should, therefore, accept the necessary consequences for their disobedience. That is, they must not claim to be a married couple for tax purposes, for pension or Social Security benefits, or in order to claim other marriage benefits unique to their state.

⁴⁴ *Civil Obedience and Disobedience* (1967), 5, <https://files.lcms.org/w/1d-wqgprfP0K0toT0hSk6ZuIXFS3dc3sXgE>.

They should also be aware that if they portray themselves as a married couple, they risk confusing others and perhaps causing offense — especially among other Christians. Moreover, in this fallen world divorces sometimes occur even in the marriages of deeply committed Christians. Without the benefit of legal marriage, a couple that is legally unwed foregoes any of the important legal protections afforded by the state for themselves and any children.

Just as Christians have had to accept the necessity of divorce laws, and perhaps even divorce laws that we believe are erroneous in their concepts (e.g., no fault divorce), so also it seems that we cannot avoid the reality of changing marriage law. However, just as divorce laws did not require the church to change its teaching about marriage and divorce, so also the adoption of same-sex marriage requires no change in doctrine or practice (at this time). We believe that securing a marriage license from civil authorities is not sinful and that it cannot rightly be interpreted to mean that a couple has endorsed same-sex marriage or any other unbiblical understanding of marriage. And for those reasons, we strongly encourage all Christians to continue to secure a license or its equivalent from civil authorities before any marriage ceremony is conducted.

Clergy as 'Agents of the State'

While the foregoing discussion addresses the matter of a Christian couple that considers a conscientious decision to forego legal licensure of their marriage, it does not answer the matter of clergy serving as "agents of the state," which they do when they perform weddings in accord with state law. Here it is important to note, however, that clergy are serving the state only on a case-by-case, voluntary basis, not as full-time agents of the state. In other words, the incidental act of an occasional marriage service limits the degree to which a pastor is an agent of the state. He takes no oath of office as a justice of the peace, judge or others would do who serve the government directly at all times and have, as one part of their duty, the task of solemnizing marriages. This distinction is all-important because it means that a minister cannot be compelled by the state to perform any wedding.⁴⁵

⁴⁵ The practice of clergy conducting marriage ceremonies is an allowance granted by the state, not a right. It is perhaps more likely that at some point in the future a state would not allow clergy to solemnize the marriage of a couple that has obtained a valid license. That is only a theoretical possibility, of course, and it is not the case in any U.S. jurisdiction presently. However, were it to take place, clergy would no longer in any sense be "agents of the state."

1. Should a Christian pastor officiate at a public marriage ceremony for a couple that has decided they cannot in good conscience secure a license?

As only a voluntary, occasional servant of the state with respect to marriage, a pastor officiates only for those couples he has agreed to serve. Therefore, clergy have not been compelled to perform any marriage in the U.S. Pastors are instead able to follow the teachings of their church body. In our judgment, an LCMS pastor should *not* officiate at a public marriage ceremony for a couple that has refused to secure a marriage license from civil authorities. To do so would inevitably be a form of ecclesial endorsement of the couple's act of disobedience to authority. While the Synod recognizes the rights of the individual conscience, it cannot go against its own doctrine. Scripture is plain about the responsibility to honor and obey the governing authorities (ROM. 13:1-6; SEE ALSO 1 PETER 3:13-14; 1 TIM. 2:1-2). Our confessions also uphold the obligation of obedience to those "whose duty it is to command and to govern."⁴⁶ They acknowledge the legitimacy of the processes of government.⁴⁷

Therefore, in our judgment, a minister is not bearing false witness or acting in any way contrary to the teachings of Scripture and the Confessions when he conducts the wedding service of a heterosexual couple. This is *not* an implicit endorsement of the current legal definition of same-sex marriage. As much as the CTCR, together with our church body,⁴⁸ objects to the legal widening of marriage to include same-sex relationships, the Commission does not believe that this expanded definition excludes the understanding of marriage we hold that is based on biblical teaching. Therefore, we conclude that for a pastor of the Synod publicly to endorse disobedience to state marriage statutes would be confusing and misleading and may lead to a misperception of the Lutheran Church's support for governing authority. Unless and until the Synod itself determines that it is impossible to be obedient to current marriage law without being disobedient to God, our pastors should not give public endorsement to civil disobedience in this matter.

2. Ought a Christian pastor refuse to serve as an agent of the state in the matter of marriage when the state has redefined marriage in such a way that it now includes as "marriage" same-sex relationships (or, potentially, other non-biblical marriages)?

Although this is a slightly different question, we believe the previous answer addresses this concern. No, we do not believe a pastor of the LCMS should refuse to serve as an agent of the state in the solemnization of the marriages of heterosexual couples. We recognize that here, too, the matter of individual conscience might be invoked. A pastor of the Synod might say that he cannot in good conscience any longer serve as an agent of the state in performing marriages. While that may indeed be true — we cannot determine what an individual's conscience may dictate and we must respect it — individual conscience does not allow a Synod pastor to impose his conscience upon his flock. If he refuses to conduct marriage services for members who themselves have no conscientious objection to securing a marriage license, he is allowing his individual conscience to "lord it over" the flock (1 PETER 5:3) unless he provides some appropriate means for them to follow their own conscience.⁴⁹

3. Ought a Christian pastor perform a marriage for a same-sex couple?

The fact that our Synod accommodates divorce in some manner may lead others to ask whether some such accommodation should be possible for a same-sex couple. No biblical or confessional church can accommodate same-sex marriage in the manner that it accommodates divorce among members. Divorce must always be understood as a failing that results from sin — for promises have been violated by at least one party to the marriage. However, there is a biblical warrant for recognizing that at times there is no alternative to suffering a divorce in circumstances such as adultery and malicious desertion.⁵⁰ Moreover, "the Bible allows for the possibility of divorce and remarriage in these circumstances."⁵¹

⁴⁶ In such a case, the pastor may have other options. For example, he might ask the couple to go to a fellow Synod pastor who does not share his objection. He might also counsel the couple to secure their legal marriage from a justice of the peace or similar civil servant and then schedule a "Blessing of a Civil Marriage" (see LSB Agenda, 71). Moreover, before a pastor reaches such a conscientious conclusion, he ought most certainly to discuss his concerns in the counsel of his peers and his ecclesiastical supervisors.

⁴⁷ For discussion of these exceptions, see the 1987 CTCR report, *Divorce and Remarriage: An Exegetical Study*, at <https://files.lcms.org/w/1d-wqgprfP0K0toT0hSk6ZuIXFS3dc3sXgE> (see LSB Agenda, 71).

⁵¹ *Luther's Small Catechism*, 100.

There are no similar grounds for accommodating same-sex marriage. It implies an endorsement of sexual acts that are inherently sinful and contrary to creation as man and woman (see ROM. 1:26-27). Therefore, the Synod has consistently expressed its understanding that Scripture and the Confessions forbid our church from any endorsement or sanction of same-sex marriage as well as any participation by a Synod pastor in such unions or marriages.⁵² Here the answer is a straightforward no, as we have already indicated in the first question of the previous section. The Synod itself has addressed this by stating unequivocally in 2016 Res. 14-04 that "no LCMS pastor shall consent to officiate or participate in any ceremony sanctioning the union of a same-sex couple."

4. What about the particular case of military and institutional chaplaincy?

We give thanks that, although chaplains often serve under governmental authority either directly or indirectly, their freedom to act according to the teachings of their church body is retained. Although no one can guarantee that such freedom will continue, it is the case at the present time.

5. Should a Christian pastor officiate at a public marriage ceremony for a couple that has decided that a legal marriage would cause a financial hardship?

The foregoing paragraphs do not address other circumstances in which couples may seek a "church wedding" without securing a marriage license. One example is individual couples who discover that if they marry, they will lose financial resources that they depend on to meet their needs. This has been the case at times when mothers receiving aid for their dependent child(ren) will no longer receive certain benefits, or will have the amounts of those benefits reduced, if they marry.⁵³ Such a couple may sometimes seek a "church marriage" or some kind of religious blessing for their relationship but decline to secure legal marriage.

Somewhat similar is the increasingly common number of older, cohabiting, retired couples who have chosen not to be legally married because there is a financial benefit to remaining unmarried. Such couples

may choose this course because they discover that if they marry one party will lose a pension or other retirement benefit from a previous marriage. Such couples have also sometimes asked to have a religious marriage ceremony and recognition as husband and wife by the church while they remain unmarried in the eyes of the state.

These circumstances present significant pastoral challenges. On the one hand, pastors and other Christians cannot glibly ignore the very real financial dilemmas that may discourage marriage. Christians have rightly exercised our responsibility for free speech in matters such as same-sex marriage. We ought also to make our voices heard when tax laws and other governmental policies impose financial burdens that discourage marriage. In addition, while the church does not have the financial resources of the government, it is certainly reasonable to seek to extend some measure of financial support — insofar as the church is able — for couples that want to marry but face legal or other economic requirements that discourage marriage. Of course, it may also be necessary for the two Christians to accept that God is, at the present time, requiring them to forego marriage and remain celibate, unmarried individuals.

On the other hand, pastors are morally bound not to conduct a "wedding ceremony" for a couple that is refusing to marry legally for financial gain. As sympathetic as one must be toward those facing such financially difficult circumstances as we have described, it is an act of deceit for a couple to portray themselves as married by the church when they have refused to abide by marriage laws. The church must not be complicit in that deceit.

Instead, our churches and pastors are duty-bound to teach that obedience to God is more important than securing financial benefits or other earthly gains. Just as Christian obedience to God may at times compel a costly *disobedience* to human authority, there are other times — like this — when obedience to God compels *obedience* to human authority no matter how inconvenient or costly that obedience may be. And, finally, we should note that it is particularly important to impress on older Christians that the example they set is one that their children and grandchildren will likely emulate.

Conclusion

The foregoing discussion indicates the appropriateness of the title of this report. Marriage truly does stand between church and state. It is both sacred and secular. It is God's institution and holy work, but one that He

⁴⁸ LCI 141; KW 405; see also Ap XVI 1, 3, 6; KW 231.

⁴⁹ Ap XVI 7, KW 232.

⁵⁰ See, for example, 2004 Res. 3-05A, 2010 Res. 3-01A, 2013 Res. 2-07A, 2016 Res. 14-02A and Res. 14-04, and 2019 Res. 11-02A.

⁵² See LCMS 2016 Res. 14-04; note also 1998 Res. 3-01, 2004 Res. 3-04A, 2010 Res. 3-01A, 2013 Res. 2-07A and 2019 Res. 11-02A.

⁵³ See Elaine Maag and Gregory Acs, "The Financial Consequences of Marriage for Cohabiting Couples with Children" *Urban Institute* (September 2015), <https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/65776/2000366-The-Financial-Consequences-of-Marriage-for-Cohabiting-Couples-with-Children%20.pdf>.

enacts by means of earthly authorities and instruments such as laws and customs. Marriage, by God's own created design, is subject to earthly laws and customs, even though human laws and customs sometimes undermine or even abrogate God's good purposes for marriage.

God, in His mercy, has given marriage as the foundational institution for all of society. The church's witness to this divine gift is, therefore, of incalculable importance. This witness comes not only in the verbal testimony to the world as it tells of God's design for marriage, but also as the actual marriages of believers demonstrate the way marriage is meant to work in human life.

Therefore, while marriage is not, strictly speaking, an ecclesial (churchly) institution, the church cannot abdicate its responsibility to teach what God intends marriage to be. Our Creator gives marriage, together with all His creation, for our good. Psalm 148 testifies to the Creator's intention for good in all His works. It speaks of all creation praising God in a chorus extending from heaven's angels, to the air, the sea and dry land, to all creatures, and to all humanity. Along the way, it speaks of "young men and maidens together" (v. 12) praising the Lord. Our hope is that men and women young and old will see what marriage is, gladly receive it as God's gift, and "praise the Lord" as they enjoy marriage's blessings.



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of — this technology to glorify our God and Savior, build up the Body of Christ and extend His kingdom in the world? The Lord Jesus prayed for His twelve disciples, and for His disciples of every age, including the challenging, media-connected age in which we live: "They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one. ... Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth" (JOHN 17:14-17).

AS THE LUTHERAN CHURCH—MISSOURI SYNOD began its national radio broadcast ministry, theologian Theodore Graebner encouraged the use of this new tool to proclaim the Gospel: "It was Jesus Himself who complained that the children of this world were wiser in their generation than the children of light. And this applies today in the matter of radio. Certainly, the enemies of true religion and of good morals are making use of this wonderful means of communication, while evangelical Christians are lagging far behind. ... Should not the beginning now being made on a small scale through the installation of a radio plant in Concordia Seminary be followed by similar efforts elsewhere, until no one living in this country shall be beyond the range of sound Christian preaching and teaching through the radio?"¹

The radio ministry that began with that new station continues to this day through the many Christ-centered programs of KFUD.² Lutherans are historically well-acquainted with the successful use of mass media in the service of the church. Martin Luther eagerly embraced the printing press as an important technological tool in the spread of Reformation teachings. Luther and the other reformers exchanged sharp words and arguments in print, publishing barbs that would delight (or dismay) many of today's social media users. Historian Mark Edwards described Luther's effective use of the new print media: "Not only did the Reformation see the first large-scale 'media campaign,' it also saw a campaign that was overwhelmingly dominated by one person, Martin Luther. More works by Luther were printed and reprinted than by any other publicist. ... [Luther] out-published all his Catholic opponents five to three."³

In this discussion guide, social media will be considered according to its dictionary definition as "forms of electronic communication (such as websites for social networking and microblogging) through which users create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content (such as videos)."⁴ Included in social media are platforms such as Facebook, Pinterest, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram and Snap-chat. This is a limited list — according to one estimate there are over 50 social media platforms, and counting — and, as these services become outdated, they may be replaced by others.⁵

These rapidly changing methods of communication are considered indispensable in all areas of life — at home, at work, at all levels of education, in managing health care and providing entertainment. Through social media, people connect with friends and engage with opponents. How should we as Christians use these social media tools? Will such connections damage the community we share in the Body of Christ or will they build up our relationships as brothers and sisters in the household of God?⁶

Social media technology leads us along pathways both helpful and hazardous. In this discussion guide, we will consider the use of social media and its impact on life and faith according to seven categories: community, trust, knowledge, influence, identity, temptation and vocation. How can we best use — or, if necessary, avoid the use

¹ merriam-webster.com/dictionary/social%20media.

² References and context reflect the time of the original document in early 2019, but with the fast pace of technology, some references may quickly become outdated and other contexts may become more pertinent.

³ Questions and concerns such as these were raised in an overture referred to the CTCR by the 2016 convention in Omnibus Resolution A (2016 Convention Proceedings, 267). This overture urged the Synod to ask the CTCR to "study the use and benefits of social media among and in the LCMS" (Ov. 5-08, 2016 Convention Workbook, 345). As evidenced by the preparation of this report, the CTCR responded positively to this overture's suggestion in light of the CTCR's responsibility to "provide studies of contemporary issues, including current social issues, as they affect the church and as the church may affect such social issues" (Bylaw 3.9.5.2-1[c]).

¹ Theodore Graebner, *The Lutheran Witness*, December 19, 1922, 407, quoted in Douglas Rutt, "Embracing Gospel Technology," *The Lutheran Layman's*, January/February 2018.

² Information on KFUD programs and listening options can be found at kfud.org.

³ Mark U. Edwards Jr., *Printing, Propaganda, and Martin Luther* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 1.

FRIENDS AND FOLLOWERS: SOCIAL MEDIA AND COMMUNITY

We, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another. (ROM. 12:5)

THE NEED FOR COMMUNITY

An advertisement for an internet service provider proudly announces that nothing keeps people more connected than the internet. There is some truth to that claim; we have technology quite literally at our fingertips that enables us to stay in touch with one another 24 hours a day, seven days a week. We like to connect with others; we need to be connected.

The social fragmentation that exists today in our digitally connected world has been traced to rising rates of suicide, drug abuse and depression: "Since the 1980s, reported loneliness among adults in the U.S. increased from 20 percent to 40 percent. The former surgeon general announced recently that social isolation is a major public health crisis, on par with heart disease or cancer. He noted that loneliness is associated with increased risk of heart disease, stroke, premature death, and violence." Responding to the crisis of loneliness in Great Britain, in January of 2018 the Prime Minister appointed a "Minister for Loneliness."

After creating the first man and placing him in the garden of Eden, God said to Adam, "It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him." God brought the livestock, the birds of the air and the beasts of the field to Adam to receive names, "but for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him" (GEN. 2:18–21). God created a woman, Eve, so that the man and woman might live in communion with Him and with one another. God created us for community, fellowship, and love, and medical research supports what we already know from Holy Scripture, suggesting "that prayer, religious faith, participation in a religious community, and practices like cultivating gratitude, forgiveness, and other virtues can reduce the risk of depression, lower the risk of suicide, diminish drug abuse, and aid in recovery. ... Church attendance is a social activity that protects people against loneliness and isolation."¹

¹ Aaron Kheriaty, "Dying of Despair," *First Things* (August 2017): 3, [firstthings.com/article/2017/08/dying-of-despair](https://www.firstthings.com/article/2017/08/dying-of-despair), accessed March 21, 2018.

² Ceylan Yeginsu, "U.K. Appoints a Minister for Loneliness," *The New York Times*, January 17, 2018, [nytimes.com/2018/01/17/world/europe/uk-loneliness.html](https://www.nytimes.com/2018/01/17/world/europe/uk-loneliness.html), accessed March 14, 2018.

³ Kheriaty, "Dying of Despair," 6.

Read Acts 2:42–47 and Acts 4:32–35. How did the earliest believers express their participation in the community into which they had been baptized? Which of their actions could reasonably be expressed through today's social media? What aspects of their life in community would be poorly served by online platforms?

Read 1 Cor. 12:12–31. Like the early believers, we are baptized into the one Body of Christ. How might social media be used to build up that body, as we suffer and rejoice together? The apostle Paul warns against the dangers of pride and division within the body. How might social media encourage those dangers? How might social media connections prevent such damage to the body?

The author of a *Time* magazine profile of Mark Zuckerberg (the chief executive officer of Facebook) offers the opinion that "Facebook wants to populate the wilderness, tame the howling mob and turn the lonely, antiscocial world of random chance into a friendly world, a serendipitous world. You'll be working and living inside a network of people, and you'll never have to be alone again."⁴ Yet even as we live in community, are there times when it is helpful, even necessary, to be alone?

People connect on social media; they also search there for answers and for spiritual comfort and insight. They may not always find what they are seeking, because some connections cannot be found through a digital device. The more we become connected online, the less we may be connected personally. "People awash in social media can't get past the paradox that the best save for loneliness is properly applied alone. They look for answers in added connections, and more emotional ones, but God isn't a closer contact and better friend. He transcends the social, and you must seek him beyond the medium of 'share' and 'like.'"⁵ Yet even in our loneliness, we are never alone, as the psalmist understood: "Where shall I go from your

⁴ Mark Baerlein, "Prayer in the Facebook Age," *First Things* (December 2014): 2–3, [firstthings.com/article/2014/12/prayer-in-the-facebook-age](https://www.firstthings.com/article/2014/12/prayer-in-the-facebook-age), accessed March 21, 2018.

⁵ Baerlein, "Prayer in the Facebook Age," 4.

Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence?" (PS. 137:7)

Read John 16:31–33, Matt. 18:19–20 and Matt. 28:20. Even though He knows His friends will be scattered when He is betrayed, what comfort does Jesus have? What comfort is ours when we are alone and when we are gathered in community? How might social media use encourage a kind of "aloneness" that is not physically, mentally and spiritually healthy? How might social media help to overcome such aloneness?

A NEW KIND OF COMMUNITY

Technology changed communities long before the internet. "When mass-produced books arrived, some people began to prefer reading a book privately instead of listening to a book read to a large group. We started to prefer technological and automated services in our work and home that remove the need to interact with a human."⁶ Robert Putnam, the author of *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*, comments that television also changed communities, making them wider and shallower, allowing individual tastes to be satisfied easily and fully. Putnam explains that technological trends today "are radically privatizing" or "individualizing" our use of leisure time and thus disrupting many opportunities for social capital formation.⁷ Due to this trend toward individualization, a trend encouraged by social media, people are less inclined to be active in existing social communities, including the church.

Mark Zuckerberg suggested that Facebook can fill the role once played by churches and other community organizations such as Little League: "It's so striking that for decades, membership in all kinds of groups has declined as much as one-quarter. ... That's a lot of people who now need to find a sense of purpose and support somewhere else. ... We started a project to see if we could get better at suggesting groups that will be meaningful to us. We started building artificial intelligence to do this. And it works. In the first 6 months, we helped 50% more people join meaningful communities. ... If we can do this, it will not only turn around the whole decline in community membership we've seen for decades, it will start to strengthen our social fabric and bring the world closer together ..."

⁶ Bernard Bull, *Digitalized: Spiritual Implications of Technology* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2018), 30.

⁷ Robert Putnam, "Bowling Alone: America's Declining Social Capital," *Journal of Democracy* 6, no. 1 (January 1995): 75, [annualreviews.org/doi/10.1146/annurev.jsoc.6.1.75](https://www.annualreviews.org/doi/10.1146/annurev.jsoc.6.1.75), accessed March 26, 2018. Social capital refers to the connections we have with family, friends, neighbors and the institutions of society. Also see, "Virtual Communities: Bowling alone online together" concerning the social aspects of virtual communities like social media at www.annualreviews.org/doi/10.1146/annurev.jsoc.6.1.75, accessed March 26, 2018.

we're going to change Facebook's whole mission to take this on."⁸

While we may debate Facebook's ability to strengthen the social fabric, there are many online communities for professions and special interest groups — for prayer, for politics, for cancer survivors and caregivers and for the lonely. Individuals or groups can create new online communities or simply wait for new communities to come into existence. "[The web] is a genuine place where people connect, network, and accomplish shared goals, where they challenge and confront others or find something they are not getting in the physical world. As we think about our role as the Church in this digital age, it is important that we think about how we live out our mission not only in the physical world but also in online contexts."⁹

Read Heb. 10:24–25. How could social media connections be used to "stir up one another to love and good works"? How have such connections been used this way in your own congregation? Members of online communities can certainly encourage one another, but do online connections satisfy the need to "meet together"? Why or why not?

Some aspects of social media communities are not so new. Face to face or online, we do not always stir up one another to love and good works; we can and do stir up one another to anger as well. With or without social media, problems and conflict will arise in every community, including among the redeemed. The apostle Paul addressed serious conflicts among the Corinthian Christians, who quarreled over favorite apostles, brought lawsuits against one another, readily accepted immoral behavior and expressed loveless attitudes in the celebration of the Lord's Supper. The apostle pleaded for unity: "I appeal to you, brothers, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment" (1 COR. 1:10). Today's social media platforms are not exempt from such divisions, and some people suggest that social media — in spite of its ability to create community — is especially effective in creating division.

Roger McNamee, an early investor in Facebook, comments that, instead of bringing people together, the popular social media platform drives them apart, and online advertising benefits financially from the divisions. "The use of algorithms to give consumers 'what they want' leads to an unending stream of posts that confirm each user's beliefs.

⁸ John Shinn, "Facebook Can Play a Role That Churches and Little League Once Filled," *CNBC Tech*, June 26, 2017, [cnbc.com/2017/06/26/mark-zuckerberg-compares-facebook-to-church-little-league.html](https://www.cnbc.com/2017/06/26/mark-zuckerberg-compares-facebook-to-church-little-league.html), accessed March 7, 2018.

⁹ Bull, *Digitalized*, 64.

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... The result is that everyone sees a different version of the internet tailored to create the illusion that everyone else agrees with them. Continuous reinforcement of existing beliefs tends to entrench those beliefs more deeply, while also making them more extreme and resistant to contrary facts. Facebook takes the concept one step further with its "groups" feature, which encourages like-minded users to congregates around shared interests or beliefs ... the larger benefit goes to advertisers, who can target audiences even more effectively.¹⁰

Another Facebook executive, Chamath Paliapitiya (the former vice-president for user growth, who left the company in 2011), believes that more serious damage is being done to community. "The short-term, dopamine-driven feedback loops that we have created are destroying how society works. No civil discourse, no cooperation, misinformation, mistrust ... This is a global problem. It is eroding the core foundations of how people behave by and between each other."¹¹

Read 1 Cor. 1:10–17. Paul appeals to the Corinthian Christians to "be united in the same mind and the same judgment." Divisions such as those experienced in Corinth are all too familiar to us today. How could social media be used in the healing of those divisions?

LASTING COMMUNITY

In the Apostles' Creed we confess, "I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting."¹² True community already exists in Christ Jesus, a community created by the Holy Spirit, who has called us by the Gospel. Social media use may encourage or harm community, but it cannot destroy the Body of Christ.

Martin Luther said that the Gospel gives us guidance and helps against sin in more than one way — through the spoken Word of God, Baptism, the Lord's Supper and, Confession and Absolution "and also through the mutual conversation and consolation of brothers and sisters.

Matthew 18:[20]: "Where two or three are gathered."¹³ Hearing the Word and "mutual conversation and consolation" can take place through social media. Yet the Roman Catholic Pontifical Council for Social Communications makes an important point in its document, *The Church and Internet*: "There are no sacraments on the Internet; and even the religious experiences possible there by the grace of God are insufficient apart from real-world interaction with other persons of faith."¹⁴

The apostle Paul writes, "When you come together, each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation. Let all things be done for building up" (1 COR. 14:26). In admonition and forgiveness, in conversation and community, in shared sacraments, we are called to build up our brothers and sisters in Christ. We can certainly do this through social media, a 24/7 tool to stay in touch with those in need of encouragement and prayer. Yet there are times when the joy, comfort and love we have in Christ can only be shared face to face — in worship, at the altar, around the font, in the home of a fellow believer, or at a hospital bed or gravesite. We appreciate convenience and efficiency, but these must not be valued above our created need for flesh and blood community.

Read Eph. 4:1–6. We have been called to one hope. What traits, according to these verses, define "a manner worthy" of our calling in Christ? How can those traits be expressed through social media? Which traits can best be expressed face to face?

Social media platforms provide space for social fragmentation and social engagement. We can use those platforms to erode unity or to build up and strengthen our unity in the Spirit. We can become entrenched in our own opinions or rejoice in like-minded conversations, while at the same time engaging in dialogue — with gentleness and respect (1 PETER 3:15) — with those whose opinions differ from our own.

When opinions differ, it can be difficult in online conversation to correctly understand those with whom we are speaking. There may be no visual or verbal cues (other than the occasional emoji) to help us judge the speaker's intent and true meaning. We may not know with any certainty the source of the information we receive. How has social media use changed our attitudes toward trust — of information or of individuals?

¹⁰ Martin Luther, *Smallcat Articles, The Book of Concord*, ed. Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000), 319.

¹¹ Roman Catholic Pontifical Council for Social Communications, *The Church and Internet* (Vatican City, February 22, 2002), II, 9, [vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/pscc/documents/rc_pc_pscc_doc_20020228_church-internet_en.html](https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/pscc/documents/rc_pc_pscc_doc_20020228_church-internet_en.html), accessed March 28, 2018.

¹² Third Article, The Apostles' Creed, *Lutheran Book of Worship* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2006), 159.

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TROLLS AND FAKE NEWS: TRUST AND SOCIAL MEDIA

In God, whose word I praise, in God I trust. (PS. 56:4)

LOSING TRUST

Every day we place our trust in technology that touches nearly every aspect of our lives — travel, health, communication, finances and so much more. In all kinds of community relationships, from business meetings to small group Bible studies, trust is expected among the participants. Do we trust the relationships we build and sustain with social media? Do we trust the companies who have developed such platforms for communication? Social media platforms attempt to build trust, but those same platforms can also lose the trust of those who use them. Facebook faced criticism for selling users' personal information for use in political campaigns. The company had to take steps to regain lost trust.¹⁵

There are books to help companies in using an online presence to build trust with their customers. Titles reveal what the authors and readers want to create: *Liar's Outlets: Enabling the Trust That Society Needs to Thrive*; *Social Media Fascination: Embracing Social Media to Build Community, Trust and Rapport*; *Trust Agents: Using the Web to Build Influence, Improve Reputation and Earn Trust*.¹⁶

The frequent contacts of friends on social media may build and encourage trust, but wrongly used, social media can also ruin personal trust. Individuals known as trolls, who love to inflame and anger, lurk throughout the internet, as do fake or false reports of various kinds. For many, what is read online becomes more important than what is said in person. People may stop trusting one another when "likes on Instagram and favorites on Twitter have more meaning behind them than the words exchanged

in everyday conversations."¹⁷ People of all ages, especially teens and preteens, access social media repeatedly every day to see how many "likes" they have received on what they have posted or to see who retweeted their posts. They may believe comments — both positive and negative — from people they do not even know. Misplaced trust in the personal opinions of others can have a serious impact on those targeted by unkind comments.

Read Ps. 52:7, Ps. 146:3–4, Prov. 11:12–13, Ec. 3:1–3 and Is. 42:17. According to these verses, when and where is trust misplaced? Where might you encounter some of these untrustworthy sources on social media?

CHANGING ATTITUDES

Social media use may be changing our attitude toward trust and its importance. Convenience and immediate feedback are, in some areas, becoming more important than trust. "Convenience is one of the most-recognized features of all new technologies, including the internet. A number of respondents (to a Pew Research Center survey) made the case that it is the convenience of using popular internet applications that makes the internet most appealing and addictive. Further, they noted that it is convenience that creates the most challenges for internet users when it comes to trust. In making trust decisions, people weigh risk and reward and generally choose reward. An anonymous respondent adapted a classic line from U.S. history, writing, 'Give me convenience or give me death.'"¹⁸

In using the internet, for personal or business reasons, we are navigating relationships with people we know and with others we will never meet. Trust may be negotiated and established according to new standards and even lost trust may not be lost for long. An official with a company

¹⁵ Jennifer Daddley-Nicholson, "Facebook will help users delete some of their personal information to stem data-fake-book backlash," *news.com.au*, March 28, 2018, [news.com.au/technology/online/social/facebook-will-help-users-delete-some-of-their-personal-information-to-stem-data-fake-book-backlash/news-story/1131f9c956d1d5a1ac294839b876](https://www.news.com.au/technology/online/social/facebook-will-help-users-delete-some-of-their-personal-information-to-stem-data-fake-book-backlash/news-story/1131f9c956d1d5a1ac294839b876), accessed March 28, 2018.

¹⁶ Bruce Schuster, *Liar's Outlets: Enabling the Trust That Society Needs to Thrive* (Indianapolis: Wiley, 2012); Deborah Owen, *Social Media Fascination: Embracing Social Media to Build Community, Trust and Rapport* (Crestview, 2014); and Chris Brogan and Julien Smith, *Trust Agents: Using the Web to Build Influence, Improve Reputation and Earn Trust* (Hoboken, NJ, 2010).

¹⁷ Makenzie Swager, "How Social Media Has Ruined Our Capacity to Trust," *Olysiya*, July 15, 2015, [olyisiya.com/social-media-ruined-capacity-to-trust](https://www.olyisiya.com/social-media-ruined-capacity-to-trust), accessed March 28, 2018.

¹⁸ Lee Rainie, "The Fate of Online Trust in the Next Decade," *Pew Research Center*, August 10, 2017, [pewresearch.org/2017/08/10/the-fate-of-online-trust-in-the-next-decade/](https://www.pewresearch.org/2017/08/10/the-fate-of-online-trust-in-the-next-decade/), accessed April 4, 2018.

ny that studies the influence of technology comments, "Our trust in our devices tends to stay constant until a catastrophic event — like our accounts being hacked, or a national news story about surveillance, or our devices being stolen. And even then, our concern lasts only as long as we're dealing with the immediate consequences, such as having to change our passwords or canceling our credit cards."²⁵ Some issues, however, may impact social media users' lives in more serious and long term ways, such as the potential harm to the user's reputation if personal information is stolen. We need to be aware, not only of information that we may be tempted to share, but of the need for up-to-date, online security. Privacy and security are important factors in a trusting relationship — online or face to face.

Read Prov. 3:29–32. In your social media use, do you ever "contend with a man for no reason, when he has done you no harm"? To what extent do you trust social media contacts? Do you establish trust with an individual or community online in the same way in which you would establish trust face to face?

Changing trust in online information matches a decline in trust for institutions such as the government, financial institutions and the church. A Gallup poll revealed that in 1999, 12 percent of the people interviewed had "very little" trust for the church. By 2017, that number grew to 25 percent. Trust for news on the internet experienced a similar decline.²⁶ Many online sites or groups that appear to be Christian are not necessarily trustworthy sources for spiritual growth or information about the faith.

Read Acts 17:10–12 and 2 Tim. 3:12–17. What does Scripture teach about establishing the trustworthiness of information we may receive concerning our faith in Christ? How might you follow this counsel in your social media use?

Trust in social media varies among its users. An official with a company that promotes networking technology believes that trust in social media will become stronger overall because millennials, having grown up with technology, expect online transactions to be trustworthy. David Durant, an analyst for the British Government Digital Service says, "People who have grown up using mobile technology for social media, interaction with business and increasingly as a way to interact with government will see doing so as entirely normal and consider it the natural channel for a very significant proportion of all their life's

interactions."²⁷ Trust, as approached online as well as in other areas of life, has multiple levels or layers and online platforms are used with varying degrees of trust. We would likely trust, and rightly so, information posted by our own local congregations or on the LCMS website (for example, blogs, podcasts and articles by pastors and synodical leaders).²⁸ In some circumstances we would share financial information on sites where such information is required, but would likely not post that information on Facebook. At the same time, we may have sufficient trust in Facebook and other community platforms to share personal and social information.

Read 1 Cor. 7:29–31. Discussing betrothal and marriage in light of our new life in Christ, and anticipating the Lord's return, the apostle Paul wants to spare the Corinthians involvement in "worldly troubles." How might his counsel about dealing with the world apply to our use of social media? Paul reminds us that "the present form of this world is passing away." How might that statement apply to our trust of the world's technology?

IN GOD I TRUST

Concerning the spiritual implications of trusting technology, Bernard Bull comments, "Each new technology is framed as a solution to some difficulty or other that ails humanity. Because of this, it has become common to think of technology more broadly as a sort of substitute savior."²⁹ There is no substitute savior of any kind for those who have placed their trust — for time and eternity — in Jesus Christ. While there are things in which we are tempted to wrongly place our trust, including false gods and earthly rulers, trust in our God and Savior is always firmly grounded: "Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the Lord our God" (Ps. 107).

Read Ps. 56 and Ps. 118. What do these psalms teach us about trusting the Lord? What has He done to prove that He is trustworthy? What influence does trust in the Lord have on our trust in worldly things, including social media and the contacts we make there?

We may determine new standards for trust in social media and other online sources. Should we trust — any, all

²⁵ Raine, *pewinternet.org/2017/08/10/the-fate-of-online-trust-in-the-next-decade*, accessed April 4, 2018.

²⁶ The LCMS website, *lcms.org*, offers articles, devotionals and Bible studies on a wide variety of topics. LCMS leader blogs are available at *blogs.lcms.org/category/leader-blog*. Concordia Publishing House has a blog that offers devotional thoughts, Bible studies and information on new products at *blog.cph.org*.

²⁷ Bull, *Digitized*, 14.

or none of — the flood of religious information available at our fingertips? In his book, *Digitized*, Bernard Bull asks, "Where do people go when they have a faith question? While many still turn to their pastors or a learned family member or friend, countless others are literally googling God. They are typing questions into the most available search engine and exploring what appears at the top of the list. The question is, of course, what will they find there?"³⁰ Should we trust the internet and social media as sources of religious knowledge and spiritual insight? How can we provide knowledge online that is firmly grounded in the truth of God's Word?

³⁰ Bull, *Digitized*, 93–94.

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PODCASTS AND BLOGS:
KNOWLEDGE ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Thanks be to God, who in Christ always leads us in triumphal procession, and through us spreads the fragrance of the knowledge of him everywhere. (1 COR. 2:14)

KNOWLEDGE AND AUTHORITY

In the sixteenth century, Luther and his fellow reformers embraced the new technology of the printing press, using it to spread the teachings of the Reformation throughout Europe. Yet the books, pamphlets and Bible translations spread more than the knowledge of the Gospel. They encouraged readers to consider new sources of authority and knowledge. Printing "undetermined central authority because it encouraged the recipients of the printed message to think for themselves about the issues in dispute, and it provided the means — printed Bibles especially — by which each person could become his or her own theologian."³¹

Today's technology continues to impact our sources of knowledge and our opinions about authority. Through social media conversations and the information readily accessible online, each person today can "become his or her own theologian." The internet "has democratized access to knowledge and information, which has forever changed the way we relate to experts and authority figures. This means that simple appeals to authority may be diminishing in perceived value."³² Authority figures, who, due to their years of education and experience were once sought out as important sources of knowledge and wisdom, may now command less respect.³³

The Pontifical Council for Social Communications comments that "the two-way interactivity of the Internet is blurring the old distinction between those who communicate and those who receive what is communicated, and creating a situation in which, potentially at least, everyone can do both. This is not the one-way, top-down communication of the past. As more and more people become familiar with this characteristic of the Internet in other areas of their lives, they can be expected also to look for it

in regard to religion and the church."³⁴ Our society readily embraces the idea that people are entitled to their own opinions, yet does not always welcome the sharing of those opinions. Even Christian evangelism may be regarded as an attempt to force private religious beliefs on others or even dismissed as "hate speech."³⁵

Read 2 Tim. 4:1–5. The apostle's warning about people with "itching ears" applies to every age. How have you seen social media users accumulating for themselves "teachers to suit their own passions"? What counsel and encouragement does Paul give to Timothy? How might the Internet and social media provide opportunities for outreach among those who no longer "endure sound teaching"? What experiences have you had in doing "the work of an [online] evangelist"?

The array of opinions and knowledge (both accurate and inaccurate) available online encourages the idea that there is no absolute truth, no single, overall perspective for understanding our purpose, life and death or the world around us. Many "truths" exist, many of which are more likely to have their origins within the ideas and opinions of individuals rather than in the Word of God. The information available online brings a wide variety of religions and worldviews into our homes and hearts and minds. "The overwhelming number of inputs today means there is no longer any dominant consensus narrative."³⁶ There is no single account or point of view that offers answers to key issues such as questions of good and evil or human origin and purpose.

Read John 18:33–36. "What is truth?" Suppose Pilate asked his question on social media. What sort of answers might he receive? How would you reply?

³⁴ Pontifical Council for Social Communications, *The Church and Internet*, II.6.

³⁵ A survey indicated that nearly half of practicing Christian millennials think it is wrong to share their personal beliefs in the hope that others will come to share their beliefs. Kate Shellmoe, "Half of Millennial Christians Say It's Wrong to Evangelize," *Christianity Today*, February 6, 2019, *christianitytoday.com/news/2019/february-half-of-millennial-christians-wrong-to-evangelize-burns.html*, accessed February 27, 2019.

³⁶ Scott Alexander, "Storm Warning," *Family Circle*, April 2018, 108.

NEW SOURCES OF KNOWLEDGE

When we are looking for answers to a puzzling question or a personal problem, we may turn first to the readily available knowledge found on the internet or to our contacts on social media and only then seek the face to face counsel of a trusted authority. After all, the "expertise" found online is available around the clock. We might, for example, search for information online about worrisome physical symptoms and only after that search — which may only increase our anxiety about our health — make an appointment with the family doctor. The same approach may be taken with spiritual questions. Religious blogs, podcasts and online discussions provide a steady supply of spiritual insight, which may or may not be biblically accurate. Will users be satisfied with the spiritual knowledge they have found online? Will they be able to discern the difference between truth and falsehood in the information they discover? If they are unable to discern the truth, will they go to a pastor or teacher for help in resolving their questions or untangling the varied answers offered through social media conversations?

Read 2 Cor. 10:1–6. The apostle Paul defends his ministry against those who oppose his authority. What "weapons of warfare" were available for his use and can also be used by us today? How might you use social media to "destroy arguments and every lofty opinion against the knowledge of God"?

Paul told Timothy, "Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture" (1 Tim. 4:13). Reading in ancient times was often a community affair, so public that the fourth century saint Augustine was astonished to come upon Bishop Ambrose reading silently, even though others were present.³⁷ Now the silent, private reading and inter-

pretation to which we are accustomed is available through very public media. Through the efforts of Google and other companies, books once obtained only through libraries or for purchase are scanned and stored on the internet. These books are easily accessed and provide new worlds of knowledge. Some educators worry that students searching for information online may spend very little time evaluating the information and the sources they find, reading only selected paragraphs and missing overall arguments. As a result, even though more information is available to them, they may understand less of what they read. How will these new avenues of information change our ability to understand and interpret Scripture — and our ability to listen to it?

"The pulpit has changed as a result of smartphone technology. . . . Since everyone has a smartphone on them, the pulpit's authority is no longer necessarily the loudest voice in the room. Attention is now politely requested. Sometimes it's given. Sometimes it isn't."³⁸ Today's pastors and teachers are faced with the challenge of proclaiming the Gospel and teaching the truths of Holy Scripture to listeners who may no longer regard them as the most trusted authorities in spiritual matters. Yet pastors and teachers still have the task of helping their listeners learn discernment, teaching them to compare what they learn through social media to God's Word. They are missionaries in a digital world, where "disregarding the impact and resources of technology is akin to a Bible translator ignoring the native language of the very people he was sent to assist."³⁹ Through careful social media use — posting sermons and blogs or mediating discussions — churches can create "spaces for dialogue" and become "trusted voices in our communities."⁴⁰

Read Ps. 71:15–18. Some Christians like to share favorite Bible passages or devotional writings on social media. Is that an effective and helpful blend of Christian teaching and technology? Why or why not? In what ways is online access to all of Scripture (for example, Bible Gateway) helpful to our use and understanding of God's Word and to the spread of the Gospel?

KNOWLEDGE AND THOUGHT

The internet and social media not only supply us with knowledge, but they may also shape the way we think

³⁷ Adam McLane, "The Opportunity Smartphones Present Your Church," *Evangelical Magazine* 4, no. 1 (Spring/Summer 2018), 15.

³⁸ Michael Viden and Bernard Bull, "Is it OK to Be a Technology Illiterate Teacher of the Faith? Not!" *Issues in Christian Education* 44, no. 1 (Fall 2010): 25.

³⁹ McLane, "Opportunity Smartphones Present," 16.

⁴⁰ Bull, *Digitized*, 90.

³¹ Edwards, *Printing, Propaganda, and Martin Luther*, 7.

³² Bull, *Digitized*, 90.

³³ While many people have become comfortable with knowledge found online, the church must continue to remember and reach out to those without internet access who still depend on traditional sources of authority and knowledge.

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about that knowledge once we have acquired it. People who are the “native speakers” of technology and its digital language, those who were born into the digital world, are sometimes called digital natives. Those who were not born into a world of online technology, but who have, to some extent, adopted — and adapted to — its use may be called digital immigrants. Digital natives are not only more fluent in digital language, they may even think differently. Children raised with the computer can “develop hypertext minds. They leap around. It’s as though their cognitive structures were parallel, not sequential.”⁴¹ Digital natives may prefer interactive experiences in which they receive an immediate response to every action, but may sometimes struggle in their ability to reflect on what they know and their ability to generalize and learn from their experiences.

A university professor comments that students are constantly distracted and that their memory is disorganized: “We worry that [technology] may be creating people who are unable to think well and clearly.”⁴² Do the children and adults who listen to sermons and attend Bible classes in our churches suffer from an inability to interpret and reflect on what they hear and read? Young people especially may differ in the way they read Scripture. Since online content supplies a steady stream of words and images for them, they may not be able to use their imagination as they read a passage from the Bible or another book. They may be unable to visualize the setting or interpret what the characters are saying, thinking and feeling. The imaginations of such readers “are weak, not least because the media they consume supply all the sights and sounds that the mind creates when all it has is words on a page.”⁴³ These changes may not change the content of our teaching and preaching, but may call for new ways to present that teaching.

Read Matt. 13:18–23. The one who “hears the word and understands it” bears fruit. In what ways might teaching methods need to change to help the digital natives in your congregation hear and understand the Word?

SAVING KNOWLEDGE

In Jesus Christ “are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Col. 2:3). Christians have found a variety of ways to bring the knowledge of salvation through Christ to the online world. Some churches have staff persons who

⁴¹ Marc Prensky, “Digital Natives, Digital Immigrants, Part II: Do They Really Think Differently?” *On the Horizon* 9, no. 6 (December 2001), marcprensky.com/writing/Prensky%20-%20Digital%20Natives,%20Digital%20Immigrants%20-%20Part%20II.pdf, accessed April 18, 2018.

⁴² Renee Germant, “Is It OK to Be a Technology Illiterate Teacher of the Faith?” *Yes! Issues in Christian Education* 44, no. 1 (Fall 2010): 17.

⁴³ Mark Bauserlin, “Reading Is Believing,” *First Things*, (October 2017), firstthings.com/article/2017/10/reading-is-believing, accessed July 11, 2018.

are specifically tasked with managing their congregation’s digital outreach. Lutheran Hour Ministries offers an online video-based course, “God Connects,” about the Christian faith and an outreach ministry called THRED. Launched through a Facebook page and a YouTube presence, THRED invites users to join in conversations about faith and culture.⁴⁴ Lutheran Ministries Media, Inc. produces a weekly half hour Lutheran worship service called *Worship Anew*, which is broadcast online and through local television and cable channels.⁴⁵ In its blog, Concordia Publishing House offers free downloadable Bible study resources and offers video-based studies through CPH FaithCourses.⁴⁶ As it engages in its God-given mission, the church is learning to speak the language of digital natives.

Read Col. 2:1–10. Paul is communicating by letter, the social media of his day, and those who receive his letters may not have seen him face to face. What support does he offer to his readers, who may face “plausible arguments” opposing the knowledge of Christ? How can you avoid being taken “captive” by the philosophies and “empty deceit” you may encounter in your social media use?

There is much useful knowledge about the Christian faith available online. There is also very harmful knowledge, often supported by some very “plausible arguments” that seek to lead us astray from the truth. The internet and social media are changing the way we view authority and the way we seek and receive knowledge, and perhaps even the way we think about the knowledge we have acquired. Even as we experience these changes, we can find new ways to share the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ in our online presence. “But thanks be to God, who in Christ always leads us in triumphal procession, and through us spreads the fragrance of the knowledge of him everywhere” (1 Cor. 2:14) — everywhere — including social media.

Social media influences our thoughts and ideas and even our ability to read and reflect. Has it influenced our faith? How can we use these digital tools to influence others for the sake of Christ?

⁴⁴ The “God Connects” study series is available at lhm.org/godconnects/. “THRED Outreach Launches Into the Conversation,” March 2, 2017, at lhm.org/newsroom/inventary.asp?ArticleID=29743, accessed April 18, 2018. The Facebook page can be found at [facebook.com/THRED](https://www.facebook.com/THRED).

⁴⁵ worshipanew.org.

⁴⁶ For example, see Wayne Palmer, “Books of the Bible Study Questions” at blog.cph.org/everyday-faith/books-of-the-bible-study-questions-journal/. Video-based studies are available at <http://cphfaithcourses.com/>.

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for assisted suicide in three other states. The California law went into effect in June 2016, permitting physician-assisted suicide. A California senator said, “The case of Brittany Maynard has brought this into focus for many Californians ... There’s a changed public attitude and increased awareness, and we think the time is right for California.”⁴⁷

Brittany’s voice was not the only one heard online concerning life and death issues. Dr. Maggie Karner, director of Life and Health Ministries for The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, was diagnosed in the spring of 2014 with the same type of brain cancer as Brittany Maynard. Brittany advocated for assisted suicide; Maggie promoted life. While receiving chemotherapy, she spoke at the Connecticut state house to lobby against a right to die bill, which did not pass.⁴⁸

Maggie posted a video online in which she read an open letter to Brittany. In her letter Maggie wrote, “Brittany, if you take your life, the world will lose some of its beauty again. And quite frankly I’m not sure this world can spare any more public losses like that, with all the death and destruction going on around us every day. We need the presence of people like you. Please don’t let cancer get one more second of your life than it deserves. ... Like you, Brittany, I am apprehensive. I know the predictions, I know what’s ahead for me and possibly for you — but we’re still here, aren’t we? We haven’t squeezed out every drop of life left in us yet — so Brittany, please don’t. Please don’t leave us yet. Let’s choose life for as long as we’ve got it.”⁴⁹

In another online article, Maggie wrote, “I have had the gift of raising three lovely daughters. I want my girls to learn servanthood and selflessness as they care for me. And I also want them to know that, for Christians, our death is not the end. Because our Savior, Jesus Christ, selflessly endured an ugly death on the cross and was laid in a borrowed tomb (no ‘death with dignity’) there. He truly understands our sorrows and feelings of helplessness. I want my kids to know that Christ’s resurrection from that borrowed grave confirms that death could not hold Him, and it cannot hold me either — a baptized child of God!”⁵⁰

⁴⁷ Josh Sanburn, “More States Considering Right-to-Die Laws After Brittany Maynard,” *Time*, January 23, 2015, time.com/3678199/brittany-maynard-death-with-dignity-legislation-california/, accessed April 25, 2018.

⁴⁸ Mary Karner, “My Mom Just Died of Brain Cancer. Here’s Why She Opposed Assisted Suicide,” *The Federalist*, October 6, 2015, thefederalist.com/2015/10/06/my-mom-just-died-of-brain-cancer-heres-why-she-opposed-assisted-suicide/, accessed April 25, 2018.

⁴⁹ Maggie Karner, “Open Letter to Brittany Maynard,” focusonfamily.com/socialmedia/letter-maggiekarner/open-letter-to-brittany-maynard/, accessed April 25, 2018.

⁵⁰ Maggie Karner, “My Brain Cancer Will Likely Kill Me, But There’s No Way I’ll Kill Myself,” *The Federalist*, October 10, 2015, thefederalist.com/2015/10/10/brain-cancer-will-likely-kill-me-but-there-no-way-ill-kill-myself/.

Maggie Karner, a baptized child of God, fell asleep in Christ on September 25, 2015. Maggie’s daughter Mary, a trauma nurse, wrote, “And the greatest honor of my life was to care for my mom in her last days. I hope and pray that her legacy will continue to inspire caring American voters to support those choosing to squeeze life for every drop that it has to give.”⁵¹

Read Phil. 1:27–29 and Phil. 2:14–18. Maggie Karner used her online presence to promote life and proclaim the Gospel. While there can be a lot of angry “striving” online, how can you use your social media presence to join fellow believers in “striving side by side for the faith of the gospel”? Consider controversial issues such as abortion and assisted suicide. What could you say in online discussions of such topics to “shine as lights in the world”?

Read 2 Cor. 3:1–6. Paul and the other apostles did not use LinkedIn to post their on-the-job experience or their qualifications for ministry. How would their flesh and blood “letters of recommendation” accomplish those purposes for them? How did Maggie’s comments and posts on social media serve as “letters of recommendation” for her status as a baptized child of God?

PERCEPTIONS

In the opinions they shared and the different ways in which they faced death, Brittany Maynard and Maggie Karner influenced others and inspired online (and face to face) conversations among many people. The topic of assisted suicide is one of the many controversial issues often discussed online. Unfortunately, conversations in social media on just about any topic can quickly become controversial, inspiring comments that range from wise to outrageous. Opinions and comments posted by Christians may be supported and praised by those who agree or criticized and dismissed by those who disagree.

Read John 15:18–25. In your experience with social media, how is the online presence of Christians generally perceived? There will, at times, be negative perceptions. What reason does the Lord Jesus give for the world’s hatred? While we are to rejoice if we are reviled for Jesus’ sake (Matt. 5:11), we should not actively seek hatred or mistreatment at the hands of others.

Before you enter an online exchange, think about the way in which you, in your comments and opinions, represent the Savior whose name you bear. You might ask yourself: “Why am I sharing this? What do I hope this will

⁵¹ Mary Karner, “My Mom Just Died ...” accessed July 11, 2018.

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VIEWS AND SHARES: SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCE

In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven. (MATT. 5:16)

CHANGED

Who — apart from the Lord Jesus — has influenced your life? Parents and other family members, pastors, teachers and friends each have a part to play in shaping our behavior, our Christian faith and the way in which we view the world. We may also be inspired and influenced by well-known individuals, past and present, including biblical characters, church and political leaders, athletes and entertainers. Now we can add social media contacts — and the use of social media itself — to the list of people and things that influence us. How will we, in turn, influence those who communicate with us on social media?

A former product manager at Google comments, “Technology steers what 2 billion people are thinking and believing every day. It’s possibly the largest source of influence over 2 billion people’s thoughts that has ever been created. Religions and governments don’t have that much influence over people’s daily thoughts.”⁵² Yet we, called and enlightened by the Holy Spirit, have experienced the influence of faith. We are “the body of Christ and individually members of it” (1 Cor. 12:27). The head of the body, our Lord and Savior, guides and directs us, as individuals and in community. It is worth remembering that today over 2 billion people claim the Christian faith. We should not underestimate the power of Christian influence.

Yet technology does exert its daily influence in our lives. “It changes the nature of our relationships, our sense of community, how we live out our various vocations, how we organize our thoughts and lives, how we spend our time with family and friends and even how we think and talk about what it means to be human. It’s short-sighted to believe without question that anything with so much power to shape who we are and how we live is a spiritually neutral force.”⁵³

⁵² Nicholas Thompson, in an interview with Triton Harris, “Our Minds Have Been Hijacked by Our Phones. Triton Harris Wants to Rescue Them,” *Wired*, July 26, 2017, wired.com/story/our-minds-have-been-hijacked-by-our-phones-triton-harris-wants-to-rescue-them/, accessed March 7, 2018.

⁵³ Bernard Bull, “Lost in Chat,” *The Lutheran Witness*, January 2018, 13.

accomplish? ... Will this build a relationship with this person? Will this build a relationship with the church? Is this a faithful witness to our Savior?”⁵⁴

Read 1 Peter 3:13–17. What is our response to those who may become angry when we are “zealous for what is good” in our online conversations? Consider a controversial topic you have encountered online or an online opportunity to witness for Christ. How might you present your comments on social media “with gentleness and respect”?

WITNESS

Social media may influence us in both negative and positive ways and, in we, in turn, have opportunities to influence the people we encounter on social media. With such a wide variety of opinions and worldviews present on social media, we want the Gospel to have a voice and a presence, too. “It is here, in proclamation, that media and technology can contribute. They can scatter seeds across the Lord’s fields. They can amplify His voice so it can be heard in places where the Gospel cannot normally, regularly, or financially be shared. ... Even more, the anonymity of the person delivering the message and the hearer’s complete control of the presentation often enable that message to be delivered in an unthreatening manner.”⁵⁵

We can enter the social media mission field as if we were preparing for a foreign mission. There is a new culture to observe and experience and a new language to learn. “Foreign missionaries are usually well trained in studying the culture they inhabit. They have a keen eye for the world around them, using this gift to learn about and explore opportunities to witness to those around them. They encounter these unfamiliar cultures, however, with God’s Word open in front of them, praying for wisdom on how to respond to those they meet. This same mindset can help us make sense of life in a digital age.”⁵⁶

As individuals, we can express in online conversations the newness of life that is ours in Christ Jesus. A congregation can have an online presence that will carry its witness beyond the immediate physical community in which it is located. Sermons, Bible classes and worship services can be made available online, not only for members who are homebound and unable to attend, but also for those who are outside of the Christian community. “Not only

⁵⁴ Amy Gray, “Witnessing Through Social Media: The Good, the Bad and the Ugly,” October 22, 2014, from an interview on KFUV, blogs.kfuv.org/2014/10/witnessing-through-social-media-the-good-the-bad-and-the-ugly/, accessed April 30, 2018.

⁵⁵ Kenneth Kinn, “Missions on Media,” *Issues in Christian Education* 44, no. 1 (Fall 2010): 4.

⁵⁶ Bull, “Lost in Chat,” 14.

Read Titus 2:1–10. According to these verses, how are different groups of people directed to influence others? How might this influence be accomplished through social media? We might especially take note of the direction to “show integrity, dignity, and sound speech that cannot be condemned.” How can you use social media in these ways, so that opponents have “nothing evil to say about us”? How can you, in your social media use, “adorn the doctrine of God our Savior”?

DEATH AND LIFE

In January 2014, a young woman named Brittany Maynard was diagnosed with brain cancer. In April, after being told she had six months to live, she moved with her husband from California to Oregon, a state that permitted assisted suicide. On November 1, 2014, Brittany took her own life. She had announced her intention to commit suicide in an online video. The president of Compassion & Choices, an organization promoting assisted suicide, wrote that Brittany had “devoted her waning days and energies to outspoken advocacy for legal reform in California and every other state. Before she died, the videos she recorded were viewed, shared on Facebook, and tweeted around the world. The story of her death on *People.com* had the highest number of readers in the site’s history.”⁵⁷ The video explaining Brittany’s choice had more than nine million views on YouTube. In her last video Brittany said, “I hope for the sake of other Americans ... that this choice [of legal assisted suicide] be extended to you ... That we mobilize, that we vocalize, that we start to talk about it.”⁵⁸

Motivated by Brittany’s decision, California introduced a bill for assisted suicide modeled after Oregon’s Death with Dignity Act. Legislators introduced assisted suicide bills or promised to do so in Washington, D.C. and 13 states. Brittany’s story also encouraged existing campaigns

⁵⁷ Barbara Coombs Lee, “Brittany Maynard’s Legacy Is Helping Us Achieve Death with Dignity,” *Time*, January 29, 2015, time.com/3687736/brittany-maynard-legacy-death-with-dignity/, accessed April 25, 2018.

⁵⁸ Lee, *time.com/3687736/brittany-maynard-legacy-death-with-dignity/*, accessed April 25, 2018.

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THE LIVING AND ACTIVE WORD

The promised Holy Spirit, Jesus said, “will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment” (John 16:8). The Spirit is at work in the Gospel Word, through our face to face efforts at evangelism and through our online witness. A video-based Bible study produced by Lutheran Hour Ministries presents the story of a young man, an atheist, who enjoyed online gaming. He joined a group called “Gaming by Grace” and became part of a team for competitive gaming, but he was not initially interested in adopting his team members’ beliefs. Eventually, he joined an online Bible study that challenged his opinions. By the power of the Holy Spirit, he came to faith in Christ. The young man was baptized and now witnesses for Christ with other online gamers.⁵⁹

Read Is. 55:6–13. The Word will accomplish the purpose for which it is sent. How can you bring the powerful Gospel Word into your online conversations? Is online witness easier or more difficult than witnessing in a face to face situation? Why?

Engaging with people in social media conversations, we may try to convince them of the righteousness of various causes we favor. Hopefully we will also seek to influence them for the sake of the Gospel. Whatever impact our online presence may have on others, our social media use may likely change or influence us, however small or great those changes might be. Whether we are digital natives or digital immigrants, social media use may have an impact on our identity.

⁵⁹ Sarah Gubeth, “Podcasting: The Next Frontier,” *The Lutheran Witness*, January 2018, 20.

⁶⁰ John Nunes, *Journey from Unbelief to Faith*, Session 4, “X-Box Atheist,” lhm.org/studies/videoofunbelief.asp?ID=266236&id=28386&mode, accessed April 30, 2018.

around the user's desires. User research is responsible for nearly all the design decisions at Facebook. In fact, there is an entire department at Facebook dedicated to Human Computer Interaction and UX [User Experience]. Teams of people at Facebook are thus dedicated to researching, and finding ways to capitalize on, the individual behaviors, thoughts, and impulses of users."⁷⁴

Read 1 Peter 5:5–11. *How can you be sober-minded and watchful in your use of social media? How might the devil attempt to "devour" you through your use of social media? (The devil can use tools too, for example, fruit.) In what ways might social media use require humility, before God and before others?*

NO PLACE TO HIDE

Adam and Eve, having eaten the fruit forbidden to them, attempted to cover their shame and hide when "they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden" (Gen. 3:8). There was no place to hide in Eden, and we cannot hide behind or blame technology, even if social media is designed to shape our behaviors. One Christian author suggests that our social media use does not *shape* us, but rather *exposes* us. "Social media can often feel dark and divisive. Very often it is dark and divisive. And yes, at times it is manipulating us into acting out of vice rather than virtue. . . . Some may feel as though the social media environment is training them to act worse over time. Others, like me, would counter that it is only exposing our worst tendencies — ones that were bad to begin with. That may seem like a slight distinction, but it is a real one."⁷⁵

Read Eph. 5:1–17. *Which of the sinful behaviors listed in these verses — sexual immorality, impurity, covetousness, filthiness, foolish talk and crude joking — find an improper place in your use of social media? How might you expose "the unfruitful works of darkness" that are found on social media? We need to remember Paul's warning, "Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted" (Gal. 6:1).*

As the apostle James said, "Desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin" (James 1:15). We will choose to act in ways that satisfy our desires. Our technology leads us to expect our needs and desires to be satisfied immediately. Social media can provide such quick satisfaction, but that, in turn, leads to greater self-centeredness, and again, our

sinful natures are exposed. One author notes, "There is no doubt that our growing lack of civility is a moral problem, but I would add that it is a moral problem exacerbated by technological innovations, particularly innovations in electronic media, which have conditioned us to expect immediate gratification. Whether it be fast food, instant entertainment, or immediate sex, the dominant value of all technological innovation from the microwave oven to the birth control pill is *speed*. We cannot wait until next year, or even until tomorrow, or an hour from now; we must have it *this very second*. It is the barbarian, Erasmus would say, who must satisfy all bodily desires the moment they surface. . . . Add to road rage, air rage, talk show rage, and after-the-athletic-event-mash-everything-in-sight rage, and one gets a better picture of what kind of people we are becoming — very selfish ones."⁷⁶

WITHOUT EXCUSE

Some writers, examining the impact of technology on our lives, have assigned the traditional "seven deadly sins" to certain sites and social networks: lust is Tinder; gluttony is Instagram; greed is LinkedIn; sloth is Netflix; wrath is Twitter; envy is Pinterest; vanity (or pride) is Facebook.⁷⁷ We may prefer to assign sinful blame to social media tools and their designers. We may even point to our many social media contacts and announce, "They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless" (Rom. 1:29–31). But the apostle's list of sin is not merely intended for other people; it is a mirror of our own lives.

Read Rom. 2:1–11. *What does the apostle Paul say about our attempts to point out the faults of others? Consider how you might practice "patience in well-doing" in all areas of life. How might you exercise such patience in your use of social media?*

We must examine our own use of social media, realizing that, as the apostle says, we are without excuse. The mirror of God's Law produces far more accurate self-insight than any smartphone. Consider, for example, the sins of idolatry, slander, disrespect for authority and lust.

⁷⁴ Trevor Sutton, "Social Media and Sin," April 5, 2018, *The Martin Marty Center for the Public Understanding of Religion*, divinity.martymarty.org/rightings/social-media-and-sin, accessed September 5, 2018.
⁷⁵ Richard Clark, "Being Salt and Light in the Middle of a Twitter Mob," review of *Tin Arguments for Defining Your Social Media Accounts Right Now*, by Jason Lanier, *Christianity Today*, August 29, 2018, christianitytoday.com/ct/2018/august-web-only/being-salt-and-light-in-middle-of-twitter-mob.html, accessed September 5, 2018.
⁷⁶ Arthur W. Hunt III, "The New Dark Ages: How Electronic Media Are Pulling Us Back to Barbarism," *Christian Research Journal* 24, no. 1 (2001), equip.org/article/the-new-dark-ages, accessed September 5, 2018.
⁷⁷ Robinson Meyer, "The Seven Deadly Social Networks," *The Atlantic*, May 9, 2016, theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2016/05/the-seven-deadly-social-networks/480897/, accessed September 5, 2018.

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potential employers assess the Facebook pages of those they are considering hiring.⁷⁸

Young people are especially at risk through image sharing. Nancy Jo Sales, author of *American Girls: Social Media and the Secret Lives of Teenagers*, comments, "Everything we're seeing [sexting, nonconsensual photo sharing and specific poses in selfies] has to do with the access to pornography that children have. I'm saying children because children do see pornography whether on purpose or by accident, since social media is used to promote pornography. It's having a huge effect on their idea of what it means to be a man or a woman, on their understanding of sexuality. It's absolutely a destructive factor, influencing how boys think about girls and how girls think about themselves. Sexting is sometimes dismissed as innocent, but it can be hurtful, damaging, and in some states, the sexting of images is considered a crime. It's not being talked about at the level of seriousness that it deserves."⁷⁹

Read Matt. 5:27–32. *How do Jesus' words here apply to the images you see or send on social media? What can you do to protect children from such images, or warn them away from such social media use? How does the Lord indicate the seriousness and eternal consequences of these offenses?*

Read Gal. 5:19–26. *Where do you find yourself involved in the "works of the flesh" in your social media use? Consider which apply to your circumstances and report of such use. How will you instead put the fruit of the Spirit into practice online?*

CALLED TO REPENT

In our worship services we often confess together: "Most merciful God, we confess that we are by nature sinful and unclean. We have sinned against You in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done and by what we have left undone. We have not loved You with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We justly deserve Your present and eternal punishment. For the sake of Your Son, Jesus Christ, have mercy on us. Forgive us, renew us, and lead us, so that we may delight in Your will and walk in Your ways to the glory of Your holy name."⁸⁰ You may be thinking, as you speak that confession, of a variety of sins — family disagreements, problems at work

or difficult relationships. Does your social media use come to mind as you confess your sins?

Groothuis suggests, "Since social media can induce 'out-of-body experiences' (digital interactions apart from personal presence), we should monitor ourselves in the midst of using Facebook or similar technologies. What are we feeling and thinking? How are we responding to this world? Given the hyper-connectedness that Facebook affords, it is easy to get swept into the data flow without being mindful of what is happening on the screen and in the soul."⁸¹

In the rush to do more with less time, our attention spans have grown shorter, leading to multitasking and depending on short bits of information instead of digesting the entire topic. Taking a break from the digital barrage is a way to "reset," and impact bodies and souls in a positive way. When Jesus visits the home of Mary and Martha, Martha is distracted with serving. Jesus reminds her not to be anxious and troubled about many things, but to focus on the one necessary thing (Luke 10:38–42). Through the regular reception of Word and Sacrament our attention is turned from anxious and troubled thoughts to the gracious and necessary gifts of our God and Savior.

A variety of apps and software programs are available to help us become more mindful of our attraction, and possible addiction, to social media use. Apps and programs such as Toggl, AntiSocial, Offtime, or Moment allow users to block certain apps or track time spent on social media, encouraging personal accountability in the amount of time spent — or wasted — online. Parental control software, such as Bark, Qustodio, Norton Family, or Net Nanny, can also promote individual accountability by setting limits, managing use and blocking harmful content. Programs such as these may help users to develop self-control and "bear fruit in keeping with repentance" (Matt. 3:8).

Read 1 Cor. 10:12–14. *How might you use online tools, as well as the help of brothers and sisters in Christ, to avoid and escape temptations that might arise as you use social media?*

For all of our efforts at self-control, we may still try to make a name for ourselves on social media, hoping to be remembered for our political insight or clever remarks. We seek attention for ourselves, our experiences and our opinions. While these appear to be harmless desires, we would do well to remember that "desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death" (James 1:15). It is important to know that we already are remembered. Our heavenly Father remembers us,

⁷⁸ Douglas Groothuis, "Understanding Social Media," *Christian Research Journal* 33, no. 3 (2010), equip.org/article/understanding-social-media/, accessed September 5, 2018.
⁷⁹ Rachel Marie Stone, "Q&A: The Secret Lives of Teens Online," *Christianity Today*, March 10, 2016, christianitytoday.com/women/2016/march/q-a-for-this-soft-life.html, accessed September 5, 2018.
⁸⁰ Divine Service, Setting One, *Lutheran Service Book*, 151.
⁸¹ Groothuis, "Understanding Social Media," equip.org/article/understanding-social-media/, accessed September 5, 2018.

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IDOLATRY

Discussing false gods in his Large Catechism, Martin Luther comments, "To have a God, as you can well imagine, does not mean to grasp him with your fingers, or to put him into a purse, or to shut him up in a box."⁸² Given that description, we might conclude that our smartphone cannot be an idol. Yet social media use itself may become a false god, especially as it encourages an idolatrous worship of self. The apostle Paul writes, "Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others" (Phil. 2:3–4). We may covet what others have (a form of idolatry; see Col. 3:5) or promote ourselves and our opinions on social media at the expense of others, especially those with whom we disagree. We may become the people described by the apostle as "lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive . . . swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God" (1 Tim. 3:3–4).

Read Is. 44:17–20 and Is. 45:20. *The prophet mocks the idol-worshipping craftsman who cannot recognize his own foolishness — cooking his dinner over half of the wood and using the other half to carve an idol. Have you ever become so caught up in your social media use that you are unable to ask yourself, "Is there not a lie in my right hand?"*

SLANDER

We know God's commandment, "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor" (Ex. 20:16). Yet social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter provide space for gossip and slander — and a place to hide. We can write whatever we like about another person without ever coming face to face with the target of our posts. Lies and rumors are easily and widely spread.

Read Ex. 23:1–2. *When have you "joined hands" online with other social media users to spread malicious reports? Have you ever sided "with the many" online to pervert justice? Read Eph. 4:15–16.* *We may sometimes try to excuse our gossip or slander with the claim that we are simply "speaking the truth in love." How is our gossip harmful, for ourselves and for others, as we seek to "grow up" into Christ?*

⁸² Book of Concord, 388:13.

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but not for our posts or pictures or tweets. He remembers us with a Father's love and, for the sake of Christ Jesus, he remembers us with compassion. "As far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us. As a father shows compassion to his children, so the Lord shows compassion to those who fear him. For he knows our frame; he remembers that we are dust" (Ps. 103:12–14).

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

Consider the Ten Commandments and their explanations from Luther's Small Catechism.⁸³ God's commandments address our trust in God, our identity as His chosen people and his will for our lives as individuals and in community. God's Law serves as a mirror to accurately reflect our sin and as a guide to holy living in our technology-driven world. Use the commandments as a guide to recognize and repent of your sins in social media use. Look for ways that you might use social media in a God-pleasing manner according to the commandments. Some questions to consider are included below.

The First Commandment

You shall have no other gods. What does this mean? We should fear, love, and trust in God above all things.

Questions to consider: How might social media become an idol? How does it create an idol of self? Does the device (tablet, smartphone, computer, etc.) itself become an idol? How will you express "fear, love and trust in God" in your social media use?

The Second Commandment

You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God. What does this mean? We should fear and love God so that we do not curse, swear, use satanic arts, lie, or deceive by His name, but call upon it in every trouble, pray, praise, and give thanks.

Questions to consider: Does the abbreviation "OMG" take the Lord's name in vain? Do you misuse God's name in your conversations and arguments? How can you use social media to join fellow believers in praying, praising and giving thanks to the Lord?

The Third Commandment

Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. What does this mean? We should fear and love God so that we do not despise preaching and His Word, but hold it sacred and gladly hear and learn it.

⁸³ Luther's Small Catechism with Explanation (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2017), 13–15.

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DISRESPECT FOR AUTHORITY

In his explanation to the Fourth Commandment, Luther writes, "We should fear and love God so that we do not despise or anger our parents and other authorities, but honor them, serve and obey them, love and cherish them."⁸⁴ Social media provides a handy platform to express our opinions about elected officials or church leadership and related issues. We may claim that we are simply expressing our opinions, political, theological or otherwise, when we are really "joining hands" with other users to bear false witness. One author believes, for example, that social media distorts the way we view politics and may, over time, make us "less rational and more impulsive." We've habituated ourselves into a perpetual cognitive style of outrage, by internalizing the dynamics of the medium," he says.⁸⁵ Yet those with whom we disagree and those who are the subjects of angry online exchanges are people created in the image of God, people for whom Christ gave his life. "Political narratives (they are really a thing), ministry narratives, and ideological narratives abound. And a temptation is to boil ideas, or even people, down to a narrative. (i.e. If they say this, or don't say that, they fit this narrative that I've adopted.) Are image bearers of God really reducible to simple tag lines and hashtags alone?"⁸⁶

Read 1 Peter 2:11–17. *When have you used social media as a platform to show disrespect to leaders in church and state? In our nation we have the freedom to disagree with one another and with our leaders. How can you disagree and at the same time "be subject"? How will you, on social media, "keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable"?*

LUST

We may sin against God and against others on social media, not only with our words, but also with the images that we post or view. Christian author Douglas Groothuis writes, "Many Facebook users recklessly post photographs of themselves in immodest and/or narcissistic poses. Even innocent photographs may be misunderstood given the often-ambiguous nature of the image. Facebook comments and images have come back to haunt their authors, as when

⁸⁴ Luther's Small Catechism with Explanation, (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2017), 14.
⁸⁵ James Williams (former Google strategist), quoted in Lewis, "Our Minds Can Be Hijacked," thequadrant.com/technology/2017/05/05/mind-phone-addiction-silicon-valley-dystopia, accessed September 5, 2018.
⁸⁶ Ryan Davidson, "5 Temptations of the Social Media User," *Founder's Ministry*, February 8, 2018, founders.org/2018/02/08/5-temptations-of-the-social-media-user/, accessed September 5, 2018.

Questions to consider: In what ways does social media distract you from worship or from the study of God's Word? How might such tools and technology help you in your study of Scripture?

The Fourth Commandment

Honor your father and your mother. What does this mean? We should fear and love God so that we do not despise or anger our parents and other authorities, but honor them, serve and obey them, love and cherish them.

Questions to consider: How might your use of social media lead you to show disrespect for those in authority (parents, church leaders, government leaders)? How might blogs, podcasts or other online avenues for communication be used to encourage respect and honor for authority figures?

The Fifth Commandment

You shall not murder. What does this mean? We should fear and love God so that we do not hurt or harm our neighbor in his body, but help and support him in every physical need.

Questions to consider: "Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer" (1 John 3:15). How might your social media use lead you to hate others, even your brothers and sisters in Christ? When might social media use lead to physical violence? How could you use social media contacts to provide for those in need?

The Sixth Commandment

You shall not commit adultery. What does this mean? We should fear and love God so that we do not take a sexually pure and decent life in what we say and do, and husband and wife love and honor each other.

Questions to consider: Has social media use led you away from a "sexually pure and decent life"? How might your social media use impact a relationship or a marriage in negative ways? How can you help young people avoid online temptations to sexual immorality?

The Seventh Commandment

You shall not steal. What does this mean? We should fear and love God so that we do not take our neighbor's money or possessions, or get them in any dishonest way, but help him to improve and protect his possessions and income.

Questions to consider: How is the internet used for theft? When you post or share items online, do you become involved in the theft of "intellectual property"? How can your social media use help others protect their possessions and income?

The Eighth Commandment

You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor. What does this mean? We should fear and love God so that we do not tell lies about our neighbor, betray him, slander him, or hurt his reputation, but defend him, speak well of him, and explain everything in the kindest way.

Questions to consider: When have you become involved in sharing or repeating false testimony, lies and slander in social media conversations? How will you defend and speak well of others when you are involved in online discussions?

The Ninth and Tenth Commandments

You shall not covet your neighbor's house. What does this mean? We should fear and love God so that we do not scheme to get our neighbor's inheritance or house, or get it in a way which only appears right, but help and be of service to him in keeping it.

You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his manservant or maid servant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor. What does this mean? We should fear and love God so that we do not entice or force away our neighbor's wife, workers, or animals, or turn them against him, but urge them to stay and do their duty.

Questions to consider (for the Ninth and Tenth Commandments): How does the internet lead you to covet what others have? How can you avoid that temptation and instead encourage others in a life of honesty and contentment?

The Ten Commandments show us our sin and guide us in service toward our neighbors. You might also review the Table of Duties on pages 33–40 of Luther's Small Catechism with Explanation or on page 328 of the Lutheran Service Book. The Table of Duties lists specific verses from Scripture that address the way we are to act within our daily callings, or vocations. These verses, too, can serve as a call to repentance and a guide to the godly use of social media.

BEARING FRUIT

The Lord Jesus said to his disciples, "You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide" (JOHN 15:16). The information we post and the identities we share on social media never really "go away." It can be difficult, if not impossible, to remove what is shared online. It is a kind of fruit that "abides," even when we wish that it would not. We repent of our sins and seek, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to have our thoughts, words and actions, including

⁶⁰ Luther's Small Catechism with Explanation (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2017); Lutheran Service Book (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2006).

our online presence, "be worthy of the gospel of Christ" (PHIL. 1:27).

Scripture says of the saints in glory, "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on." Blessed indeed," says the Spirit, "that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow them" (REV. 14:13). In his commentary on the book of Revelation, Louis Brighton writes, "Those who are entering this eternal rest are accompanied by their works ... the saints are separated from their guilt and shame but are not separated from their godly works, for those works follow them."⁶¹ The apostle Paul encourages us, as he points to the great hope of resurrection on the Last Day, "Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain" (1 COR. 15:58). In our daily vocations, or callings, our godly works, done in faith and with the help of the Holy Spirit, display our love for God and our neighbor. How can we serve our neighbor in love through our use of social media?

⁶¹ Louis A. Brighton, *Revelation Concordia Commentary* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1999), 306.

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What are some of the good works in which you might walk in your online relationships?

In our vocation as baptized, royal priests of God, we have opportunities online to connect with our neighbor and express our love and care in Christ in ways never before possible. "Rather than simply letting technology change and sometimes control the way we think, act, learn, and believe, we must be proactive, not only in how we use technology, but also in how we view its role in our lives. What kind of environment—both offline and online—do we want to be a part of and even create? Where do our Christian beliefs and practices fit in and affect what we do with our use of technology? ... As Christians, our identity and most important citizenship is in Christ."⁶²

LET LOVE BE GENUINE

We do not always walk within the good works God has prepared for us. We tend to stray and we do so online also. Abusive, attacking and harmful words have no place in our online lives. "We must remember that even though we cannot see actual people on the other side of our screens, we are interacting with real people who have real, God-given souls."⁶³ Within online communication it is all too easy to give offense and to take offense, even—perhaps especially—when we are discussing matters of faith. As one writer comments concerning the scandalous turn of the good news, "The Gospel is offensive enough on its own" (1 COR. 1:23). Don't let the way you treat your neighbor online add to that offense!⁶⁴

Read Rom. 12:9–21 and James 1:19–21. In your use of the internet and social media, how can you "abhor what is evil" and hold fast to the good? Is it easier to show genuine love online or in face to face relationships? Why?

Even as they attempt to proclaim Christ, believers may undermine the good news of salvation by causing (or supporting) division or conflict in their online conversations with fellow believers or with unbelievers. Social media is not good or evil in and of itself; it is a tool for communication. Yet we can use it for good or for evil. An author commented that "Christians are not exempt from the dangers of social media. Just like anyone else, we can make mistakes. But our mistakes can hurt the cause of the

⁶² Ben Boeker and Jake Hollatz, *Faithfully Connected: Integrating Biblical Principles in a Digital World* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2018), 10.

⁶³ Haley Bodine, "We Are the Light of the (Cyber) World: Let's Act Like It," *Christianity Today*, The Exchange, January 9, 2018, christianitytoday.com/exchange/2018/january/we-are-the-light-of-cyber-world-lets-act-like-it.html, accessed June 13, 2018.

⁶⁴ Peter Clayton, "Loving Your (Internet) Neighbor," *The Lutheran Witness*, January 2018, 16.

gospel, even while we're trying to promote the message of Jesus." Such mistakes include the use of unverified facts, being smug or condescending in our comments, equating the Christian faith with politics and considering the sins of others as worse than our own.⁶⁵

Church leaders and members may feel that they must engage in online discussions and make use of social media in other ways. We are not required, however, to use social media. "There is no biblical command to be active on social media discussions. As a Christian, you are free to engage or walk away. ... If loving the neighbors in your digital proximity proves too difficult, it's okay to focus on loving the neighbor in your physical proximity instead."⁶⁶

Read Col. 4:2–6. How can you be watchful and thankful in prayer through your social media use? What are some ways in which you can use social media to support pastors, teachers and missionaries as you pray that God would open "a door for the word"? As God's royal priests, online or face to face, we should remember that our speech is to be graciously "seasoned with salt."

SOCIAL MEDIA SALT AND LIGHT

The Lord Jesus tells us that we are "the salt of the earth" and "the light of the world" (MAT. 5:13–14). We reflect the light of Jesus, but our social media tools produce their own light. Jesus has suggested that exposure to the blue wavelengths of light from electronic screens and other forms of lighting can disrupt sleep patterns and possibly contribute to health concerns.⁶⁷ Yet even without help from our glowing screens, we have reason to stay alert.

Read Rom. 13:11–14. Why, according to these verses, are we to be awake and alert, dressed in the armor of light? How might we be tempted in our online conversations to "make provision for the flesh"? As we "put on the Lord Jesus Christ," how might we respond to unkind comments posted online?

There is a significant amount of darkness on social media—inappropriate content, angry arguments or gossip and lies. Such darkness is not produced by social media; the defiling darkness comes from within the human heart (MAT. 15:18). Within our calling to serve our neighbor in

⁶⁵ Karl Vaters, "9 Common Social Media Tactics That Never Draw Anyone Closer to Jesus," *Christianity Today*, Prior Blog, May 11, 2018, christianitytoday.com/karl-vaters/2018/may/9-common-social-media-tactics-never-draw-anyone-to-jesus.html, accessed June 13, 2018.

⁶⁶ Clayton, "Loving Your (Internet) Neighbor," 23.

⁶⁷ "Blue Light Has a Dark Side," *Harvard Health Letter*, December 30, 2017, health.harvard.edu/staying-healthy/blue-light-has-a-dark-side, accessed June 11, 2018.

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#ROYALPRIESTS: VOCATION AND SOCIAL MEDIA

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself (LUKE 10:37)

CALLINGS

Through social media we can establish online relationships with people in our own communities and across the world. In and through every relationship, whether online or face to face, as people born anew in Christ Jesus we are to carry out our callings, our vocations, according to our Lord's command: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (MAT. 22:39). Our vocations are the tasks and relationships to which God has called us, and it is in our vocations that our life in Christ intersects with our life in this world. Vocations certainly involve our careers and daily work, but God also calls us to many other relationships—for example, as brother or sister, husband or wife, father or mother, son or daughter—and these various vocations may change over time as our lives change.

Martin Luther spoke of loving our neighbor in our vocations: "You see, now we are talking about a Christian—in relation: not about his being a Christian, but about his life and his obligation in it to some other person, whether under him or over him or even alongside him, like a lord or a lady, a wife or children or neighbors, whom he is obliged, if possible, to defend, guard, and protect."⁶⁸ Luther also gave specific examples of the ways in which our various vocations are carried out as we serve God by serving our neighbor in the places and relationships to which God has assigned us. "When it is recognized that God is gracious, placable, and kind, then I go out and turn my face from God to human beings, that is, I tend to my calling. If I am a king, I govern the state. If I am the head of a household, I direct the domestics; if I am a schoolmaster, I teach pupils, mold their habits and views toward godliness. These works are rightly called a worship of God. For in all of them we serve God, who wanted us to do such things and, so to speak, stationed us here."⁶⁹

⁶⁸ Martin Luther, "The Sermon on the Mount," *Luther's Works*, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan, vol. 21 (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1956), 109.

⁶⁹ Martin Luther, "Lectures on Genesis Chapters 15–20," *Luther's Works*, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan, vol. 3 (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1961), 117.

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love, social media conversations, blogs or videos may provide opportunities to bring the light of Christ to those lost in the darkness of unbelief. We not only put on the Lord Jesus Christ, as the apostle Paul tells us, but we also put on our neighbor, so that we might understand our neighbor's needs. Luther wrote, "See, according to this rule the good things we have from God should flow from one to the other and be common to all, so that everyone should 'put on' his neighbor and so conduct himself toward him as if he himself were in the other's place."⁷⁰

Read Gal. 6:1–10. Is it possible to bear the burdens of another through social media? How might that be done? Which of the instructions in these verses are especially helpful when considering our social media use?

In social media conversations we can listen and ask questions to understand different points of view. At times it may be more important to listen than to make points of our own. "Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear" (EPI. 4:29). The people with whom we are in conversation, the people who read what we post or watch our videos, are people for whom Christ died. They are created, as we are, in the image of God. We are also called, as we have opportunity, to witness to the truth of God's Word. Luther wrote, "Certainly we are not compelled or obliged to let every insolent person run rampant all over the place and to take it silently without doing anything about it—not if we can follow orderly procedure in defending ourselves ... We must not sanction a wrong, but we must testify to the truth."⁷¹

Read Phil. 2:1–7. You may not always be "in full accord and of one mind" with your social media contacts. How can you still "count others more significant than yourselves"? Do you ever respond in your conversations "from selfish ambition or conceit"? How might you respond instead with the mind of Christ?

THE HARVEST IS PLENTIFUL

Before he was confronted by the risen Lord on the road to Damascus, the apostle Paul (then still known as Saul) "was ravaging the church" in Jerusalem (ACTS 8:3). During the persecution, believers fled into the surrounding regions and "those who were scattered went about preaching the word" (ACTS 8:4). As we today are "scattered" across various social media platforms, we too have opportunities to share the saving Word of the Gospel.

A survey by the Barna Group asked: "Has talking about

⁷⁰ Martin Luther, "The Freedom of a Christian," *Luther's Works*, ed. Harold J. Grimm, vol. 31 (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1973), 371.

⁷¹ Luther, "Sermon on the Mount," LW 21: 112.

In our vocations we follow in the footsteps of Christ Jesus as we, in our daily relationships, serve our neighbor in love. Luther wrote, "Each of us is to examine himself according to his station in life and is to find what is the best way for him to fulfill the work and purpose of his baptism, namely, to slay sin and to die in order that Christ's burden may thus grow light and easy" [MAT. 11:30] and not be carried with worry and care."⁷²

Read 1 Peter 2:9–12. What purpose do you have in your calling as God's royal priest? How might you carry out that purpose in your online conversations? You may have contact with both believers and unbelievers on social media. Sometimes "the passions of the flesh" may tempt you to say regrettable things in your social media conversations. How will you "keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable" in those conversations?

Our relationships also provide opportunities to share the good news of salvation. Luther commented on this task assigned to us in our foremost vocation as God's royal priests: "You must, says Peter, exercise the chief function of a priest, that is, to proclaim the wonderful deed God performed for you to bring you out of darkness into the light. ... Thus you should also teach other people how they, too, come into such light. For you must bend every effort to realize what God has done for you. Then let this 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."⁷³

Read Eph. 2:4–10. God, in His grace, made us alive in Christ Jesus. We are created anew as His workmanship to walk in the good works He has prepared for us.

⁷² Martin Luther, "The Holy and Blessed Sacrament of Baptism," *Luther's Works*, ed. E. Theodore Bachmann, vol. 35 (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1960), 40.

⁷³ Martin Luther, "Sermons on the First Epistle of Peter," *Luther's Works*, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan, vol. 30 (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1967), 64–65.

faith become harder or easier in the digital age? How do our online habits impact Christians' opportunities to speak about their beliefs or to share the gospel? Survey results indicated that Christians recognize that there are barriers to personal conversation because of our dependence on digital devices, yet technology also provides new ways to witness. Of millennials (ages 20–34 for the Barna surveys) 69% agreed with the statement: "It's harder to have a private, one-on-one conversation now than in the past because people are so busy with phones and technology." But 59 percent of millennials surveyed also said, "Technology and digital interactions have made sharing my faith easier." Of millennial respondents, 61 percent were concerned that talking about their faith would be seen as offensive. The most popular strategies for witnessing online include writing posts, sharing others' posts and commenting on what others have said. Such proclamation does, in fact, reach others. Survey results indicated that "58 percent of non-Christians said someone had shared their faith with them on Facebook and another 14 percent through other social media channels."⁷⁴

Read John 4:27–38. Social media provides a wide view of the harvest fields. How might it happen, in witnessing to Christ on social media, that "one sows and another reaps"? What opportunities have you had on social media to enter into the labor of others in the harvest fields?

A new teaching module for the "Preach the Word" program of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod is titled "The Use of Technology in Preaching." The video-based teaching program is presented by Rev. Matt Peeples, who says of communication technology, "We have not seen a ... shift this drastic since the Reformation. Today the average person can literally broadcast a message to the world!"⁷⁵ Blogs, conversations, podcasts and videos can be avenues for sharing with others the good news of salvation.⁷⁶ An online community might also be useful for that purpose. "There are endless reasons for creating an online community. It might be a group of Christian business people who want to build online support and encourage one another in modeling Christian ethics in the workplace. It could be a group of people going through a shared struggle. It might be a network of pastors or church workers working toward a common goal who can benefit from sharing ideas and

⁷⁴ Kate Shellm, "Go Tell It on the iPhone," *Christianity Today*, June 1, 2018, christianitytoday.com/news/2018/june/go-tell-it-iphone-technology-spiritual-conversation-becomes-kind, accessed June 11, 2018.

⁷⁵ Cheryl Magness, "Technology in Focus of New Preaching Module," *The Reporter*, June 18, 2018. View the teaching modules at lcms.org/about/leadership/president/preach-the-word.

⁷⁶ The blog at Concordia Technology Solutions offers a variety of resources and ideas for congregations, including ways to connect digitally with visitors, volunteers and college students. See concordiatech.org/blog.

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resources. It could be online Bible study communities for those whose work and life situations make it challenging to participate in the face-to-face equivalent."¹⁰⁴

Social media provides unique opportunities for love, service and witness as we live in the places and relationships to which God has called us. Luther comments, "I will therefore give myself as a Christ to my neighbor, just as Christ offered himself to me; I will do nothing in this life except what I see is necessary, profitable, and salutary to my neighbor, since through faith I have an abundance of all good things in Christ."¹⁰⁵

HOLY TO THE LORD

Commenting on Matt. 7:12, "So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets," Luther wrote, "Just look at your tools — at your needle or thimble, your beer barrel, your goods, your scales or yardstick or measure — and you will read this statement inscribed on them. Everywhere you look, it stares at you. Nothing that you handle every day is so tiny that it does not continually tell you this, if you will only listen All this is continually crying out to you: 'Friend, use me in your relations with your neighbor just as you would want your neighbor to use his property in his relations with you.' In this way, you see, this teaching would be inscribed everywhere we look, and engraved upon our entire life, if we only had ears willing to hear it and eyes willing to see it."¹⁰⁶

The prophet Zechariah speaks of another engraved inscription as he foretells "a unique day" when "the LORD my God will come, and all the holy ones with him" (Zech. 14:5, 7). On that very unique day, even the most ordinary things will be set apart for service to God and inscribed with a different label than that suggested by Luther. "And on that day there shall be inscribed on the bells of the horses, 'Holy to the LORD.' And the pots in the house of the LORD shall be as the bowls before the altar. And every pot in Jerusalem and Judah shall be holy to the LORD of hosts" (Zech. 14:20-21).¹⁰⁷

The high priest of ancient Israel wore a turban to which was fastened a golden plate engraved with those words, "Holy to the LORD" (Ex. 28:36-37). In Christ our Great High

Priest, that engraved dedication is ours now, as we await the arrival of the Lord's unique day. Born anew in Christ Jesus as God's royal priests, we too are marked "Holy to the Lord," set apart for service to Him and to our neighbor (1 Tim. 2:10-11). Although we may not actually get out an engraving tool, we can — for our neighbor and for the sake of the Gospel — put our smartphones, tablets and computers to good use, envisioning on each digital device the inscription "Holy to the Lord."

¹⁰⁴ Bull, *Digitized*, 162.

¹⁰⁵ Luther, "Freedom of a Christian," LW 31: 367.

¹⁰⁶ Luther, "Sermon on the Mount," LW 21: 237.

¹⁰⁷ Theo. Laetich, *Bible Commentary: The Minor Prophets* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1956), 505-6, says, "In the Church of the New Testament every 'pot,' every vessel, every tool, every instrument used in the service of the Lord to His glory, will be holy, the broom in the hand of the Christian housemaid as well as the scepter of a king; the pick and shovel of the miner as well as the pen of the preacher."

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

BOOKS

Boche, Ben and Jake Hollatz. *Faithfully Connected: Integrating Biblical Principles in a Digital World*. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2018.

Bull, Bernard. *Digitized: Spiritual Implications of Technology*. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2018.

Crouch, Andy. *The Tech-Wise Family: Everyday Steps for Putting Technology in Its Proper Place*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2017.

WEBSITES

Concordia Technology Solutions: Technology and Your Ministry
concordiatechnology.org/blog/topic/social-media

Insights @ Faith Lutheran: Digital Teenagers, Parts 1 and 2 (a resource offered by Faith Lutheran, an LCMS middle school and high school in Las Vegas, Nevada)
blog.faithlutheranlv.org/digital-teenagers-part-1
blog.faithlutheranlv.org/digital-teenagers-part-2

Higher Things: Dare to Be Lutheran (a resource for cultivating a distinctly Lutheran identity among youth and young adults)
media.higherthings.org/

KFUO Radio
kfuo.org/

LCMS Social Media
lcms.org/resources/multimedia/social-media

LCMS Youth Gathering
lcmsgathering.com/

LCMS Youth Ministry
lcms.org/how-we-serve/national/youth-ministry

Lutherans Engage the World (a quarterly publication about LCMS works of witness and mercy around the world)
engage.lcms.org/

Resources for LCMS Church Worker Wellness and Congregational Well-being
lcms.org/how-we-serve/mercy/church-worker-wellness

Lutheran Women's Missionary League
lwml.org/social

**CTCR Statement on Luther's Large Catechism
with Annotations and Contemporary Applications**

At its most recent meeting Feb. 16–18, 2023, the LCMS's Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR) discussed the controversy that accompanied the publication of *Luther's Large Catechism with Annotations and Contemporary Applications*, for which the Commission served as editors, contributors and reviewers. The CTCR forthrightly asserts that this volume does not change, question or supplant any doctrinal position of the LCMS, including any Synod teaching on contemporary cultural issues such as race or sexuality. The CTCR furthermore categorically rejects any assertions to the contrary. In feedback we have received as a Commission, it has become clear that many misconceptions about the volume have surfaced on social media, and we wish to offer this brief explanation to clarify what this volume is and what it is not.

First, the CTCR undertook the production of this volume at the behest of recent Synod conventions. 2013 Synod Resolution 3-13A addressed the matter of catechesis, including a resolve that a "catechetical compendium for adults" be prepared "which would be more comprehensive and apologetic in scope" than *Luther's Small Catechism with Explanation*. The 2016 LCMS convention adopted Resolution 5-12 on the use of Luther's catechisms. The resolution tasked the CTCR, in concurrence with the Synod president and seminaries, to "explore the creation of an annotated and expanded edition of the Large Catechism." Consequently, the resulting volume should be seen as a resource that was produced under the auspices of the CTCR, in conjunction with the LCMS Office of the President.

Second, the text of the Large Catechism itself remains entirely unchanged in this volume, using the English translation found in *Concordia: The Lutheran Confessions—A Reader's Edition of the Book of Concord*. It is the same text to which our Synod has always subscribed as part of our unqualified commitment to the 16th-century Lutheran Confessions. This volume, however, has two very different components, in accordance with the convention resolutions from 2013 and 2016. One component is the newly composed introductions and explanatory footnotes provided with the text of Luther's Large Catechism (similar in arrangement to *The Lutheran Study Bible*). These introductions and notes were written by scholars of Luther and the Lutheran Confessions. They are meant to help clarify the context and language of the catechism in its historical context. The introductions and annotations are the centerpiece of this project and one of the most extensive resources on this score provided in English. The other component is a series of excursive essays. The essays are wide-ranging attempts to engage the sorts of contemporary questions that often come up in relation to both of Luther's catechisms, as well as more generally in adult instruction and church life. By their nature, essays on contemporary questions touch on challenging and complex social, cultural and political issues. As such, they represent individual perspectives and judgments that some in the LCMS may not share.

Third, the selection of drafters for these excurses was not limited to LCMS authors but expanded to other Lutherans who have a record of scholarship with the Large Catechism or experience with many of these contemporary issues. We sought to have contributions from a variety of individuals, including Lutherans from other church bodies to benefit from their expertise and/or experience. Some of these writers are from church bodies not in fellowship with the LCMS. Their contributions were painstakingly reviewed by the entire CTCR (and later by the Synod's doctrinal review process) to ensure that the doctrinal content in each essay is fully consistent with LCMS teachings and practices. The decision was made to include the contributor's name for every piece in this volume (editors, annotators and essayists alike), unlike the typical custom

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Rev. Dr. Ely Prieto
Rev. Arlo Pullmann
Rev. Dr. William Schumacher
Rev. Dr. Scott Stiegemeyer
Rev. Dr. Roland Ziegler

Commission Staff

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Rev. Dr. Richard Serina, associate executive director
Rev. Dr. Larry Vogel, assistant to the executive director

of the CTCR in publishing its materials with the Commission itself identified as the author, rather than the principal drafters. The authors submitting these essays, for their part, did not view their short papers as articulating or defending specific positions of the Synod but as helping to explain some of the controversies that arise while teaching the catechisms or Lutheran doctrine — indeed, arising in many cases from their own congregational and personal experiences as pastors or laypeople.

Fourth, as noted earlier, the text of each introduction, annotation and excursive essay underwent thorough review and subsequent approval by the CTCR, as well as Synod doctrinal review. These reviews were undertaken to ensure that all material was in accord with Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions and the Constitution, bylaws and doctrinal statements of the Synod. Numerous suggestions for improvement were offered during this process and were ultimately addressed satisfactorily. That is not to say every reader will agree with each essay's perspective on specific social, cultural or political matters where Scripture, the Confessions or the Synod may not have spoken. There is obviously room for debate on many such issues, as brothers and sisters in Christ should be free to engage one another on matters of concern. They should be able to do so with confidence that their voices will be heard, their engagement will be fruitful, and their positions and objections measured by the rigorous standard of Scripture and the Confessions upon which our doctrinal unity is based.

Last, while we acknowledge that certain things could have been worded differently, better or more precisely (as is true of any publication, especially one of such massive size and scope), we remain firmly supportive of this volume, its contents and its usefulness for our church body. It is our express mandate and purpose as a Commission not to cause controversy, but to advise the Synod on matters of doctrine and practice, to assist the Synod president in his constitutional responsibilities, and to respond to the directives of our Synod in convention. We believe that we have done so with this volume. As the Rev. Dr. Matthew C. Harrison, Synod president, said in his Feb. 2, 2023, statement to the Synod: "Frankly, I think each reader will be astounded at the content and quality of the volume." We urge you to read it for yourselves and to make your own judgments.

The Commission on Theology and Church Relations
Adopted unanimously—Feb. 17, 2023

Commission Members

Rev. Dr. Lawrence Rast, chairman (*ex officio*)
Rev. Dr. Brian Saunders, vice-chairman
Rev. Paul Gregory Alms
Mr. Kenneth Balsters
Rev. Dr. Joel Biermann
Rev. Robert Dargatz
Rev. Dr. Thomas Egger (*ex officio*)
Dr. Frederick Guengerich
Mr. Timothy Hardy
Rev. Dr. Matthew C. Harrison (*ex officio*)
Dr. Jack Kilcrease
Rev. Peter Lange (*ex officio*)
Rev. Dr. Naomichi Masaki
Dr. Andrea Pitkus

South Wisconsin District President Request for an Opinion concerning Shut-in Communion by a Commissioned Minister

The Request of the District President

In correspondence dated March 10, 2015, the President of the South Wisconsin District submitted three questions to the Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR) concerning the propriety of a commissioned minister consecrating the Lord's Supper or distributing reserved elements to shut-ins. The text of the request is as follows:

While it is true that 'the regularly called and ordained pastors of the church are to officiate at the administration of Holy Communion' (TPLS, 17-18), it is only 'through Christ's word and its power'—not through the mere 'sound' or 'recording' of the voice of the pastor'—'that Christ's body and blood are present in the bread and wine' (TPLS, 14). [from the CTCR opinion 'DVD Consecration', page 2]

- 1.) *In light of that, Holy Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions (especially Augsburg XIV) is it appropriate for a commissioned worker (in this case a rostered teacher who serves as a pastoral care assistant) to consecrate the elements for the Lord's Supper when making shut-in visits?*
 - *Is such an action a violation of Augsburg XIV?*
- 2.) *In light of Holy Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions would it be appropriate for a commissioned worker (non-ordained) or a lay person to take properly consecrated elements from the Sunday Worship to the homes of shut-ins for distribution during the week?*
 - *Clarification: I know that this question has been asked and answered previously. However, the words of Herman Sasse ring in my years: "Extra institutionem Christi ("outside of Christ's institution") the Sacrament is not there; consequently, the real presence ceases when the celebration is over." Sasse, Herman (2014-01-03). Letters to Lutheran Pastors – Volume 2 (page 155). CPH.*
 - *How are the two positions reconciled?*
- 3.) *Are there Scriptural reasons and/or spiritual benefits for the consecration to be closely connected (either in time or location) to the distribution of the consecrated elements during the administration of the Sacrament in the Divine Service?*
 - *How do SD VII 75, 83-86 apply to usage of consecrated elements being distributed by laity apart from the Divine Service where they were properly consecrated?*
 - *Part of my concern and the reason for the question lies in the following: when the consecrated elements are distributed apart from the Divine Service where the institution took place, is the communicant deprived thereby of a critical aspect of the Gospel which ought to be connected with the distribution of the Sacrament, viz., the Words of Institution?*

church should not be displaced" (p. 26). This is especially important because shut-in communion provides the pastor an opportunity to offer confession and absolution, invite the participation of family members in communion, and offer pastoral care to his flock.

While this consideration applies to laity performing the distinctive functions of the pastoral office, another consideration regarding reserving the consecrated sacrament applies to clergy, as well. Scripturally and confessionally speaking, the administration of the Sacrament of the Altar is a single action involving three constitutive features: consecration, distribution, and reception. When Christ instituted this sacrament, he intended that all three features—consecration of the elements with our Lord's words ("given thanks"), distribution to the communicant ("give"), reception by the communicant ("take, eat"; "drink of it")—be done in accordance with this Word (Matt. 26:26-29; Mark 14:22-25; Lk. 22:17-20; 1 Cor. 11:23-26). When the consecrated sacrament is reserved and later distributed and received, it severs the single unified action which Christ instituted.

The Formula of Concord repeatedly opposes the reservation of the sacrament as an abuse because the severing of the single action which Christ instituted raises serious questions about whether the reserved sacrament is in fact the Lord's Supper. The Formula states that the sacrament is not rightly administered when "the consecrated bread is not distributed, received or eaten, but is instead locked up [in the tabernacle], made into a sacrifice, or carried around in a procession."² It also says: "Apart from this practice, it is not to be regarded as a sacrament—for example, when in the papistic Mass the bread is not distributed but is made into a sacrifice, or enclosed [in the tabernacle], or carried about in a procession, or displayed for adoration."³

When consecrated elements are set aside in a tabernacle, or any other receptacle, after the end of the celebration of the Lord's Supper, doubts are raised precisely because there is no longer a direct relation for the recipient between their consecration, distribution, and reception. To do so is to move outside of the parameters of the sacrament as it was instituted by Christ. Outside of these parameters, there is no certainty. As the Commission said of digital consecration in "Addendum to Communion and Covid-19":

We are not able to say with certainty that this would be an invalid Sacrament, but that is precisely the problem: we cannot be confident of it either. We would instead be troubled with the question whether this manner of communing is according to Christ's institution... We seriously and sincerely wonder whether (in the language of the Formula) "the entire external, visible administration of the Supper" is indeed "as Christ established the administration of the Supper (FC SD VII, §86, KW 608)." (p. 12)

The practice of reserving the consecrated sacrament for distribution and reception to those who did not witness its consecration unnecessarily raises doubts regarding its validity as a sacrament or the benefits it may offer. For these reasons, the Commission urges against the practice of laypersons (or clergy) communing shut-ins with elements consecrated apart from that distribution and reception.

² SD FC VII, 83; Kolb/Wengert, 607.

³ SD FC VII, 87; Kolb/Wengert, 608.

The Response of the CTCR

The basic theological issues involved in these questions have been addressed (at least in principle) in previous CTCR documents, including two reports, *The Ministry: Offices, Procedures, and Nomenclature* (1981) and *Theology and Practice of the Lord's Supper* (1984), and multiple opinions, such as "DVD Consecration" (2006), "Communion and Covid-19" (2020), and "One Little Word Can Tell Him: Addendum to 'Communion and Covid-19'" (2020). For the sake of greater clarity and precision, however, the Commission shall respond directly and succinctly to the questions presented in the request.

Q. 1) *In light of that, Holy Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions (especially Augsburg XIV) is it appropriate for a commissioned worker (in this case a rostered teacher who serves as a pastoral care assistant) to consecrate the elements for the Lord's Supper when making shut-in visits?*

AC 14 states that public preaching and the administration of the sacraments is the responsibility of the ordained minister of the gospel called for that purpose. Auxiliary offices, such as commissioned ministers, are established in the church to help the pastor in the discharge of his office, yet those occupying these offices are not authorized to perform the "distinctive functions" that belong to the pastoral office.¹ As the Commission said in its 1981 report, *The Ministry: Offices, Procedures, and Nomenclature*:

Functions that are essentially exercises of 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 Sacrament of the Altar, baptisms, wedding and funeral services should be carried out by those who hold the office of public ministry. (p. 35)

Since the pastor is given responsibility for the administration of the sacraments, and since consecration belongs to the proper administration of the sacraments, only the pastor should consecrate the elements for the Lord's Supper. It is the opinion of the Commission, then, that a layperson—commissioned minister or otherwise—should not consecrate the elements for the Lord's Supper during shut-in visits.

Q. 2) *In light of Holy Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions would it be appropriate for a commissioned worker (non-ordained) or a lay person to take properly consecrated elements from the Sunday worship to the homes of shut-ins for distribution during the week?*

For the same reason as above, the CTCR cautioned against the practice of lay persons bringing the reserved sacrament to shut-ins in *Theology and Practice of the Lord's Supper*: "The chief consideration regarding such a practice is that the role of the pastor in the sacramental life of the

¹ On the historical understanding of auxiliary offices in the LCMS cf. Cameron Mackenzie, "Helping Offices in the Church," *The Office of the Holy Ministry: Papers Presented at the Congress on the Lutheran Confessions Ilaasca, Illinois, April 10-13, 1996*, Crestwood, MO: Luther Academy; Minneapolis: Association of Confessional Lutherans, 1996, 65-82, available at <http://www.ctsfw.net/media/pdfs/MacKenzie-HelpingOfficesChurch.pdf>.

Q. 3) *Are there Scriptural reasons and/or spiritual benefits for the consecration to be closely connected to the distribution of the consecrated elements during the administration of the Sacrament?*

Scripturally speaking, as noted above, the Sacrament of the Altar as instituted by our Lord is understood as a single action of consecration, distribution, and reception. To sever consecration from distribution and reception is to—intentionally or unintentionally—disregard the clear words of Christ when instituting this sacrament. The Commission has addressed this issue repeatedly but to cite one example, the 2006 opinion on DVD Consecration says this:

The Lord's Supper was instituted by Jesus with words and actions spoken and carried out by him in the direct presence of his disciples (Matt. 26:26-28). Throughout history, the church has sought to be faithful to Christ's practice in this regard. Pastors speak the words of institution in the presence of the assembled congregation, thereby giving assurance that we are "doing this" as our Lord has instructed us to do (Luke 22:19). Whenever the actual words and actions of the celebrant in consecrating the elements are intentionally separated (by time, distance, or technological means) from the distribution and reception, no assurance can be given that our Lord's instructions are being heeded and that the body and blood of Christ are actually being given and received for the forgiveness of sins and the strengthening of faith.

Any separation of consecration from distribution and reception raises doubts about fidelity to the clear command of Christ in the words of institution and, thus, the validity of the sacrament.

Spiritually speaking, the same argument applies. Where the consecration is separated from distribution and reception, the certainty of Christ's body and blood present in the sacrament and, by extension, the certainty of his promise of forgiveness through the sacrament, are called into question. Yet it is for this very reason that Christ has given this sacrament—to strengthen faith and forgive sins through his presence and his promise. The separation of consecration from distribution and reception—again, whether by time, space, or technological innovation, such as DVD or digital consecration—diminishes the purpose for which it is instituted, namely, the strengthening of faith and the forgiveness of sins.

Adopted (unanimously) by the CTCR
December 9, 2022

Lutheran World Federation

An Introduction and Evaluation from the Theological Perspective
of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

Introduction: History, Vision, Projects

The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) describes itself as “a global communion of churches in the Lutheran tradition on a common journey of renewal” that strives to put faith into action “within and beyond the communion” with the guidance of God’s Word and Spirit.¹

As of 2019, LWF member churches were about evenly divided between the global north and south.² According to its website, as of 2021, LWF membership included 148 Lutheran churches from 99 countries. These churches represent 77 million Christians.³ “Churches that wish to join the LWF must formally accept the Federation’s doctrinal basis as outlined in the LWF Constitution.”⁴ Member churches meet every 6 to 7 years in an assembly. The Federation administration includes a president, 7 vice-presidents and a finance chairperson. A council, with its elected General Secretary, governs the LWF between assemblies. In the fiscal year 2019, the LWF had a budget of approximately 152 million with a revenue of 168 million.⁵

The Lutheran World Convention was founded in 1923, with the goal to “coordinate relief efforts after World War I and to promote fellowship and cooperation among Lutheran church bodies.”⁶ The convention met for the first time in Eisenach, Germany, with 160 delegates from twenty-two nations, who explored and expressed their unity of faith and spiritual kinship.⁷ At a meeting in 1929, the Lutheran World Convention stated its purpose: “In all its work of serving love the Lutheran World Convention and its committees shall, so far as the means are available, assist the needy and deserving Churches of the faith without respect to race, language, or political alignment.”⁸

¹ About the LWF | The Lutheran World Federation, accessed December 17, 2021.

² Kenneth G. Appold, “Is There a World Lutheranism? Accountability and Representation in Ecumenical Dialogue,” *Dialog* 58 (2019), 150.

³ About the LWF | The Lutheran World Federation, accessed December 17, 2021.

⁴ Member Churches | The Lutheran World Federation, accessed December 23, 2021. The LWF Constitution states: “The Lutheran World Federation confesses the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the only source and norm of its doctrine, life and service. It sees in the three Ecumenical Creeds and in the Confessions of the Lutheran Church, especially in the unaltered Augsburg Confession and the Small Catechism of Martin Luther, a pure exposition of the Word of God,” at https://www.lutheranworld.org/sites/default/files/2018/documents/lwf_constitution_en.pdf, accessed December 30, 2021.

⁵ <https://www.lutheranworld.org/content/lwf-finances-2019>, accessed May 2, 2022.

⁶ Albert B. Colver III, “A Brief Status of Worldwide Lutheranism at the 500th Anniversary of the Reformation,” *Logos* 27.3 (2018), 6.

⁷ Gilbert A. Thiele, “The Lutheran World Federation,” *Concordia Theological Monthly* 27 (1956), 445.

⁸ Thiele, 446.

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united in pulpit and altar fellowship.”¹⁵ Because “the LWF defines itself as a ‘communion,’ all of the member churches are in communion with each other and are thereby linked sacramentally.”¹⁶

The LWF works toward the goal of Christian unity as they “engage with ecumenical and inter-faith partners.”¹⁷ The *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification (JDDJ)*, prepared by the LWF and the Roman Catholic Church, was an LWF ecumenical document. The *JDDJ* agreement was adopted at the LWF assembly in 1997 and signed in 1999. The LWF believed that this document expressed “a common understanding of our justification by God’s grace through faith in Christ.” The remaining differences in the doctrine of justification were no longer considered as “the occasion for doctrinal condemnations.”¹⁸

The doctrinal direction of the LWF “has followed that of the secular progressive movement, particularly in social, moral, ethical, and justice issues.”¹⁹ The LWF has taken liberal, progressive positions concerning the role of women, gender issues, same-sex marriage and environmental and social justice issues.²⁰ As the LWF has adjusted its interpretation of Scripture to align itself with these issues, the federation has moved away from historic Lutheran doctrinal positions.²¹

According to its vision statement, the LWF is a “communion in Christ living and working together for a just, peaceful, and reconciled world.” Their core values include dignity, justice, compassion, commitment, respect for diversity, inclusion, participation, transparency and accountability.²² The LWF states that their values are rooted in God’s grace revealed in Jesus Christ and that they seek to promote dialogue “in order to build trust and peaceful coexistence among members of the world’s different faith communities.”²³

The first phase of an LWF study, “We Believe in the Holy Spirit: Global Perspectives on Lutheran Identity,” states: “Lutheran identity is rooted in the *solae* including the Word, the Trinitarian ecumenical creeds, Lutheran confessional documents (recognizing that some churches also recognize the Formula of Concord, Barmen Declaration, etc.) including the

¹⁵ Nordstokke, 487.

¹⁶ Appold, 149.

¹⁷ Theology, Unity, Mission and Justice | The Lutheran World Federation, accessed December 24, 2021.

¹⁸ Colver, 8.

¹⁹ Colver, 7.

²⁰ For instance, the LWF has developed theological studies and educational resources such as, “Gender: Herstories: Telling the Stories of Women Reformers,” “Transformative Masculinities,” “Loving Your Neighbor: Encouraging Constructive Interfaith Engagement,” “A Common Word: Buddhists and Christians Engage Structural Greed,” “The Church in the Public Space” and “God, Creation and Climate Change.”

²¹ “The Lutheran World Federation remains a federation in which the ‘family’ of Lutheran churches finds its expression. What keeps together the LWF and its member churches is not the common confession, but family resemblances, historical facts,” Herman Sasse, “Inclusive Lutheranism” in *The Lonely Way*, Vol. 2, ed. Matthew Harrison (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2002), 144.

²² About the LWF | The Lutheran World Federation, accessed December 17, 2021.

²³ Theological Studies | The Lutheran World Federation, accessed December 22, 2021.

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In 1947, the Lutheran World Convention was reorganized as the Lutheran World Federation, to help people in need, cooperate in mission efforts and theology, and respond to the challenge of the ecumenical movement. The 1947 LWF constitution stated, “The LWF shall be a free association of Lutheran churches. It shall have no power to legislate for the churches belonging to it or to interfere with their complete autonomy, but shall act as their agent in such matters as they assign to it.” The LWF did not, at that time, consider itself a “superchurch” that held authority over its member churches.⁹ The need to provide help to those in need in Europe after World War II meant that the LWF was more concerned with practical matters than with ecclesiological studies.

In the decades to come, controversy arose over the nature of the LWF as an “association of churches” and the role it had in exercising church discipline among its members. This came to be called the “Great Debate” and is best characterized by German theologian Peter Brunner’s argument that the LWF was an “ecclesiological problem.”¹⁰ Brunner claimed that since the LWF agreed on the Gospel and the sacraments, it was a church according to Article 7¹¹ of the Augsburg Confession, but that if it chose not to discipline its members for theological error, then it was not faithfully carrying out its responsibilities as a church.¹² Ultimately, this came to a head at the LWF general assembly in 1977, when the issue of apartheid was discussed in connection with the membership of white LWF churches in South Africa and Namibia. In 1984, the LWF constitution was amended to state that “the member churches . . . understand themselves to be in pulpit and altar fellowship with each other.”¹³ Considering itself a communion rather than a federation, the 1984 LWF World Assembly claimed for itself the authority of church discipline and “suspended the membership of two South African Lutheran churches that practiced apartheid.”¹⁴ The earlier constitution had referred to the LWF as “a free association of Lutheran churches,” but in 1990, the constitution was amended to state: “The LWF is a communion of churches which confess the triune God, agree in the proclamation of the word of God and are

⁹ Kjell Nordstokke, “The Ecclesiological Self-Understanding of the Lutheran World Federation: From ‘Free Association’ to ‘Communion of Churches,’” *The Ecumenical Review* 44 (1992), 481.

¹⁰ On this issue and its development, see Michael Root, “Affirming the Communion: Ecclesiological Reflection in the LWF,” in Hens Holger Schjöring, Prasanna Kumari, and Norman A. Hjeltn, *From Federation to Communion: The History of the Lutheran World Federation* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997), 216-246.

¹¹ “It is enough for the true unity of the church to agree concerning the teaching of the gospel and administration of the sacraments. It is not necessary that human traditions, rites, or ceremonies instituted by human beings be alike everywhere” (Augsburg Confession VII.2-3; Kolb-Wengert, 43).

¹² Peter Brunner, “The Lutheran World Federation as Ecclesiological Problem,” *Lutheran World* (1960): 237-256.

¹³ See also Hermann Sasse: “Is [the LWF] in a position to call upon its member churches to again take the Lutheran Confessions seriously? If it can do this, then it has a great task, and we will happily help it in this regard. If it is not in the position to do this, or it will not do this, then the cooperation of any truly confessional churches is senseless,” Sasse, “Altar Fellowship, Church Fellowship, & Federation,” in *Letters to Lutheran Pastors, Vol. II: 1951-1956*, ed. Matthew Harrison (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2014), 201. Hermann Sasse (1895-1976), a German theologian who spent the last part of his career as a seminary professor, was an informed, careful and engaged observer of the LWF since its inception in 1947. Several of his essays address the theological assumptions articulated in the earlier years of the LWF’s history which would become foundational for the organization’s increasing distance from Lutheran doctrine. See “For Further Reading and Study” for a selection of these works.

¹⁴ Nordstokke, 485.

¹⁵ Colver, 8.

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Catechisms with special emphasis here on the third article.”²⁴ The study continues: “Being Lutheran describes a faithful way of being in the world that points to Christ as the revelation of God’s love, while embracing the creative tension of ecumenical consensus, interfaith dialogue and interdisciplinary dialectic.”²⁵

The LWF addresses underlying causes of poverty and exclusion, working for a more equitable distribution of power, resources and opportunities. They believe that differences in history and culture shape theological understandings, as well as perspectives on moral and ethical questions. They are committed to enabling “the full and equitable participation of women, men, people of all ages and people with disabilities.”²⁶ The LWF also offers “platforms for reflection and joint work on gender justice and women’s empowerment, eco-theology and what it means to be church in the public space.”²⁷

Since 1995, the LWF has engaged in a dialogue with its member churches concerning family, marriage and sexuality issues, including a process called the “Emmaus Conversation.” The LWF faces the challenge of differences of opinions among member churches about same sex marriage and the ordination of women and homosexuals. In 2004, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Tanzania issued a statement saying, “We object to legalization of same sex marriage . . . We do not agree with those seeking to ordain homosexuals into the ministry of Word and Sacrament.”²⁸ In contrast, the Church of Sweden stated that “the purpose of marriage is to support the mutual relationship between the spouses and provide a secure framework in which to bring up children. These needs also exist in relationships between people of the same sex.”²⁹

LWF efforts in gender justice focus on promoting human rights with an emphasis on women and girls and their full participation in church and society. The Federation’s 2013 Gender Justice Policy was prepared to help its member churches achieve gender equality through measures that promote justice and dignity. The document explains that gender justice “is expressed through equality and balanced power relations between women and men and the elimination of the institutional, cultural and interpersonal systems of privilege and oppression that sustain discrimination.”³⁰ The LWF has also produced webinars on transformative masculinity “to address the root of gender-based violence, to transform the intellectual and spiritual violence that shapes our ideas about what it means to be human and therefore our concepts of masculinity.”

²⁴ Lutheran Identity Process Phase 1: Full Report and Lessons Learned, The Lutheran World Federation, 2020, https://www.lutheranworld.org/sites/default/files/2021/documents/2020_dtnj_addis_ababa_lutheran_identity_consultation_a4_en.pdf, accessed December 21, 2021.

²⁵ Lutheran Identity Process Phase 1: Full Report and Lessons Learned, The Lutheran World Federation, 2020, https://www.lutheranworld.org/sites/default/files/2021/documents/2020_dtnj_addis_ababa_lutheran_identity_consultation_a4_en.pdf, accessed December 21, 2021.

²⁶ Our Core Values | The Lutheran World Federation, accessed December 17, 2021.

²⁷ Theology, Unity, Mission and Justice | The Lutheran World Federation, accessed December 26, 2021.

²⁸ Craig L. Nesson, “Three Theses on the Theological Discussion of Homosexuality in the Global Lutheran Communion,” *Currents in Theology and Mission* 37.3 (June 2010), 191.

²⁹ Nesson, 192.

³⁰ DTPW-WICAS Gender Justice.pdf (lutheranworld.org), accessed December 26, 2021.

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The LWF Action for Justice unit focuses on human rights, climate justice, gender justice, and interfaith and peace-building. The Federation engages with national, regional and international human rights organizations and takes part in discussions with the United Nations Human Rights Council. The LWF also creates policy briefs concerning human rights issues in various countries.

The LWF seeks peace through conversation with religious leaders of various faiths and works with faith-based organizations. The Federation has also produced a number of publications concerning climate change, including “LWF Together Green and Just” (2012) and “Creation Not for Sale” (2017). The 2017 LWF assembly passed a Resolution on the Commercialization and Commodification of Creation to encourage member churches in their teaching on human dignity and their relationship to creation.

A Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod Evaluation

The LWF World Assembly in 1952 in Germany was the first to be attended by a president of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, along with other LCMS representatives. The LCMS president and representatives, as well as some free churches and churches in fellowship with the Missouri Synod, did not attend the LWF communion service held that year at a local church.

In its 1956 convention, the LCMS declined membership in the LWF “because the synod determined that [the LWF] was not in fact a federation, but a church requiring doctrinal agreement and church fellowship ... The churchly character of the LWF as well as disagreements about the inspiration and inerrancy of Holy Scripture, about confessional subscription to the Lutheran Confessions, and the nature of the gospel of Jesus Christ (among other things) prevented the Missouri Synod and many of the church bodies in fellowship with her from joining in the LWF.”³¹ In this sense, the LCMS identified what it would take the federation another 25 years to articulate: that the LWF was in essence a church.

The Missouri Synod did not sign the *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification*, commenting in a 1999 report that “the foremost defect” of JDDJ was its acceptance of conflicting definitions of justification. “For Lutherans, justification is essentially forensic, that is, God declares the sinner righteous on account of and in Christ. Roman Catholics define justification as an internal transformation of the believer, a ‘process,’ which Lutherans place in the area of sanctification, about which too there are different understandings.”³²

³¹ Colver, 7. Here also note Hermann Sasse, writing in 1959 on the lack of confessional consensus in the LWF: “It has become obvious and was frankly admitted that in very important doctrines, such as, for example, the doctrine of the Lord’s Supper, there exists no agreement between the Lutherans belonging to the LWF. The same is true of almost every doctrine of the Lutheran faith. There is no agreement on original sin, on justification, to say nothing of the doctrine of the inspiration and authority of the Holy Scripture,” Sasse, “The Crisis of Lutheranism” in *The Lonely Way*, Vol. II (1941-1976), ed. Matthew C. Harrison (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2002), 269.
³² Commission on Theology and Church Relations, *The Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification in Confessional Lutheran Perspective* (St. Louis: The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 1999), 17, at <http://www.lcms.org/Document.fdoc?src=lcms&id=339>, accessed December 31, 2021.

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The LCMS also disagrees with the LWF in its support for the ordination of women. As of 2016, 119 out of 145 LWF member churches allow the ordination of women. The organization itself considers the opening of ordained ministry to women part of its “ongoing reformation.”³³ When the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Latvia, an LWF member, voted in 2016 to restrict ordination to men, the LWF declared that it was “deeply saddened and concerned” by their decision.³⁴ The Latvian church later joined the International Lutheran Council (ILC), which does not grant member status³⁵ to churches that ordain women, and in response the LWF issued a statement expressing their dissatisfaction: “Membership criteria in the ILC subject churches to a set of theological principles, commitments, and practices. Several of these are at odds with what LWF member churches hold in common.”³⁶ The LCMS has repeatedly and categorically committed itself to the teaching that Scripture reserves the office of pastor for men (1 Cor. 14:34-35; 1 Tim. 2:11-12, 3:1-7; Tit. 1:5-9), and thus women may not be ordained as pastors or carry out the distinctive functions of the pastoral office.³⁷

The LCMS affirms that shared work in matters of physical need, or cooperation in externals, is possible even where disagreement in doctrine exists.³⁸ However, the LWF’s unbiblical position on certain social and ethical issues has made such cooperation untenable. LWF theological and political advocacy for LGBTQ+ causes runs in direct opposition to Holy Scripture. The Scriptures are patently clear that God created humans as man and woman (Gen. 1:27; Gen. 2:21-23), that He instituted marriage as an indissoluble bond between man and woman alone (Matt. 19:1-12; Mark 10:1-12; 1 Cor. 7:10-11), that He prohibits sexual intercourse outside the bonds of marriage (Ex. 20:14; Deut. 5:18; Num. 5:11-31; Matt. 5:27-30), including between persons of the same sex (Lev. 18:22, 24; 20:13; Rom. 1:26-27; 1 Cor. 6:8; 1 Tim. 1:10; Jude 7) and that heterosexual marriage and procreation is the foundation for all human societies (Gen. 1:28; Eph. 5:6; Col. 3:4; 1 Pet. 2:3). As is the case with the ELCA, explicit support for gay marriage, gay clergy or the appropriateness of alternative sexual lifestyles is at odds with the biblical view and must be rejected on theological grounds, thereby making work together on certain social matters nearly impossible. A 2010 LCMS Task Force said this of the ELCA’s views on homosexuality and it applies even more strongly to the LWF’s advocacy of LGBTQ+ lifestyles: “These cooperative activities, however, are threatened by the sexuality decisions of the ELCA because, in some cases, the ELCA’s new affirmation of same-gender relationships may contradict

³³ <https://www.lutheranworld.org/news/more-80-percent-lwf-churches-ordain-women>, accessed May 2, 2022.

³⁴ <https://www.lutheranworld.org/news/deeply-saddened-by-latvian-church-decision-against-womens-ordination>, accessed May 2, 2022.

³⁵ The ILC, though not a “communion of churches” like the LWF, grants membership to participants that fall into three categories: 1) Members; 2) Associate Members; and 3) Others, including Observers, Recognized Organizations, and Individuals. See <https://ilc-online.org/about-us/membership>, accessed May 2, 2022.

³⁶ <https://www.lutheranworld.org/news/lwf-responds-decision-lutheran-church-latvia>, accessed May 2, 2022.

³⁷ The most recent LCMS affirmation of this came at its 2016 convention in the form of Resolution 5-14, “To Affirm the Biblical Teaching on Man and Woman in the Church.” See also Commission on Theology and Church Relations, *Women in the Church: Scriptural Principles and Ecclesiastical Practice* (St. Louis: The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 1985), 40-42.

³⁸ Commission on Theology and Church Relations, *Principles for Cooperation in Externals with Theological Integrity* (2010 Res. 3-03) (St. Louis: The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 2010).

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The 1965 document by the Commission on Theology and Church Relations, *Theology of Fellowship*, addresses the issue of fellowship with other churches. Both unionism and separatism are viewed as equal dangers: “Unionism ignores genuine differences in doctrine, and treats them as though they were unimportant ... separatism ... sins against love and divides the church.”³³ Concerning cooperative work with other church bodies, the same document states: “Our Synod should clearly recognize that, in the case of necessary work on the local, national, or international level, where the faith and confession of the church are not compromised, and where it appears essential that the churches of various denominations should cooperate or at least not work at cross purposes, our churches ought to cooperate willingly to the extent that the Word of God and conscience will allow.”³⁴ At times, however, faith and confession may be compromised, as in association with the Lutheran World Federation, which calls itself a “communion” and considers its member churches to be “united in pulpit and altar fellowship.”³⁵

In his explanation of the Third Article of the Apostles’ Creed, Martin Luther writes that through the Gospel, the Holy Spirit “calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian Church on earth and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith.”³⁶ A 2009 document of the Commission on Theology and Church Relations, *Church Relations in the 21st Century*, states: “In creating the church, the Holy Spirit works through external means. Thus Augsburg Confession Article 7 describes the true unity of the church as agreement “concerning the pure teaching of the gospel and the right administration of the sacraments.” It appends to the article the Apostle Paul’s description, “One faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all...” (AC 7, 2-4). This clarifies how the Holy Spirit establishes and maintains the unity of the church: He does so through the word of Christ as it is rightly proclaimed and as it is authentically made visible in the sacraments.”³⁷

The *Church Relations* document continues: “The proclamation of the Gospel and the administration of the sacraments cannot be separated from the entire body of doctrine any more than the head can be separated from a body and survive. Therefore church fellowship *coram mundo* [before the world] always flows out of unity in confession.”³⁸ The LCMS does not share a “unity of confession” with the Lutheran World Federation, therefore we cannot share pulpit and altar fellowship.

³³ Commission on Theology and Church Relations, *Theology of Fellowship* (St. Louis: The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 1965), 42, at <https://files.lcms.org/wl7?id=JOnSgd1wJkW41JGpnQJFzCR8FXRBEBZ>, accessed December 31, 2021.

³⁴ Commission on Theology and Church Relations, *Theology of Fellowship* (St. Louis: The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 1965), 43, at <https://files.lcms.org/wl7?id=JOnSgd1wJkW41JGpnQJFzCR8FXRBEBZ>, accessed December 31, 2021.

³⁵ See footnote 12 in this document.

³⁶ *Luther’s Small Catechism with Explanation* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2017), 17.

³⁷ Commission on Theology and Church Relations, *Church Relations in the 21st Century* (St. Louis: The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 2009), 3, at <https://files.lcms.org/wl7?id=By9D2sXSfrehHfUUV6KBJgdk0YL17r>, accessed December 28, 2021.

³⁸ *Church Relations in the 21st Century*, 4, at <https://files.lcms.org/wl7?id=By9D2sXSfrehHfUUV6KBJgdk0YL17r>, accessed December 28, 2021.

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understandings or goals that have enabled cooperative activities in the past.”³⁴ Church bodies that disagree about homosexuality or gender identity, for instance, cannot possibly provide spiritual care to families in distress without confronting the possibility—or even the probability—of contradicting each other’s firmly held beliefs on such fundamental, “first article” matters.

The Missouri Synod has expressed concern that some of its partner churches (in full pulpit and altar fellowship with the LCMS) retain their membership in the LWF. Details about this lack of confessional unity are expressed in Resolution 5-07, “To Clarify the Relationship between LCMS Partner Churches and the Lutheran World Federation,” adopted by the Missouri Synod at its 2019 Convention:

WHEREAS, LWF is a proponent of women’s ordination, acceptance of the LGBT lifestyle, and the use of a higher critical approach to interpreting Scripture; and

WHEREAS, The LWF defines itself as a global communion of churches united in pulpit and altar fellowship (although many of our partner churches in the LWF do not acknowledge this pulpit and altar fellowship); and

WHEREAS, Some partner churches of the LCMS are members of the LWF, and as partner churches we are in full altar and pulpit fellowship with them; and

WHEREAS, These partner churches have each joined the LWF at various times and have remained in the LWF for different and complex reasons; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Office of the President engage in fraternal dialogue with partner churches regarding this concern and compile accurate information from them on their existing relationship to the LWF; and be it further

Resolved, That the Office of the President report to the 2022 Synod convention with recommendations on addressing the relationship between partner churches and the LWF; and be it finally

Resolved, That the Synod in convention commend these partner churches for their commitment to the Word of God and the Lutheran Confessions and exhort them to remain faithful in that confession.³⁶

The Commission hopes this brief review of the Lutheran World Federation will provide the President of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod with a helpful resource in advising our partner churches about the LWF and our concern over their joint membership with the LWF.

The Missouri Synod is not a member of the LWF. It holds membership in the International Lutheran Council (ILC). The ILC traces its roots to a series of meetings (beginning in 1952) initiated by leaders of confessional Lutheran churches, eventually becoming known as the “International Lutheran Theological Conference.” Its present name was adopted in 1993. While

³⁴ Presidential Task Force, “Theological Implications of the 2009 ELCA Decisions” (St. Louis: The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 2010), 5, at <https://files.lcms.org/71B7F7596-E3ED-46CE-8A5C-A809B5E447E5>, accessed April 15, 2022.

³⁶ Resolution 5-07, “To Clarify the Relationship between LCMS Partner Churches and the Lutheran World Federation,” *2019 Convention Proceedings* (St. Louis: The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod), 152-153.

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not a church body, nor requiring pulpit and altar fellowship among its members, the ILC currently includes 39 member churches worldwide, in addition to 4 associate members, 16 observers, and 2 registered organizations. It serves to promote confessional Lutheranism through joint educational ventures, outreach programs, theological study and conferences for its leaders. It also conducts a Lutheran Leadership Development Program, offering a certificate to leaders of ILC affiliated churches.⁴⁷

Links and Websites

Lutheran World Federation
<https://www.lutheranworld.org/>

Lutheran World Federation Constitution and Bylaws
<https://www.lutheranworld.org/content/resource-lwf-constitution-and-bylaws>

International Lutheran Council
<https://www.ilc-online.org/>

For reports by the LCMS Commission on Theology and Church Relations on justification, church relations, gender dysphoria, the stewardship of creation and other topics, see:
<https://www.lcms.org/about/leadership/commission-on-theology-and-church-relations>

For Further Reading and Study

Bloomquist, Karen. "Lutheran World Federation" (pp. 476-478) in *Encyclopedia of Martin Luther and the Reformation*, Vol. 1: A-L ed. Mark A. Lampert. Landam: Rowan and Littlefield, 2017.

Johnson, Kathryn L. "Lutheran World Federation" (pp. 462-465) in *Dictionary of Luther and the Lutheran Traditions* ed. Timothy J. Wengert et al. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2017.

Nelson, E. Clifford. *The Rise of World Lutheranism: An American Perspective*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982.

Sasse, Hermann. "Concerning the Unity of the Lutheran Church" (pp. 117-136) in *Letters to Lutheran Pastors*, Vol. II: 1951-1956 ed. Matthew Harrison. Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2014.

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Sasse, Hermann. "Inclusive Lutheranism" (pp. 341-345) in *The Lonely Way*, Vol. 2: 1941-1976, ed. Matthew Harrison. Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2002.

Sasse, Hermann. "Open Letter to the Lund Meeting of the LWF 1947" (pp. 521-528) in *Letters to Lutheran Pastors*, Vol. III: 1957-1969 ed. Matthew Harrison. Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2015.

Adopted by the CTRC
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⁴⁷ More information on the ILC may be found at <https://www.ilc-online.org/>.

Theological Considerations and Procedural Guidelines**Regarding****The Recognition of Altar and Pulpit Fellowship****Between****The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and Another Church Body¹**

Article III of the Constitution of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) lists as the first objective of the Synod that

- The Synod, under Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions, shall—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.

This document sets forth theological considerations and procedural guidelines for The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod as it responds to a request by another church body for altar and pulpit fellowship with the LCMS.

I. Delineation of Responsibilities**1. The President of the Synod**

The president of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod is “the chief ecumenical officer of the Synod.” The LCMS Bylaws state the following in this regard:

- a) He shall represent the Synod, in consultation with the appropriate board or commission, in official contacts with all partner churches by aiding, counseling, and advising them and strengthening the relations with and among them.
- b) He shall develop protocol documents between the Synod and partner church bodies according to which the Synod and its agencies will work together with its partner churches in foreign mission fields, which documents are also to be respected by agencies, auxiliaries, and recognized service organizations.²

¹ An earlier “Policy for The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod Declaring Altar and Pulpit Fellowship with Another Church Body” was adopted by the CTCR in April 2003 in response to a request from the President of the Synod, then revised in 2014 to reflect 2010 convention action (e.g., 2010 Res. 3-04A) and 2010 and 2013 changes to the Synod Bylaws. This revised document was approved by the CTCR on September 17, 2020.

² A protocol document is an official, written agreement between the LCMS and a partner church that is executed by the respective church leaders and that codifies the recognition of altar and pulpit fellowship while establishing certain protocols for inter-church relations upon which the two church bodies have mutually agreed. Protocol agreements are intended and expected to be permanent (unless subsequent revisions are mutually agreed upon by both church bodies).

Members and officers of the Synod will respect this orderly procedure and shall not move ahead of the Synod as a whole by engaging in altar and pulpit fellowship before such has been officially recognized. Members and officers should consult with the president or his representative and the Office of International Mission (where necessary) before making contacts with or making overseas trips to church bodies with whom we are not yet in fellowship (see Bylaw 3.8.3).

So that these provisions may be carried out with consistency and in faithfulness to the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions, a relationship of altar and pulpit fellowship between another autonomous church body and the Synod shall be officially recognized in the following manner.

II. Basic Considerations

In considering whether the Synod should declare recognition of altar and pulpit fellowship with another church body, the president of the Synod and the CTCR shall take into consideration the following criteria.

1. Altar and pulpit fellowship is a relationship that has agreement “in doctrine and in all its articles” as its basis (FC SD X 31).

“While the church’s internal unity is perfect and known only to God (Eph. 1:4), the limits of external fellowship are determined by whether the Gospel is preached purely and the sacraments are administered according to Christ’s institution. The Gospel and the sacraments are in themselves always pure. In this way they create and preserve the church in her hidden unity throughout the world. Yet, when church bodies make public confession of the Gospel and the sacraments, tragically some obscure or explicitly contradict the teaching of the Gospel and the proper administration of the Sacraments. For this reason the limits or boundaries of the external fellowship are creeds and confessions. Churches in altar and pulpit fellowship share the same confession, including the rejection of errors that contradict this confession. Where churches cannot agree on a common confession, the basis for church fellowship does not exist” (*Lutheran Understanding of Church Fellowship*, p. 5).

2. Altar and pulpit fellowship is a relationship which signifies agreement not only in a church body’s formal statements but also agreement in the implementation of the formal confessions of a church body in its actual life and practice.

“Confessional ecumenism recognizes the importance of practice as the application of doctrine to life. Proper formulations of the meaning of the Gospel on the basis of the Scriptures, necessary as such formulations are, are no substitute for actually preaching, teaching, and living the Gospel and using the sacraments. Practice is a fair indication of fidelity to the Gospel. For example, it does little good to point to an excellent formulation of the lodge problem in a synodical constitution if in fact that policy is not being followed in the parishes. It means little to point to a fine statement on the inerrancy of Holy Scripture in the *Brief Statement* or the *United Testimony of Faith and Life* if, in fact, that position is no longer consistently followed. We need to remember that the Augsburg Confession (VII) is talking about a Gospel that is actually taught and proclaimed and

- c) He or his representative shall represent the Synod in official contacts with other church bodies. (Bylaw 3.3.1.1.2 a–c)
2. The Commission on Theology and Church Relations

The Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR) is “to assist the President of the Synod in matters of church relationships” (Bylaw 3.9.5). The CTCR is to “assist the President 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).

The Bylaw further explicates the CTCR’s responsibilities as follows:

- 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. (Bylaw 3.9.5.2.2 a–e)

3. The Synod in Convention

The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod in convention, acting on the basis of a recommendation of the CTCR, declares recognition of altar and pulpit fellowship with another church body.

In cases where the president of Synod has declared recognition of altar and pulpit fellowship with “a small, formative, emerging confessional Lutheran church body” or with “an entity” (e.g., a district, mission, group of congregations, etc.) “of a self-governing partner church” that has been “established as an independent church body in altar and pulpit fellowship with that partner church body” the subsequent Synod convention is asked to endorse the declaration. (Bylaw 3.9.5.2.2 c and 3.9.5.2.2 e)

4. Members of the Synod

about sacraments that are actually administered. Why? Because it is through the ‘practice’ of the Gospel, if you will, that the Holy Spirit creates and sustains His church. To be sure, not all items in the area of practice are clearly defined in the Word of God, and this needs to be recognized. But where they are, or where they clearly relate to the Gospel, there can be no ecumenical retreat to the safety of written formulations at the expense of what is actually happening in the church’s parishes as well as its seminaries, colleges, publishing houses, boards and commissions. Herein lies one of the chief reasons why The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod holds doctrinal discussions with other Lutheran groups prior to the establishment of altar and pulpit fellowship” (Ralph Bohlmann, “Celebration of Concord” in *Theologian’s Convocation Formula for Concord*, 1977, pp. 69–70).

3. Altar and pulpit fellowship is an officially-recognized relationship between two self-governing church bodies or ecclesiastical entities.

In addition to agreement in confession, factors that may need to be taken into account in making a recommendation for altar and pulpit fellowship with another church body include its history, self-understanding, and confessional and organizational stability and maturity. That is, the process for declaring church fellowship must be realistic with regard to external circumstances of the two churches. In the case of established church bodies with significant traditions of theology and practice, a more formal process may be appropriate. In the case of a small, formative, emerging confessional church body without extensive structures or organizations a simpler process may be appropriate.

4. Altar and pulpit fellowship is a relationship that affects all those church bodies with which each of the two newly related church bodies holds church fellowship.

Early on in the process of contemplating the possibility of altar and pulpit fellowship, the churches with which the Synod is already in church fellowship are to be informed of this prospect and their input requested. The president of the Synod and the CTCR will consider the responses of the Synod’s partner churches in reaching its recommendation regarding the possibility of church fellowship with this church body.

5. Existing LCMS mission work may be a factor in the contemplation of possible altar and pulpit fellowship with a church body.
6. When the LCMS has current missionary personnel or when it has had missionaries in the past serving in the country or region where the church body requesting fellowship is located, the Office of International Mission should be informed of the request and consulted regarding it.

III. Procedures

- A. In the case of considering formal recognition of altar and pulpit fellowship with an established church body (in distinction from “a small, formative, emerging” church — see III.B., below), the following procedures are in order:

1. When relationships between the Synod and another church body have reached the point that church fellowship between them is contemplated, the president of the Synod, in consultation with the CTCR, is responsible for formally initiating this process. Early on in the process, the president and/or the CTCR will invite the partner churches of the Synod to provide input to him and to the CTCR regarding possible altar and pulpit fellowship with this church body.
2. The president of the Synod may designate an individual to serve as his assistant or representative in his responsibility as chief ecumenical officer of the LCMS. In such cases the assistant will serve as directed by the president, interacting with church bodies requesting fellowship and working with the CTCR toward the fulfillment of its responsibilities in church relations.
3. Working together with the head of the church body with which church fellowship is contemplated, the president or his representative shall arrange for doctrinal discussions between representatives of the two church bodies. Synod representatives to these discussions shall be appointed by the president of the Synod, ordinarily including representation from CTCR membership or staff. These representatives shall report regularly to the president and to the CTCR on these discussions.
4. After thoroughly reviewing pertinent documents (e.g., historical information, constitution and bylaws, doctrinal statements, formal descriptions of the church body's theology and practice, etc.), together with reports from those involved in doctrinal discussions (and others as deemed necessary and appropriate), the CTCR, in consultation with the president, shall either recommend that the Synod recognize altar and pulpit fellowship with this church body or decline to do so.
5. If the CTCR recommends that the Synod recognize altar and pulpit fellowship with this church body, it shall immediately report this to the president of the Synod. The president or his representative shall inform this church (and the Synod's partner churches) of this recommendation. The Commission on Theology and Church Relations shall prepare an overture to this effect for consideration by the next Synod convention. The president's office, in consultation with the head of the church body requesting fellowship, is to coordinate the preparation of a protocol document in the language of each church body to be signed by the heads of the respective churches at the next Synod convention upon adoption of the resolution recognizing church fellowship.
6. If the CTCR declines to recommend recognition of altar and pulpit fellowship with this church body, it shall prepare a statement delineating the reasons for this decision, which is to be shared with the president of the Synod. The president or his representative shall inform this church body of the CTCR's action. Continued discussion and consideration may follow. If the concerns which caused the CTCR to decline to approve altar and pulpit fellowship are not able to be resolved, the president will inform the members of the Synod and the Synod's partner churches of this action of the CTCR.
- B. When the president receives a request for recognition of fellowship from a confessional Lutheran church body that he identifies as "a small, formative, emerging confessional Lutheran church" (Bylaw 3.9.5.2.2(c)), the following procedures are in order:
7. If the CTCR declines to approve the request for altar and pulpit fellowship, it shall prepare a statement delineating the reasons for this decision, which is to be shared with the president of the Synod and the Praesidium. Continued discussion and consideration may follow. If the concerns which caused the CTCR to decline to approve altar and pulpit fellowship are not able to be resolved, the president will inform the church body requesting fellowship of this decision, as well as the Synod's partner churches. The members of the Synod shall also be informed of this action via the Synod's official publications.
8. If the Synod president does not act on a recommendation by the CTCR to declare recognition of fellowship in time for consideration by the next Synod convention, the request for fellowship is to be remanded to the CTCR for review and reconsideration in the subsequent triennium.
- C. When a mission of the Synod applies for formal recognition as a self-governing partner church (Bylaw 3.9.5.2.2(d)), the following procedures are in order:
 1. When an LCMS mission applies for self-governing partner church recognition, the Office of International Mission (OIM) shall inform the Office of the President and the executive director of the CTCR of its recommendation that such status be recognized. Information and/or documentation that identifies the mission's doctrinal convictions (for example, doctrinal statements, its constitution and bylaws, copies of doctrinal materials used in the church, materials for training clergy and laity, and so forth) shall be shared with the CTCR.
 2. If upon review of this material the CTCR approves the recommendation of the OIM, it shall prepare an overture to this effect for consideration by the Synod at the next Synod convention. If the CTCR declines to approve the request for partner church status, it shall prepare a statement delineating the reasons for this decision, which is to be shared with the president of the Synod and the OIM. Continued discussion and consideration shall follow.
 3. After CTCR approval of the application, the president's office, in consultation with the head of the newly self-governing church body, is to coordinate the preparation of a protocol document in the language of each church body to be signed by the heads of the respective churches at the next Synod convention.
- D. When a mission or other entity established by a church body in fellowship with the Synod applies for formal recognition as a self-governing partner church (Bylaw 3.9.5.2.2(e)), the following procedures are in order:
 1. 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 and requests recognition of altar and pulpit fellowship with the LCMS as a self-governing partner church, the president of the Synod, in consultation with the CTCR, shall correspond with the existing partner church from which the entity has originated. The purpose of the correspondence is to ensure that the partner church fully supports the independence of the entity as a church body and is in fellowship with the new church body, recognizing it as a partner

1. When fellowship with such a church body is initially requested, the church shall be asked to share with the Synod president and the CTCR any information and/or documentation that identifies its doctrinal convictions (for example, doctrinal statements, its constitution and bylaws, copies of doctrinal materials used in the church, materials for training clergy and laity, and so forth). On the basis of such information and discussions with church leaders, the CTCR, in consultation with the president, shall determine whether the requesting church is committed to the full authority of the Scriptures as the infallible Word of God and subscribes without reservation to the *Book of Concord* (to the extent that it is available in the primary language of the church).
2. When relationships between the Synod and the church body have reached the point that church fellowship between them is contemplated, the president of the Synod, in consultation with the CTCR, is responsible for formally initiating this process. He will inform the Praesidium that the process has begun and, early on in the process, he will also inform the partner churches of the LCMS, inviting their input.
3. Working together with the head of the church body with which church fellowship is contemplated, the president of the Synod shall arrange for visitation of the church and doctrinal discussions between representatives of the two church bodies. Synod representatives to these discussions shall be appointed by the president of the Synod, ordinarily including representation from the CTCR or its staff. The head of the church body or his representative shall also be welcome (and assisted, as necessary) to visit Synod offices, congregations and institutions.
4. After such visitation(s) and doctrinal discussions, the Synod representatives shall provide a written report, including relevant doctrinal materials (cf. #1 above), to the president of the Synod and to the CTCR. After consideration of this report, the CTCR shall formally forward to the president its recommendation regarding church fellowship with this church body.
5. If the CTCR recommends recognition of fellowship with this church, the president, after consultation with the Praesidium, shall either declare such recognition or decline to do so. If the president declines to declare recognition of fellowship, continued discussion and consideration may follow. If the concerns which caused the president to decline to approve altar and pulpit fellowship are not able to be resolved, the president will inform the church body requesting fellowship of this decision, as well as the Synod's partner churches. If the president declares recognition of fellowship, he shall inform the church requesting fellowship (and also the Synod's partner churches) of this action.
6. Subsequent to the recognition of fellowship and prior to the next Synod convention, the CTCR shall prepare an overture to the Synod convention requesting endorsement by the Synod of the president's declaration of fellowship. The president's office, in consultation with the head of the church body requesting fellowship, is to coordinate the preparation of a protocol document in the language of each church body to be signed by the heads of the respective churches at the next Synod convention.

church fully committed to the authority of Scripture and subscribing to the Lutheran Confessions without reservation.

2. If, as a result of this correspondence, recognition of church fellowship with the requesting entity is contemplated, the president of the Synod, in consultation with the CTCR, is responsible for formally initiating this process. He will inform the Praesidium that this process has begun and, early on in the process, he will also inform the partner churches of the LCMS, inviting their input.
3. The process shall then proceed in the same manner as indicated in Section III.B.3–8 above with reference to "a small, formative, emerging confessional Lutheran church."
- E. The procedure for contemplating and/or recommending the termination of recognition of altar and pulpit fellowship with another church body is as follows:
 1. As noted above (Page 1), the Bylaws stipulate that the president "shall represent the Synod, in consultation with the appropriate Board or Commission, in official contacts with all partner churches by aiding, counseling, and advising them and strengthening the relations with and among them" and that "he or his representative shall represent the Synod in official contacts with other church bodies" (Bylaw 3.3.1.1.2 a, b).
 2. The Bylaws further state that the CTCR "shall assist the President 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) and, in that capacity, "shall address itself to and evaluate existing fellowship relations for the purpose of mutual admonition and encouragement" (Bylaw 3.9.5.2.2 a).
 3. In light of the above, when relationships between the Synod and another church body have reached the point that, regrettably, the termination of recognition of altar and pulpit fellowship is contemplated because it appears that agreement "in doctrine and in all its articles" (FC SD X 31) no longer exists (cf. "Basic Considerations," Pages 3–4 above), the president of the Synod, in consultation with the CTCR, is responsible for formally initiating this process.
 4. Working together directly with the head of this church body, the president shall arrange for doctrinal discussions between representatives of the two church bodies to identify the cause(s) of concern which have led to the initiation of this process. Synod representatives to these discussions shall be appointed by the president of the Synod, ordinarily including representation from CTCR membership or staff. These representatives shall report regularly to the president and to the CTCR on these discussions.
 5. The president of the Synod may designate an individual to serve as his assistant or representative in his responsibility as chief ecumenical officer of the LCMS. In such cases the assistant will serve as directed by the president in interacting with this church body.
 6. If as a result of these discussions the concerns leading to initiation of this process are able to be resolved — praise and thanks be to God! The heads of both church bodies may wish

to discuss specific steps that can be taken, mutually agreed upon and supported by leaders in both church bodies, to strengthen the relationship between the two church bodies and help ensure that such concerns do not arise again in the future.

7. If as a result of these discussions the concerns leading to the initiation of this process are not able to be resolved, the president of the Synod, speaking the truth in love, shall convey this decision clearly to the head of the church body in question, indicating the need to bring this serious matter to the attention of the Synod in convention. The president may then advise the CTCR to prepare an overture regarding this matter for consideration by the next Synod convention. He shall also determine the best and most appropriate way(s) to inform the members of the Synod and the Synod's partner churches of this regrettable situation and the need to place this matter before the Synod in convention.

Adopted September 17, 2020
Commission on Theology and Church Relations
The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

Communion and Covid-19

The current crisis caused by the coronavirus or Covid-19 pandemic is disrupting every facet of life for our entire continent and for most of the world. Increasing restrictions on social ties and connections—“social distancing”—while endorsed by most medical authorities are now also being mandated increasingly by governing authorities. Among the practices of social distancing is the avoidance of group settings—settings such as Christian worship.

A growing number of LCMS churches are suspending services temporarily because of Covid-19. This presents significant challenges for Christian life and the church's well-being. Christians treasure His Word and Sacraments and so we treasure regular corporate worship. Colossians 3:16 says, “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly...” Similarly, we treasure fellowship with one another and know that the Word tells us not to forsake meeting together so that we can continue to encourage each other (Heb. 10:25).

The Small Catechism summarizes the Lutheran understanding of the importance of public worship in its teaching on the third commandment: “We should fear and love God so that we do not despise preaching and His Word, but hold it sacred and gladly hear and learn it.” As a consequence, we hold services each Lord's Day and at other times, and encourage all members to attend regularly in order to receive the gifts of Christ in Word and Sacrament. At the same time we have not made a law of Sunday worship. We know that our services are not something we are doing to earn a place with God. Jesus tells us that “The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath” (Mark 2:27). There are times when the obligations of Christian love may lead individuals *not* to worship with a congregation. A church member with a bad cold, flu, or another contagious disease will generally refrain from attending services lest he or she infect others. Congregations have canceled services entirely in order to protect their members during inclement weather. Understandably then in the current circumstance, many LCMS congregations have again determined that they should suspend services for a time out of love for those who might contract the deadly Covid-19 virus.

Such churches are able to find various ways to help members to hear the Word of Christ richly. From telephone calls to emails to website messaging to instant messaging to sermon streaming, the Word is being heard and received in the midst of the coronavirus. But what of the Sacrament of the Altar? The forgiveness of sins is not prevented when one cannot commune, for it is delivered by the Gospel as it is read and preached and spoken by the royal priesthood and also in the sacraments of Baptism and the Holy Supper as well as in Absolution. But it is only in the Lord's Supper that we eat and drink Christ's very body and blood. It thereby offers a special assurance that is proper only to it, just as Baptism has its own assurances. The inability to commune is therefore no small matter, but a true hardship!

We know, however, that the church has known this hardship at other times and not only in our own time. During the early years of colonial America, Lutherans often went weeks or months

of our Lord Jesus Christ” (FC Ep VII, 8; quoted in TPLS, 15). While it is true that “the regularly called and ordained pastors of the church are to officiate at the administration of Holy Communion” (TPLS, 17-18), it is only “through Christ's word and its power”—not through the mere “sound” or “recording” of the voice of the pastor—that Christ's body and blood are present in the bread and wine” (TPLS, 14).

Novelties such as these in the practice of the Lord's Supper will inevitably lead *away* from the Sacrament itself as instituted by Christ to humanly-instituted *techniques* by which the Sacrament is purportedly being given. Note the third point raised by the CTCR in 2006:

3. As emphasized above, the focus in our celebration of the Lord's Supper must always be on the gracious word of Christ—the word that gives assurance to hearts weighed down by guilt, doubt and fear that the great gifts promised here are truly given and received. The Commission says: “To...insert some personal idiosyncrasy into the consecration is to detract the people's attention from the Sacrament. The congregation's focus is to be on Christ's word and invitation. The celebrant is a servant to sharpen that focus” (TPLS, 15).

The Lord's Supper is intended to strengthen faith in God's forgiving grace, a faith which counts on the Word of Christ's promise that the bread and wine are His body and blood. To introduce doubts or uncertainty about the Sacrament negates this purpose. We can be thankful that God in His mercy has not given the Lord's Supper as the only “means of grace.” Instead, he showers us with His grace. The Gospel is not silenced, forgiveness is proclaimed, Baptism will be administered even in emergencies, and Baptism is lived out daily by means of repentance and the new life that God's Spirit enables us to live in any and all circumstances.

We also cannot support the suggestion that a pastor may consecrate elements with the elders or deacons, who would then administer them to members. The CTCR counseled against this practice on theological grounds in *Theology and Practice of the Lord's Supper*, pages 26–27 (see also page 13 which opposes distribution without the *verba*).² Moreover, given the clear guidance of medical and governing authorities regarding behavior that best minimizes the spread of infection, we note that this suggested practice introduces two potential opportunities for the transmission of Covid-19. The first is the interaction between the pastor and the elders/deacons. The second is the interaction of the individual elder or deacon with the communicant(s) in the home.

As great as the hardship is when we cannot receive Christ's body and blood, the hardship ought not be “resolved” in ways that promise an uncertain “sacrament” without the absolute assurance that Christ intends. It is better humbly and repentantly to ask the Lord for the regular administration of the Sacrament of the Altar to be restored to us, together with an end to the

without the Supper. Congregations without a pastor are often unable to receive the Lord's Supper in their services because supply pastors are unavailable—sometimes for lengthy time periods. And, in the early 20th century during the great influenza epidemic of 1918–1919, many Missouri Synod churches were not able to meet for any services during a period of time. We are not in uncharted territory.

Some unsatisfactory solutions to the unavailability of the Sacrament have been suggested at the present time. One is that a pastor speak the words of institution from the church during a streaming service while everyone communes at home. Another is to have the pastor consecrate elements in the presence of elders or deacons who would in turn administer them to members. While the hunger and thirst for the Lord's Supper that leads to such measures is both understandable and commendable, the solutions are nevertheless faulty.

A video streaming “consecration” with words spoken by the pastor remotely and communion elements in member homes is almost identical to an approach that the CTCR addressed in 2006¹ in which the Commission said:

1. The Lord's Supper was instituted by Jesus with words and actions spoken and carried out by him in the direct presence of his disciples (Matt. 26:26-28). Throughout history, the church has sought to be faithful to Christ's practice in this regard. Pastors speak the words of institution in the presence of the assembled congregation, thereby giving assurance that we are “doing this” as our Lord has instructed us to do (Luke 22:19). Whenever the actual words and actions of the celebrant in consecrating the elements are intentionally separated (by time, distance, or technological means) from the distribution and reception, no assurance can be given that our Lord's instructions are being heeded and that the body and blood of Christ are actually being given and received for the forgiveness of sins and the strengthening of faith (cf. fn. 15 of the CTCR's 1983 report *Theology and Practice of the Lord's Supper* [TPLS]).

Moreover, this approach turns the words spoken by the pastor from a proclamation into an incantation of sorts. This, too, was addressed by the CTCR:

2. This practice lends itself to the unscriptural notion that the body and blood of Christ in the Lord's Supper are present by virtue of the “incantation” of the pastor in some way, shape or form, rather than by the gracious power of Christ and his Word. “Concerning the consecration,” says the Formula of Concord, “we believe, teach, and confess that no man's work nor the recitation of the minister effect this presence of the body and blood of Christ in the Holy Supper, but it is to be ascribed solely and alone to the almighty power

¹ The CTCR responded to a question about DVD consecration. While there certainly are some dissimilarities between the question at that time and the present question about a video streaming consecration, the similarities are so strong that we are referencing the 2006 opinion extensively here. See CTCR, “Opinion on DVD Consecration (2006)” at <https://files.lcms.org/wl/?id=7ZiqCqGn3FiMMtQcbrfFOuPjfn9AoMQ>.

“deadly pestilence” that is killing thousands of souls who are precious to God, their Creator (see Ps. 91; Jonah 4:11).

In this uncertain time, let us encourage every baptized child of God to be fervent in seeking opportunities to hear the Word of God as it goes forth from written sermons, letters, websites, emails, streaming videos, and other means, to read the Word in their homes, to implore God to end this plague and preserve His church, and—as His royal priesthood—to “proclaim the excellencies of him who called us out of darkness into his marvelous light” (1 Peter 2:9).

In closing, we wish to echo the CTCR from 2006.

Finally, it is important to note that this response of the Commission is in no way intended to pass judgment on the motives of those involved. . . . The sole purpose of this response is to promote and encourage the proper practice of the Lord's Supper in faithfulness to the teaching and example of Christ, so that doubts and questions may be replaced by faith in Christ's gracious word, promise, and presence.

Rev. Dr. Lawrence R. Rast, Jr., Chairman of the CTCR
Rev. Dr. Joel D. Lehenbauer, Executive Director of the CTCR
Rev. Larry M. Vogel, Associate Executive Director of the CTCR
Endorsed by the CTCR (unanimously) on March 20, 2020

CTCR resources for further study:

“Opinion on DVD Consecration” (2006) at
<https://files.lcms.org/wl/?id=7ZiqCqGn3FiMMtQcbrfFOuPjfn9AoMQ>

The Royal Priesthood: Identity and Mission (2018) at
<https://files.lcms.org/wl/?id=sKchZQJlvrVVVAJ6JqTkymW2FuX9NOZQ>

Theology and Practice of the Lord's Supper (1983) at
<http://www.lcms.org/Document.fdoc?src=lc&id=421>

² CTCR (1983), <http://www.lcms.org/Document.fdoc?src=lc&id=421>.

One little word can fell him

Addendum to “Communion and Covid-19”

Ten reasons to question whether “online Communion” is “truly good, right and salutary”

ON MARCH 20, 2020, the CTCR unanimously endorsed “Communion and Covid-19” (CC19), an opinion on certain Holy Communion practices during the coronavirus pandemic. The opinion was drafted by the staff, in concurrence with the chairman of the Commission, at the request of the Synod president. While the opinion in its entirety met with widespread expressions of gratitude and agreement, some have also questioned it — particularly its recommendation against online, streaming services of Communion in which households consecrate with the pastor and then commune together alone.¹

An anonymous document has been circulated within the Synod titled “Communion in Homes During Times of Crisis: Scriptural and Confessional Principles” (CIH).² It is evidently written and/or endorsed by pastors who are now advocating and practicing online home Communion services in their congregations and who intend to continue the practice. The authors offer it “in the spirit of fraternal discussion and edification,” and in it they “share some of the Scriptural and Confessional principles that guided our decision-making.”³

CIH offers three statements or assertions to support the practice of online family Communion:

First, we believe that it is appropriate to celebrate the Lord's Supper, even while faithful participants may be in different physical locations, because the gifts offered in Christ's body and blood are not based on

our locations, but in wherever Christ has promised to be present.⁴

Second, we believe that it is appropriate for both pastor and people to speak the Words of Institution in the celebration of Communion because the words and gifts of Christ are given to the whole Church.⁵

Third, we believe that the promise and certainty of the Lord's Supper is not found in the mere recitation of a certain set of words. Nor is it found in the physical space in which a set of words is spoken. The promise and certainty of the Lord's Supper is found in Christ and Christ's Word alone.⁶

We appreciate the aforementioned purpose of the document, to engage in “fraternal discussion and edification.” In that same spirit, what follows are 10 reasons in support of the CTCR conclusion given in CC19, that Lutheran churches should refrain from online Communion services as described therein.

1. God's Word alone gives us everything we need for faith, life and salvation.

IT SHOULD BE CAUSE FOR THANKSGIVING that disagreement over this particular practice does not preclude agreement in important truths. First, both those who oppose and those who approve of the practice believe, teach and confess that the Sacrament of the Altar is the gift of Christ's very body and blood, “in and under the bread and wine, which we Christians are commanded by Christ's word to eat and drink” (LC Fifth Part, §8, KW 467).⁷ Second, both parties fully hold to the teaching that the forgiveness of sins is conveyed to those who commune in faith, believing Christ's words that the Sacrament is “given for you” and “shed for you

¹ CIH, 2.

² CIH, 3.

³ CIH, 5.

⁴ References to the Lutheran Confessions are from Robert Kolb and Timothy Wenger, eds., *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000), with the specific confession abbreviated, the section(s) indicated by § and the page in the volume following the abbreviation KW.

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Jesus' sake and God's gracious variety of forms by which it can be both heard and enacted — in baptismal washing, in the gathered meal of Christ's body and blood, in the declarations of grace and absolution, in the quiet reminders given by members of the royal priesthood to one another. Extravagant grace indeed!

Note also Luther's reference in the foregoing quotation to the preaching of forgiveness as “the proper function of the gospel.” Scripture's Word spoken is the foundation for every other means by which forgiveness is delivered to believers. The Word alone makes the “signs” efficacious and salvific. And the practices of Baptism, Communion, the power of the keys, and the words of “mutual conversation and consolation” of fellow believers with one another all have the common foundation of the Gospel and with it, the central benefit of the forgiveness of sins. For this reason, as highly as the Lutheran church has valued these sacred acts, we have also acknowledged that one who is unable to receive them, but does not scorn them, does not forego the precious gifts of forgiveness of sins, life and salvation. Even Baptism, which Lutherans have always performed in emergency circumstances, is not to be viewed legally as a requirement to be fulfilled to gain one's salvation.¹² Similarly, we do not doubt the salvation of our baptized infants and little children or prospective members who are yet to be catechized, even though they do not yet commune. Why? Because the Gospel Word, which is the power of God for salvation (Rom. 1:16) and gives us everything we need for faith, life and salvation, has been heard and believed.

CIH does not deny the power of the Word at work in the Lord's Supper. Rather, it says “we believe that the promise and certainty of the Lord's Supper is not found in the mere recitation of a certain set of words. Nor is it found in the physical space in which a set of words is spoken. The promise and certainty of the Lord's Supper is found in Christ and Christ's Word alone.” For this we give thanks. However, we do question some of the conclusions drawn from this valid assertion in CIH, as the following will show.

¹² LSCE question # 312, 295.

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2. It is the Lord's Supper, not our supper.

THE SACRAMENT OF THE ALTAR is not ours to do with it as we please. It is the Lord's Supper and He is the true “officiant” since it is He who acts in the Words of Institution — and who instructs us regarding the proper use of His Supper.

Our Lord Our Lord Jesus Christ, on the night when He was betrayed, took bread, and when He had given thanks, He broke it and gave it to the disciples and said: “Take, eat; this is My body, which is given for you. This do in remembrance of Me.”

In the same way also He took the cup after supper, and when He had given thanks, He gave it to them, saying, “Drink of it, all of you; this cup is the new testament in My blood, which is shed for you for the forgiveness of sins. This do as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.”¹³

In these words, He calls us (His disciples) to repeat His holy meal (Do *this*) in His remembrance. He tells us what to do (taking bread and the cup of wine), what we are eating and drinking (His body and blood) and what we receive with it (forgiveness). The synoptic Gospels reinforce one another in these essential facts while St. Paul's first epistle to the Corinthians corroborates them in the earliest church, showing both how they may be wrongly and rightly enacted.

Our confessions take care to show not merely that Lutheran churches have a semblance of the sacraments, but also the right use of them: “through God's grace our churches are now enlightened and supplied with the pure Word and right use of the sacraments” (SA Preface of Martin Luther §10, KW 299; emphasis added). This was especially true regarding the Sacrament of the Altar.

Early in the Reformation a chief point of controversy was the private Mass. In the Smalcald Articles Luther calls it a human invention, an unnecessary thing that can be omitted without sin or danger, something that distracts from reception in a “better and more blessed way ... according to Christ's institution,” a practice that has led to abuses, and a work by which individuals think they are reconciled to God, acquire forgiveness and merit grace, thereby distracting from the Lamb of God who alone takes away our sin.¹⁴

¹³ LSCE 28, 322.

¹⁴ See SA II, 2, §2-7, KW 302.

for the forgiveness of sins” (SC Sacrament of the Altar, §§5-6 and 9-10, KW 362-63). Third, and most importantly, both parties can join in the song and sentiment of “A Mighty Fortress” with its triumphant cry that, in the face of Satan and all his evil ways, “one little word can fell him” (LSB 656:3).

We rejoice that *all* of us can agree that God's Word alone (Holy Scripture) gives us the wisdom to address difficult and vexing theological problems, that God's Word alone (the Gospel) is the one thing needful (Luk 10:42) and “the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes” (Rom. 1:16),¹⁵ and that God's Word alone (Jesus) is “the way, and the truth, and the life” (Joh 14:6). We praise God for this. For this very reason, we endeavor here to “speak the truth in love” (Eph. 4:15) and to with brothers and sisters in Christ. This means at times speaking forthrightly, but always in a spirit of fraternal and collegial prayer, hope, and desire that God would grant us a spirit of unity on this and all other issues that threaten to divide us as a church body, and thereby hinder our witness to Christ.

Underlying the teachings about the Lord's Supper noted in the first paragraph is the confessional insistence on the trustworthiness and power of the Word of God. In the Small Catechism the reality of the bodily presence of Christ in the Sacrament's elements is substantiated by the *written Word of God*: “the holy evangelists, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, and St. Paul write thus,” says Luther before giving the Words of Institution. Then he adds that the benefits of the Lord's Supper are “the forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation,” which he again buttresses with the Word: “Eating and drinking certainly do not do it, but rather the words that are recorded” (SC Sacrament of the Altar, §4-8, KW 362-63). This is true also of Baptism. There, too, the power lies not in the element, but in the Word of God which is always trustworthy. It, too, forgives and saves “as the words and promise of God declare” (SC Sacrament of Holy Baptism, §5-6, KW 359). Water cannot do this, “but the Word of God, which is with and alongside the water, and faith, which trusts this Word of God in the water” can indeed do what it promises (SC Sacrament of Holy Baptism, §9-10, KW 359). And, what is true of both Baptism and the Lord's Supper is also true of the Office of the Keys. Our Synod catechism reminds us that Christ gives His church power

¹⁵ Scripture quotations are from the ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

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Luther then meets the final objection to His view — that the private Mass is a form of devotion:

If some want to justify their position by saying that they want to commune themselves for the sake of their own devotion, they cannot be taken seriously. For if they seriously desire to commune, then they do so with *certainty* and in the *best* way by using the sacrament administered according to Christ's institution.¹⁵

None of the above material is focused on the efficacy of the private Mass. “It is not a question of *can* one commune alone; rather, it is a question of *should* one commune alone.”¹⁶ Similarly, the CTCR's primary concern with online Communion is whether one can do it with certainty — whether it is a *right* use (“truly good, right and salutary”) of the Sacrament “according to Christ's institution.”

Concern over right use is clearly evident in the Formula of Concord. CIH quotes from the Formula's Epitome (VII, §8 and 9) to emphasize the necessity of the Words of Institution and that it is Christ's own words, not the minister's recitation, that effect the presence of Christ's body and blood in the elements.¹⁷ It states its agreement with the CTCR's CC19 in this, but then objects to the Commission's concern over “where these words must be spoken” as representing the CTCR's endorsement of an incantation: “We have difficulty understanding how an insistence that a certain set of words be spoken by a certain person in a certain space can be conceived of as anything other than the very definition of an incantation.”¹⁸ We object to this claim on the basis of the Formula of Concord itself. Lutherans have been concerned precisely with such things as who speaks the words of institution and the place of the speaking. To say otherwise would be to suggest, for example, that one could record the words of institution and play them (say, on one's cell phone) anywhere and anytime at all and still be fully confident that the Sacrament is being consecrated — after all, God's Word is always and everywhere powerful and efficacious! Such a view of the power of God's Word “wherever and however it is

¹⁵ SA II, 2, §8-9, KW 302. Emphasis added.

¹⁶ We are indebted to an unpublished paper written by Dr. Trevor Sutton (LCMS) for this quotation and the preceding line of thought. His paper is “Making Sense of Online Communion: A Certain and Best Celebration of the Lord's Supper,” dated January 17, 2020, available from the author.

¹⁷ CIH, 6.

¹⁸ CIH, 6-7.

“to forgive the sins of repentant sinners” by showing that very promise from *the Word of God*:

This is what St. John the Evangelist writes in chapter twenty: The Lord Jesus breathed on His disciples and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.” (Joh 20:22-23)¹⁹

All of this, of course, is simply a reminder of the Lutheran understanding of the Means of Grace, that is, the means that God uses to bestow His gracious gift of forgiveness and, with it, life and salvation. He does so by His Word. The Word is the foundational Means of Grace: “Faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ” (Rom. 10:17). The Spirit works through the word of Christ to create faith. This truth is the foundation of the Lutheran doctrine of justification and our understanding of salvation. The Word does it all! We confess with Luther:

Therefore everything in this Christian community is so ordered that everyone may daily obtain full forgiveness of sins through the Word and signs appointed to comfort and encourage our consciences as long as we live on earth.²⁰

The Word here is the Gospel, the promise that Christ Jesus is Lord, that we are justified by grace through faith in Christ, that in Him all sin is atoned and forgiveness is freely given. The Gospel empowers the “signs” — Baptism, the Supper and Absolution. All this is

because God is extravagantly rich in his grace: first, through the spoken word, in which the forgiveness of sins is preached to the whole world (which is the proper function of the gospel); second, through baptism; third, through the holy Sacrament of the Altar; fourth, through the power of the keys and also through the mutual conversation and consolation of brothers and sisters. Matthew 18:[20]: “Where two or three are gathered ...”²¹

Note first the reference to God's “extravagantly rich” grace. How grateful we are that the Gospel comes to us by various means. We have its voice even in these perilous times of quarantine. Its extravagance applies both to its full and total declaration that *all* sins are forgiven for

¹⁹ *Luther's Small Catechism* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1986) as it appears in *Luther's Small Catechism with Explanation* (St. Louis: Concordia, 2017), 27, 314. Abbreviated as LSCE.

²⁰ LC Creed, §54-55, KW 438.

²¹ SA III [4], KW 319.

spoken” (CIH, 7), with specific reference to the words of institution (CIH, 7), is detached from careful and serious attention to the scriptural context of the Lord's institution of His Supper and its grounding in a specific identifiable and locatable set of actions that, as our Lutheran Confessions teach, constitute “right use.” The Epitome certainly addresses this, saying, “God has and knows various ways to be present at a *certain place*” (FC Ep VII, §14, KW 505, emphasis added), including a specific and unique way to be present in the body and blood of Christ at specific places and times when the Supper is used and practiced according to Christ's institution. These are matters of *right use* — the *usus* or *actio* that the Formula of Concord Solid Declaration discusses:

In order to preserve this true Christian teaching on the Holy Supper and to avoid and eliminate many kinds of idolatrous abuses and perversions of this testament, this useful rule and guide is taken from the Words of Institution: nothing has the character of a sacrament apart from the use [*usus*] instituted by Christ or the divinely instituted action [*actio*]. (That is, when Christ's institution is not observed as he established it, there is no sacrament.) This rule dare not be rejected in any way, but it can and should be followed and preserved in the church of God with great benefit. The *usus* or *actio* (that is, the practice or administration) does not refer primarily to faith or to the oral partaking, but to the entire external, visible administration of the Supper, as Christ established the administration of the Supper: the consecration, or Words of Institution, and the distribution and reception or oral partaking of the consecrated bread and wine, Christ's body and blood. Apart from this practice it is not to be regarded as a sacrament — for example, when in the papistic Mass the bread is not distributed but is made into a sacrifice, or enclosed [in a tabernacle], or carried about in a procession, or displayed for adoration.²²

This is very much pertinent to this conversation about online Communion. The “useful rule and guide” offered here is that “when Christ's institution is not observed as he established it, there is no sacrament.” It has to do with “the entire external, visible administration of the Supper” and includes consecration, distribution and reception according to Christ's institution. CC19 is concerned with the “external, visible administration of the Supper” and nothing less.

²² FC SD VII, §§85-87, KW 607-8.

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3. Holy Communion is to be celebrated in community with God's gathered people.

WE EARLIER NOTED THAT CIH does not deny the power of the Word at work in the Lord's Supper. We also hope that the authors of CIH would not deny that the Sacrament of the Altar is intended by Christ for the gathered community — the congregation. Rather, CIH's central disagreements with CC19 seem to be due to its apparent understanding that (1) the CTCR opinion may be falsely asserting that the Sacrament is "bound" to a particular time and place²⁰ and (2) that the CTCR is wrong to question the propriety of online Communion which is jointly consecrated by the pastor and the household (or a designated worship leader in the household), and administered, presumably, by parents.²¹ We are less clear about whether CIH holds that the CTCR is itself denying the power of the Word of God, but that may be implied. This same implication may underlie CIH's references to the ongoing LCMS use of electronic means to proclaim the Gospel:

The history of our own Synod shows that we have made use of nearly every imaginable technological resource available to us — from radio to television to, now, online streaming — to share Christ's Word with our world. A faithful permutation of Christ's Word — whether this be in the form of a translation of the Scriptures, or in the form of an interpretation of these same Scriptures in a sermon, or in the form of an electronic proclamation of the Scriptures — does not blunt the force of Christ's Word. His Word is powerful and carries with it all of God's promises wherever and however it is spoken or, for that matter, written.²²

²⁰ CIH does not say this expressly but offering such a thesis in their rebuttal of CTCR's CC19 seems to imply or suggest it. In its introductory paragraph it indicates that the Sacrament can be provided in a home by quoting Luther and the institution of the Passover in Exodus 12. Luther is quoted from *The German Mass and Order of Service*, in Jaroslav Pelikan, Hilton C. Oswald, and Helmut T. Lehmann, eds. *Luther's Works*. Vol. 53. *Liturgy and Hymns*. (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1965), 63–64. Future references to *Luther's Works* will be abbreviated as LW with volume number and page (e.g., LW 53:63–64).

²¹ CIH 3–5 defends its practice against CTCR objections to it, asserting that the words of institution are portrayed in Scripture as a blessing by the whole people of God (p. 4), quoting Luther from *Concerning the Ministry* (LW 40:24–35), and arguing that the pastors engaged in the practice do so after inviting congregants to consecrate "with him" (p. 5) and to administer the Supper only to those who are properly prepared (pp. 5–6).

²² CIH, 7. We should note that previous efforts of the sort mentioned here did not produce division in the Synod. We are unaware of anyone

Let us simply state that we do not disagree in any way with CIH's position in this paragraph. The CTCR opinion certainly does not question the power of God's Word. Nor does it deny the validity of sharing the Word by electronic means, for such means are all perfectly consistent with the nature of the Word itself as a unique and foundational means of grace.

Indeed, the CTCR's opinion is grounded in its conviction about the power of the Gospel — as we have already indicated in reason one above. Our concern is with the right understanding and use of God's Word — specifically with reference to the Lord's Supper. Our questions flow from that and only that. On the one hand, is CIH unwittingly diminishing the power of the foundational means of grace — the Word of the Gospel — in its attempt to emphasize the importance of another means of grace, the Lord's Supper? On the other hand, is CIH fully engaging with what Scripture — the Word of God — teaches about the Lord's Supper and how it is conducted? We are largely in agreement with CIH's first assertion, that the Sacrament is not bound to a particular time and place and are not suggesting that one could not celebrate the Sacrament in any place but a church building. However, the arguments in CIH to defend the time and place they are advocating — communion in member family homes with the consecration and guidance of an online pastor — are unconvincing.

In the introductory portion of the CIH, the document quotes Luther and Exodus 12 as support for their invitation to their members to commune in their homes. The quotation of a single paragraph from Luther's *The German Mass and Order of Service*, stating that "a truly evangelical order" for "earnest" Christians who meet privately in a home, in no way supports the practice of online family Communion. Luther is envisioning (literally, imagining) an elite group of Christians under an ideal set of circumstances (certainly not an "emergency") whose meeting in a house is purely incidental. It is relevant to the pristine situation he is imagining only because a home is private and it is not open to others. This is not in any sense a prescription for family-by-family home Communion. Moreover, Luther never developed this idea, repeated it or implemented it ("as yet I neither can nor desire to begin such a congregation or assembly or to make rules for it," says Luther²³). Nor was it endorsed by

who held that when the Gospel was preached by radio it was perhaps invalid.

²³ LW 53:64.

confessional Lutherans.²⁴ Next, to quote the practice of the Passover, which was indeed a family meal, is not a convincing argument for the novel idea that the "new covenant" in our Lord's blood is also to be celebrated as a Sacrament by individuals and families at home.²⁵ Both the Last Supper and Corinthian practice show that the new Testament does not allow Old Testament Passover customs to dictate the practice of the Lord's Supper. Later CIH adds an additional Luther quote from *Concerning the Ministry* to suggest that Luther advocates home celebrations.

After the first of its three assertions, CIH suggests additional biblical, historical and confessional references for online family Communion. Under closer examination, they too fail to support CIH's contention. Neither Matthew 18:20 nor 28:20, nor their contexts, provide any support for any particular Communion practice, including family Communion. The Marburg debate, and for that matter, the later Calvinist view that Christ's body is only in heaven, also simply do not apply to this discussion. (The CTCR does not in any way deny the teachings of Article VIII of the Formula.) And, finally, CIH's quotation (on pages 2 and 3) from the Large Catechism, in which Luther says the "new Passover" is "bound to no place or appointed time," provides no more support for online Communion than did the earlier references in this section of CIH. An examination of the context shows that Luther's concern at this point of the Large Catechism is to urge people not to despise the Sacrament, but to commune more frequently and not to think of the Supper as "bound to a special time like the Passover" of the Old Testament.²⁶

The CTCR does have concerns about time and place, but they have to do exclusively with the matter of appropriate times and places — of "right use."²⁷ Any building, including a house, could be the right place for the Sacrament. Any place — an outdoor park or

²⁴ Why? It is, in truth, a bad idea in which a hierarchy of "earnest" Christians purposefully excludes "all sorts of people" not only from the Sacrament, but from the whole of the means of grace. One might question even this rather strange notion of "private" vs. "public" congregational worship — frankly, it is hard to know exactly what Luther had in mind here. (Even Luther could have had ideas on occasion!)

²⁵ See the next paragraph that shows that Luther actually condemns such a practice in the fifth part of the Large Catechism. A type of home Communion to celebrate Passover was the background for the CTCR's opinion on DVD consecration. See "Texas District President Request concerning DVD consecration" at files.lcms.org/wl?id=72aQcGn-3FAMRQ&w=FO&w=10aMQ.

²⁶ LC Sacrament of the Altar, §39–48, KW 470–72. He accuses the pope of having turned the Lord's Supper "back into a Jewish feast."

²⁷ SA, Preface of Martin Luther §10, KW 299.

cemetery (common settings for many Easter sunrise services) — could be the proper setting for celebrating the Sacrament. Any time, including 3 a.m. on a Tuesday could be the right time for the Sacrament. It is our common practice in the church to schedule services on the Lord's Day and on other occasions at *set times*. We schedule our celebrations at *set places* — places where the congregation can gather most easily. We do these things not because we believe the Sacrament is bound to be given only then and in those places, but because those times and places are the best times available for God's people to "assemble themselves together" for public worship (see *Heb. 10:25*).

The sole questions that concern us are how one can commune with *certainty* and in the *best way*.²⁸ Lutheran practice has never used its doctrinal assertion against Zwingli — that Christ is not bound by time and place but is able to be present bodily in many places — including in the Sacrament, when and where it is properly administered (FC SD VII, §9–15, KW 594–95; §88–103, KW 608–11; §119, KW 614; FC SD VIII, §92, KW 633–34) — as an argument for family Communion at home. Luther's occasional statements about offering the Lord's Supper in homes do not have "family communion" in view and are not reflective of Luther's more common view, nor of Lutheran practice. More significantly, they do not reflect or represent the positions of the Lutheran Confessions.

Therefore, it remains our opinion that the practice advocated in CIH is problematic in many ways. The Scripture speaks of the whole church (congregation) coming together. The Lord's own Communion with His disciples at the Last Supper was a gathering of the church, not a family. It was conducted in a borrowed room where all could gather. It was not a family meal at home. In Acts and the epistles, we read about breaking of bread together in homes (Acts 2:46) and about churches meeting in a member's house (Rom. 16:5; 1 Cor. 16:19; Col. 4:15; *Phm. 1:2*). But the mention of breaking bread in Acts 2:46 is connected with sharing food with thanksgiving, so it is by no means conclusive that it refers to Communion. But, even if this is Communion, the third person plural pronoun used both for temple gatherings and home gatherings implies that this is part of congregational, not familial, activity. Similarly, the many references to churches meeting in homes indicates that the homes in question were where congregations gathered, together with the apostles and/or those appointed

²⁸ SA, Second Article, §8–9, KW 302.

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to the task of "preaching the word of God" (Acts 6:2) and devoted to "prayer and the ministry of the word" (Acts 6:4). The fact that Communion occurred in these houses is evidence only of the vitality and adaptability of the church as assembly. It needs no dedicated structures, as much as that may be convenient and beneficial. It is a welcoming community of believers, marked less by earthly family ties than by the common confession of children of God from diverse backgrounds bound together by faith.

Finally, in 1 Corinthians, the apostle Paul writes specifically about the importance of the church's gatherings for the Sacrament (see 1 Cor. 10–14). In 1 Corinthians 11:20 and 33, Paul insists that the Corinthians reform their practice of the Lord's Supper, with part of that reform being that they not neglect the whole congregation by excluding some members of the body of Christ (in that case, the poor). Paul adds that the home is the place not for the church's Sacrament, but for eating (1 Cor. 11:34). Paul's approach in 1 Corinthians is thoroughly centered in the principle that the Sacrament is for the whole of the local congregation as it gathers.

4. Emergency Baptism? Yes. Emergency Communion? No.

AS WE HAVE NOTED, both Baptism and the Lord's Supper have much in common. Both are instituted by Christ and depend entirely on the Gospel Word that empowers them and that defines their benefit — that both bestow forgiveness, life and salvation.

Yet, the different Means of Grace are also unique. The written Word can be disseminated in a variety of forms, while always retaining its character of divine inspiration and truth and offering throughout its pages the Gospel of salvation (e.g., John 5:39; Acts 17:1–2, 10–11; Rom. 1:1–3; 2 Tim. 3:16). The spoken Word of the Gospel, proclaimed individually by countless members of the royal priesthood and preached from pulpits as well as scattered abroad ("broadcast") as far and wide as sound can be carried and without any restrictions on who would hear it, always retaining its character as the power of God for salvation (e.g., Matt. 13:3–9; Rom. 10:17; Luke 24:34). Baptism, administered always with water and always to a particular individual (even if thousands are baptized on the same day), retains its individual character as a means by which we receive discipleship, adoption, the Holy Spirit and new birth. And, in an emergency, any Christian baptizes (e.g., Matt. 3:11; 28:19; John 1:33; Acts

2:38–41; Rom. 6:3–4; Titus 3:5; 1 Peter 3:21).

So also, then, we receive the Lord's Supper as a unique means of grace. It is not received by meditative reading alone, like the written Word. It is not scattered abroad, like the spoken Word. Unlike Baptism, it is not administered to the isolated individual except for when the pastor, who is called by the assembled church, carries the Sacrament on behalf of the assembly to the sick member. We value the Sacrament highly, but we restrict its administration rather than sharing it freely, having those with doubts and questions, visitors from other confessions and even our own children wait until they can share our confession (1 Cor. 11:10), examine themselves and rightly discern Christ's body and blood. This is especially true in view of the sobering fact that the apostle's instructions for the right use of the Supper contain a unique warning that its misuse can actually be harmful to the uninstructed and unprepared communicant both physically and spiritually (1 Cor. 11:27–32; see below under #5). Each of the Means of Grace is rightly used in a manner appropriate to it.

The LCMS at its 2019 convention vigorously affirmed the importance of the royal priesthood and the high calling of royal priests at all times to share the Word in their vocations and to forgive sins in their relationships, as well as to baptize in emergencies. The Synod also strongly affirmed the complementary nature of the royal priesthood and the office of public ministry. The CTCR opinion is informed by these biblical values. However, as noted above, the Lord's Supper's uniqueness leads to its administration by one who is called and appointed publicly to exercise the kind of pastoral care that enables the communicant to be rightly prepared for the Sacrament and certain of the gift received therein. So, we again reaffirm that the Lutheran church has not viewed the Sacrament of the Altar as an "emergency sacrament," unlike Baptism or something any member of the royal priesthood can or should do, like proclaiming "the excellencies of him" who has called us "out of darkness into his marvelous light" (1 Peter 2:9).

Luther, for example, vigorously defended the propriety of the laity's engagement with the Word of God devotionally, the need for families to gather for the Word and prayer, for the royal priest's vocational proclamation and for Baptism in emergency situations. Indeed, he preferred a vigorous devotional life in the home over the acceptance of an unfaithful pastor. He addressed just such a problem — just such an emergency — in his letter to the Bohemians, *Concerning the Ministry*. Although for

Luther, "emergency knows no rule," he offered careful counsel to the Christians in Bohemia with these words:

For it would be safer and more wholesome for the father of the household to read the gospel and, since the universal custom and use allows it to the laity, to baptize those who are born in his home, and so to govern himself and his according to the doctrine of Christ, even if throughout life they did not dare or could not receive the Eucharist. For the Eucharist is not so necessary that salvation depends on it. The gospel and baptism are sufficient, since faith alone justifies and love alone lives rightly.²⁹

One can hardly accuse Luther of neglecting the importance of the Sacrament of the Altar, yet he rightly reminds us that it "is not so necessary that salvation depends on it." Unlike Baptism, the Lord's Supper is not an "emergency sacrament."³⁰

But what of the quote from Luther on page 4 in CIH?

There is no other Word of God than that which is given all Christians to proclaim. There is no other baptism than the one which any Christian can bestow. **There is no other remembrance of the Lord's Supper than that which any Christian can observe and which Christ has instituted.** (AE 40 34–35) [Emphasis in CIH.]

This, too, must be read in context. Luther is establishing the fact that the keys belong to the whole church and that, when no recognized (ordained) minister is to be found, the church may establish the ministry on its own, even without the approval of bishops, which was the situation in Bohemia.³¹

²⁹ *Concerning the Ministry*, LW 40:9.

³⁰ At no point does CIH refer to the Lord's Supper as an emergency sacrament. At the same time, however, the apparent rationale for offering the Lord's Supper in an online family setting is that "our current situation," that is, the Covid-19 crisis is leaving Christ's people "without the blessing of the Lord's Supper" (CIH, 1). We can only understand this to mean that the availability of the Lord's Supper is essential in the present medical emergency — that the emergency requires this innovative administration of the Eucharist.

³¹ CIH might have added quotations of Lutheran fathers from C. F. W. Walther's *Church and Office*. Walther provides the same Luther quote from *Concerning the Ministry*. He follows it with quotes from Johann Gallus, Tilemann Heshusius, and Johann Müller, to say that at times "ordinary Christians ... may proclaim the Gospel, remit sins, baptize, and administer the Lord's Supper." That might seem to cement CIH's position, but the ellipsis in the preceding sentence leaves out the all-important qualification "in such cases when no upright minister of the Church is to be had." Examples provided are groups of Christians stranded or imprisoned, who therefore appoint the most well-prepared man from among them to be their pastor. C. F. W. Walther, *The Church & the Office of the Ministry*, Kirche und Amt: The Voice of Our Church on the Question of Church and Office, J. T. Mueller, trans., Matthew

Lastly, we should remember that the frequency of the Lord's Supper has always been an adiaphoron. In many congregations of the LCMS the Sacrament is not offered on a weekly basis. In times past it has been offered monthly or even quarterly in Missouri Synod congregations, while preaching and baptisms continued weekly. While that is not by any means ideal, it indicates that the Sacrament of the Altar has and ought to be viewed from its own proper perspective, and that orthodox Lutherans have never viewed weekly access to the Lord's Supper as a *iure divino* command or practice or as essential to the survival of the church.

5. Responsible pastoral care is essential for the proper scriptural and confessional administration of the Lord's Supper.

FIRST CORINTHIANS NOT only emphasizes the gathered community, but it also shows that wrong practices may invalidate the Lord's Supper and that it may be received not as a means of grace but as a means of judgment. Note Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 11, where he says of the practice in Corinth, "It is not the Lord's Supper that you eat" (v. 20) and warns about the possibility of eating and drinking to one's judgment (v. 29). The potential for such judgment is directly related to the question of responsible pastoral care.

Responsible pastoral care is required for right use of the Lord's Supper. There can be no proper scriptural and confessional administration of the Lord's Supper without it. CIH recognizes this and states as much:

In the Divine Services that have been celebrated online among our Synodical congregations, a rightly called minister of the Gospel has presided over the Sacrament, inviting his congregants to speak the Words of Institution with him — not *instead* of him. Careful pastoral care and responsible pastoral oversight has been exercised as our pastors have called upon their people to follow the apostle Paul's guidance and heed his warning to the Corinthians:

Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself. (1 CORINTHIANS 11:28–29)

C. Harrison, ed. (St. Louis: Concordia, 2012), 271, 275–77, 282. The quotation is from Heshusius on 277.

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If a person has not been properly prepared to receive Christ's body and blood through repentance, discernment, and faith, or if they have been reluctant to receive the Sacrament in their home, they have been invited to receive a blessing instead.

Pastors who have led their congregants in the reception of Communion in their homes have taken extensive measures to be responsible to their vocations as "stewards of the mysteries of God" (1 CORINTHIANS 4:1) by exercising faithful pastoral care. We do not see any reason, therefore, why a congregation cannot join in saying Christ's words, which He has given to His whole Church, with its pastor.¹²

We commend the authors of CIH for the desire to offer pastoral care. As commendable as these efforts are, however, it seems to us, first of all, that this important matter is not treated adequately. The exercise of "careful pastoral care and responsive pastoral oversight" is difficult and challenging under normal circumstances — indeed, it is one of the most difficult and challenging tasks entrusted to undershepherds of the Good Shepherd. The possibility of exercising such "careful pastoral care and responsible pastoral oversight" seems questionable given the many different circumstances that would inevitably arise (many likely unknown to the pastor) in communion services held in scores or hundreds of homes. Secondly, the very nature of the pastoral care that is described and envisioned in the document is inadequate. Indeed, we believe it is impossible to carry out pastoral care in a *responsible* way in the online/home/family Communion endorsed by CIH. In the description as provided, the pastor delegates much of Communion practice to the household. Since the household provides the elements, what will they use if there is no bread or wine?¹³ Who is consecrating in this scenario in which everyone speaks together "with the pastor"? Is the pastor consecrating from afar? Or, is the family consecrating for themselves? Or, is this some sort of "co-consecration"? (As discussed above, the issue of proper consecration is no small matter to the Confessors.) And what of single individuals who

¹² CIH, 4-5.

¹³ Descriptions of online Communion in several congregations indicated that grape juice was commended as an alternative to wine. Actual reports from participants in Lutheran online services indicated that in certain cases other beverages in place of wine and other foods in place of bread have been employed. While the authors and supporters of CIH would hopefully frown on such an aberration, this demonstrates the difficulty of exercising pastoral oversight when there is no single meal but many individual meals in private homes.

live alone? Who consecrates in their setting? Are they to commune themselves, or should they refrain from the Sacrament?

Is the whole of pastoral oversight in such cases simply the verbal or written instruction from the pastor that whoever is leading the family communion service at home (assuming there is such a leader) should follow Paul's instructions in 1 Corinthians 11:28-29? In the case of blessing those who have "not been properly prepared," who is to determine what makes one unprepared? Those who are not instructed and prepared *should* be excluded, out of Christian love and concern. Will uncatechized children or family members be asked to refrain from the Sacrament — or will (unknown) "exceptions" be regularly granted? Will those who do not share the Synod's beliefs be excluded since they are not in agreement with the confession of this church? Are moms and dads at home to be expected (unfairly and unreasonably burdened) with "being the pastor" in these situations, which even for ordained and experienced pastors are some of the most difficult and sensitive pastoral care decisions to make? Who is presiding over all of this?

If this is a congregational Communion by virtue of the pastor's online presence, then what about nonmembers who log in to the service? Does this practice include those guests who should be welcomed to commune? Worthy and well-prepared guests should always be (and feel) welcome at a sister congregation. Is that done? Can it be done?

Lastly, in this case many worthy and well-prepared individuals, visitors as well as members, would be excluded by reason of conscience. CIH itself indicates this on page 5, which speaks of blessing those who are "reluctant to receive the sacrament in their home." Here CIH seems to recognize that their practice does create uncertainty and doubts — so much so that some will be reluctant to commune. Does that reluctance on the part of congregational members and others from the Synod trouble the pastors who endorse this practice? Isn't it problematic that many (most?) from their own church body — with whom they are in fellowship — could not conscientiously participate with them because this practice makes them uncertain that they would receive Christ's body and blood by these means? Is that truly responsible pastoral care? These are important and troubling questions.

We repeat the issue raised in CC19 — is there "any uncertainty being created regarding what is being received?" Some evidently believe there would be none,

but we strongly and respectfully disagree. Many could not participate in this practice in good conscience precisely because they are uncertain about the validity of the Sacrament when the witness of the Word of God about sacramental practice is seemingly ignored.

6. "I Want It All and I Want It Now": Discerning the influence of culture on our theology and practice.

PASTORS, BOTH THOSE who are part of the CTCR and others, are grateful for the level of supportive self-sacrifice among those they serve. Most of their members have graciously adjusted to the challenges we are facing in this time of Covid-19. Members have been more than understanding that pastoral care must be different temporarily — that there can be no visits to nursing homes or hospitals, that sermons and services must be offered online, that their family or individual times of Scripture and prayer have never been more important, that each member of the royal priesthood has both an opportunity and an obligation to reach out to other members by phone, email or notes.

Nearly everyone we serve recognizes that part of the adjustment we must temporarily make is that the Lord's Supper cannot be offered at all or that it can be given only in a highly restrictive manner.¹⁴ Here and there, however, pastors have had individuals strongly object to the suspension of public worship and to the "denial" of the Sacrament. It seems evident that CIH was not in any way motivated by objections to suspending public worship. We do wonder, however, if there is not some sense that without the Lord's Supper the church cannot survive. The authors declare: "Out of an abundance of concern for God's people, who *should not* be left bereft of this sacred gift, some pastors in our Synod have invited their congregants to partake of the Lord's Supper in their homes."¹⁵ The underlying concern here — the desire for God's people to receive His precious gifts — is highly commendable and we share it. But the phrase "who should not be left bereft of this sacred gift"

¹⁴ For example, in a few congregations Communion is offered by having separate families or individuals come on a set schedule to receive. This practice has not been considered by the CTCR. We should note, however, that it invites a disparity between those who are fearful or too vulnerable to come for the Sacrament and those that feel more confident about the practice. It potentially risks disease transmission from the pastor to communicants while it places the pastor (and therefore his spouse or family if he is married) at an even more significant risk of exposure.

¹⁵ CIH, 1, emphasis added.

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not required? Should every service be a Communion service? Have we substituted "Luther's emergency knows no rule" with "Emergency establishes the rules?" Further, since technology is so decisive in this practice, are we saying now that past teachers and positions no longer hold simply because technology and the desire for innovation supersedes them?

9. Walking Together: Does it even matter anymore?

Because "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" (LCMS Constitution Article VII), congregations are not bound by anything but the Word of God and need not follow even a convention resolution that is "inexpedient." We realize (and emphasize) that this does not apply to a doctrinal resolution based on God's Word (Bylaw 1.6.2.a), but at question in this case is a CTCR opinion, not a resolution of Synod, doctrinal or otherwise.

Some have asked whether CC19's opinion is binding on congregations or districts. It is not. The next question is no doubt this: If not, then is there any reason why congregations are not able to exercise their Christian freedom and make use of such means as streaming home Communion services with a clear conscience? Clearly, some will do so. That is explicitly stated in CIH:

We are left with a choice. On the one hand, we can cease celebrating the Lord's Supper during this pandemic because our Synod's Commission on Theology and Church Relations has issued an opinion that celebrating the Supper in homes while a pastor speaks Christ's words over an online stream while his congregation joins in is inappropriate — a practice that, in our own opinion, is nowhere forbidden by Scripture or the Confessions. On the other hand, while respectfully engaging with and listening to those who disagree with our position, we can continue celebrating the Lord's Supper so that God's people may receive with joy all that this meal promises and delivers, heeding Christ's clear command:

Do this in remembrance of Me. (LUKE 22:19)

For these reasons, after thoughtful contemplation and prayerful consideration, we humbly, confidently, and faithfully intend to continue to obey Christ's command to celebrate His Supper.

used in reference to the Lord's Supper gives us pause. To be without the Sacrament is a harsh burden for a believer. To be bereft of it is to be without a treasure our Lord intends for the church. Yet, it is not a treasure that is to be treated lightly. It is also not a treasure to be demanded.

"I Want It All and I Want It Now," Queen's classic rock song, is reflective of much of American culture. We are all, at our worst, a demanding people who believe we deserve (or at least need) all that we want. When we lack something, we often share the sentiment, if not the words, "I want it all, and I want it now." This is not the attitude for a Lutheran communicant. St. Paul soberly instructs us to examine ourselves before we eat of the bread and drink of the cup (1 Cor. 11:28). We ask, in all sincerity and Christian charity, whether one worthy question for self-examination in this context might be the following: is it possible that our God-pleasing *desire* for the Sacrament can become a less-than-God-pleasing *demand* for the Sacrament that is informed more by the spirit of our culture than by the Holy Spirit and His fruits of self-control, self-discipline, self-denial and self-sacrifice?

Think, for example, of the times when Judah and Israel were deprived of the presence of Yahweh at the temple. They longed for the courts of the Lord (Ps. 84), but God's own judgment meant that they could not rejoice in God's dwelling place or witness the atoning sacrifices offered there until God Himself relented and brought them back (see 2 Chron. 6:36-39). Still more trying was the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple (see Ps. 137). These judgments were harsh and the loss of the comfort of the temple a great burden, but God was working repentance and faith. His grace — the Word — was sufficient for His suffering people. It was in that very time that Israel was given the Word through the prophets Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Micah and others. The exile led to a new appreciation and reliance on the Word, the Scriptures and their teachings (see Ezra 8).

Our circumstances are different from Israel's, but not entirely dissimilar. We seek no earthly temple (John 4:21-21) and the sacrifices of Israel have been fulfilled in the atoning sacrifice of our Lord on Good Friday (1 John 2:1-2). But we should not deny that this deadly pestilence is a call to repentance (Luke 13:1-5) and a call to return to the Lord (John 2:13). We look to no hills (Ps. 121; John 4:20-21) and demand nothing from God, but we flee for refuge to His mercy (Ps. 30:10; Matt. 15:22; Luke 18:13).

It is indeed true that the CTCR opinion in this matter is not binding. It is also true that during these trying times we ought to be especially generous toward one another and with those with whom we disagree. For these reasons, we want to repeat that our concern is offered in a desire to foster discussion and prayerful consideration. We are members together in the Synod and on that basis are prayerfully asking that those who read and contemplate this document not take a step that is already dividing us simply by being proposed. It will divide us even more if it is implemented and no doubt provoke dissension and controversy that will reach beyond this present health crisis. We ask that all concerned act in a way that reflects the concerns we have raised in love for LCMS pastors and church workers and for all of Christ's holy people in our Synod.

10. A final word: The purpose of this precious Sacrament is to create faith, not raise doubts.

We recognize in the authors of CIH the deep desire, expressed so clearly, to minister faithfully to their flocks. We appreciate and share the high value they place on the Lord's Supper. We rejoice in our fellowship together in the LCMS. It grieves us to write these pages. We do not offer these thoughts to fellow pastors as their "ecclesiastical supervisors" for that is not the calling of the CTCR or its staff. Our intention is to speak to one another as peers. We speak as representatives of both seminaries, fellow ministers and brothers and sisters in Christ in the royal priesthood. We speak out of deep, conscientious concern over a practice that we cannot endorse and that we fear may produce division (and, sadly, already has). We speak on behalf of the many in our Synod who could not participate in good conscience in this practice — as pastors, congregations or communicants. Their participation would be impossible because they could not commune in good faith. Rather than such Communion strengthening their faith, it would do the opposite and raise doubts.

We are not able to say with certainty that this would be an invalid Sacrament, but that is precisely the problem: we cannot be confident of it either. We would instead be troubled with the question whether this manner of communing is according to Christ's institution, as these 10 reasons attest. We seriously and sincerely wonder whether (in the language of the Formula) "the entire external, visible administration of the Supper" is

Christians throughout history have suffered similar times during which the Means of Grace were limited. The church in China survived Maoist oppression meeting in homes for five decades, often without a Bible, on the power of remembered words of Scripture. Our great-grandparents in the Missouri Synod survived the three-year trial of the influenza epidemic from 1917-1919, often going months without any public worship (including the Sacrament).

As we await His mercy on us, our country and our world at this time, we may all be bereft of the Sacrament for a time, but we will not lack God's Word. It will not be bound. Its Gospel is proclaimed and it will sustain us. And through it all, by God's grace, may our appreciation of and longing for the precious Sacrament of the Altar grow.

7. "Online Communion" has questionable roots.

The practice of Communion via online means did not arise with Covid-19. Trevor Sutton points out that it has been practiced for some time by evangelical churches. Its purpose in those circles has been to offer a way to gather wider audiences than Communion within even very large sanctuaries would allow. It is part of what Tim Hutchings calls *Creating Church Online*.¹⁶ By having online Communion, the megachurch — or any church for that matter — is able to claim more members — members who can get anything a local church would offer.

The notion of an "online church" may have some immediate appeal, especially during this time. Some might say that is what every church with services or sermons available online is doing. We do not believe that is accurate. The many steps congregations are taking to proclaim the Word are often adapting to this emergency alone. Others have been using the internet as a regular part of their ministry. Electronic means of communication are a worthy and time-tested aspect of a church's ministry — but they are not an adequate approach to "creating church."¹⁷ The church is the *body* of Christ. It is physical people who hold to Christ in faith. The church is both catholic — scattered throughout the world — and local, and locatable, gathered physically in particular

¹⁶ We are again indebted to Sutton, who documents these sources. Tim Hutchings, *Creating Church Online: Ritual, Community, and New Media* (New York: Routledge, 2017).

¹⁷ The CTCR addressed the topic of social media, a significant form of electronic communication, *A Snapshot of Trending Tools* (2019), *files.lcms.org/wl/?id=ntp6cGZ6gk4AAtFGHAR75foWp2L*.

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indeed "as Christ established the administration of the Supper" (FC SD VII, §86, KW 608). With such serious doubts we ourselves would be unprepared to commune worthily in this manner, just as, evidently, are those other individuals who are "reluctant to receive the Sacrament in their home" (CIH, 5).

*God's Word forever shall abide,
No thanks to foes, who fear it;
For God Himself fights by our side
With weapons of the Spirit.
Were they to take our house,
Goods, honor, child, or spouse,
Though life be wrenched away,
They cannot win the day:
The Kingdom's ours forever!
(LSB 657:4)*

The Commission on Theology
and Church Relations
Holy Week 2020



Summary of “One little word can fell him”

Ten reasons to question whether “online Communion” is “truly good, right and salutary”

THE CTCR DOCUMENT, “Communion and Covid-19” (CC19), offers an opinion on Holy Communion practices during the coronavirus pandemic. Reactions have been both positive and negative. An anonymous reaction, “Communion in Homes During Times of Crisis: Scriptural and Confessional Principles” (CIH), has circulated within the Synod. CIH offers three reasons supporting the practice of online family Communion: (1) The validity of the Lord’s Supper is not based on our location, but wherever Christ promises to be present; (2) It is appropriate for both pastor and people to speak the Words of Institution Holy Communion since the gifts of Christ are given to the whole Church; (3) The certainty of the Lord’s Supper is not found in mere recitation of Christ’s words or in the location where the words are spoken, but in *Christ and Christ’s Word alone*. The authors of CIH wish to engage in “fraternal discussion.” In that same spirit, we are offering 10 reasons in the accompanying opinion to support the conclusion of CC19, that LCMS churches should refrain from online home Communion. This summary identifies points of agreement and apparent disagreement on the practice of online home Communion. The full document gives the rationale for the CTCR’s concerns.

1. God’s Word alone gives us everything we need for faith, life and salvation.

- We are agreed that the Lord’s Supper is Christ’s body and blood and conveys forgiveness of sins together with life and salvation, and that the Word of Christ alone ensures the Sacrament’s validity, not the particular time or place where it is offered.
- We disagree with certain conclusions drawn from this valid assertion by the author(s) of CIH (see 2–10 below).

2. It is the Lord’s Supper, not our supper.

- We are agreed that the Lord’s Supper is given by our Lord Jesus Christ and that we “do this” according to His command and promise.

- The question that divides us is whether online family Communion is a right use of the Sacrament according to Christ’s institution, and (therefore) whether it can be done with certainty and full assurance of our Lord’s own approval and blessing.

3. Holy Communion is to be celebrated in community with God’s gathered people.

- We agree that the gifts offered in and through Christ’s body and blood are intended for all members of His church and that Holy Communion is not bound to any set time or place.
- The matter that divides us is the significance of the New Testament’s portrayal of the Sacrament as a gathering of the church community, not a family group, and (therefore) whether it is a proper and acceptable practice for individuals and/or families to observe Holy Communion by means of a streaming video (as CIH advocates and encourages) rather than in a congregational (communal and churchly) setting.

4. Emergency Baptism? Yes. Emergency Communion? No.

- We are agreed that Baptism is to be administered even in an emergency, whether or not a pastor is present to baptize the person in need.
- We are divided over the question of whether the kind of situation we are facing in this epidemic means that the Lord’s Supper can and should be offered as an “emergency sacrament” by means of the unprecedented practice of online family Communion.

5. Responsible pastoral care is essential for the proper scriptural and confessional administration of the Lord’s Supper.

- We agree that responsible pastoral care is necessary for right use of the Lord’s Supper.
- We disagree whether such oversight is actually and/or fully possible in the varied circumstances that inevitably exist in online family Communion, many of which would almost certainly be unknown to the pastor. We ask: How can one oversee what one cannot see?

6. “I Want It All and I Want It Now”: Discerning the influence of culture on our theology and practice

- We think that all would agree that American culture can influence theology and practice both positively and negatively, and that Americans often assume that — if at all possible — their desires and perceived needs should be met according to their own timing.
- The CTCR is concerned with the possibility that our God-pleasing *desire* for the Sacrament can become a less-than-God-pleasing *demand* for it, which may stem from or result in an unwillingness to bear a temporary cross of deprivation and self-denial (as Israel suffered during its exile from the temple and previous generations suffered when they could not receive the Sacrament — in some cases, for an extended period of time).

7. “Online Communion” has questionable roots.

- We are agreed that creative and innovative methods of delivering God’s Gospel gifts (when in conformity with God’s Word and will) can be and often are good, right and salutary.
- We disagree on the question of whether this particular practice is an appropriate and beneficial innovation and are concerned that it is more informed by the theology and practice of evangelicalism (where the practice first originated) than by Lutheran theology and practice.

8. Novel practices often establish dangerous precedents.

- We agree that exceptional practices should not become the rule, as evidenced by the fact that many practitioners of online family Communion have indicated that this is an “emergency” measure and should be discontinued after the Covid crisis is over.
- The CTCR is concerned that since “online family Communion” has been endorsed as an appropriate Communion practice now, it may be accepted and employed in the future (even in non-emergency situations) as an alternate method of Communion — especially since many of the reasons given to justify it pertain to more than just “emergency” situations.

9. Walking Together: Does it even matter anymore?

- We acknowledge that the Synod has not addressed this matter in a doctrinal resolution in convention and that the CTCR opinion on online communion (CC19) is not binding in any formal or official sense.
- We disagree on the necessity or importance of seeking consensus as a Synod before introducing and engaging in a novel and potentially divisive practice such as this.

10. A final word: The purpose of this precious Sacrament is to create faith, not raise doubts.

- We are agreed that the Lord’s Supper is given to strengthen faith.
- We disagree whether the unprecedented and extraordinary practice of online family Communion can be done with certainty and (therefore) whether it serves the primary purpose for which Christ instituted His Supper: to strengthen faith, not create doubt.

On the Historical, Biblical, and Confessional Basis of Article VI of the Constitution of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

In 2010, the convention of the LCMS adopted Resolution 8-30B “To Study Article VI of Synod’s Constitution” which states in its first resolve: “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 and the current and historical bylaws that elucidate the article; . . .”¹

This report does not deal with the entire Article VI, but focuses on Article VI, 2. As such, it seeks to make a contribution to the larger question of what the whole of Article VI means within its original historical context and as it applies to the many questions generated by the culture in which we seek to carry out the mission of our Lord today. In the following pages we will begin with a historical section in order to understand the language used in Article VI, 2 at the time when the Constitution of the Missouri Synod was first drafted and used, with particular attention given to the terms “unionism and syncretism” as they were then understood. Next, we will look at the biblical background for the Synod’s concerns about unionism and syncretism. A third section will examine the confessional basis for that concern.

We realize some may question the order of our three sections, wondering why we do not begin with the biblical basis and then move to the Confessions before concluding with the historical section. Only by beginning with the historical background can we understand the wording that is used in the Synod’s Constitution. Only after we know what we are talking about can we seek direction from Scripture and the Confessions.

The Historical Basis

A. The wording—English and German

Article VI, 2 of the Constitution of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod reads:

Conditions for acquiring and holding membership in the Synod are the following:

2. Renunciation of unionism and syncretism of every description, such as:
 - a. Serving congregations of mixed confessions, as such, by ministers of the church;²

¹ The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS), *2010 Convention Proceedings*, 169. (See Appendix 1, attached.)
² This is the only point that was explained in the article “Synodalverfassung”, *Der Lutheraner* III (1846-47), 2-6. On page 3, an annotation, to art. II, 3 “Das Bedienen gemischter Gemeinden als solcher” says: “These are therefore such [congregations], which consist of Lutherans and Reformed or so-called Evangelicals (united protestants) and are served not rarely by so-called Lutheran preachers, who then naturally have to be of a double kind, i.e. they have to be Lutheran to the Lutherans and Reformed to the Reformed.” “Das sind also solche, die aus Lutheranern und Reformierten oder sogenannten Evangelischen (Unierten Protestanten) zusammengesetzt sind und nicht selten von

LCMS are, we have to look at the use of the words at the time of origin of the document. The meaning of a word or phrase must always be determined in connection with its actual usage. Because words often change meaning over time, it is important to consider a word’s usage both diachronically (over a long expanse of time) and synchronically (focusing on the period of time in which a particular use of the word occurs). To confirm that an accurate understanding of the word in question has been reached, it is important to compare a particular use of the word with other uses of the same word by the same author whenever possible. Thus, when we ask what “unionism” and “syncretism” mean in the constitution of the LCMS, we need to examine the way these words were used by the authors of the constitution at the time when the constitution was being framed. To allow for the possibility that the meaning of these words was changing or had changed in the decades surrounding the drafting and adoption of the constitution, we will consider the use of these words in two periods:

We will first consider the use of these words before 1847 when the Missouri Synod Constitution came into being. Second, we will consider their usage after 1847 until the death of the generation that originated the document. For practical reasons this date will be 1887, the year C.F.W. Walther died.

C. The use of the terms “unionism” and “syncretism” until 1847

Under the heading “*Religionsmengerei*,” *Der Lutheraner* quoted Luther in 1844.³ Luther states:

Whoever regards his doctrine, faith, and confession as true, right, and certain cannot stand in one stall with others who teach false doctrine or are agreeable to it, nor can he continue to speak sweet words to the devil and his followers. A teacher who is silent over against error and nevertheless pretends to be a true teacher is worse than an outspoken fanatic [*ein öffentlicher Schwärmer*] and by his hypocrisy does greater harm than a heretic; so that no one should put confidence in him.

Thus, in the context of *Der Lutheraner* in 1844, *Religionsmengerei* means not only being together in one church without doctrinal agreement—or as Luther calls it in his colorful language, “standing in one stall together”—but also being silent in the face of false doctrine.

The union between Lutherans and Reformed without doctrinal agreement was not only an issue in Germany, but also in the USA with the *Evangelische Kirchenvereine des Westens*.⁴ In an article

³ *Der Lutheraner* I (1844/45), no. 7, p. 28. The quote is from Walch XVII, 1477. Walther uses it also in *Kirche und Amt* (3rd ed., 117-118; *Church and Office*, 110). It is from the report of the last conversation Georg Major had with Luther before he departed for the colloquy in Regensburg in January 1546 and is found in WA.BR 12, no. 4298, p. 362,20-33 (this is overlooked in *Church and Office*, p. 470). The English translation quoted is from *Church and Office*, 110.

⁴ The *Evangelischer Kirchenverein des Westens* was founded in 1840 in Gravois Settlement (now Mehlville), Missouri. It was from the beginning a denomination that united Lutherans and Reformed. Cf. Albert Schory, *Geschichte der deutschen evangelischen Synode von Nord-Amerika* (St. Charles, Mo: Verlag der Deutschen Evangelischen Synode von Nord-Amerika, 1889) and Carl E. Schneider, *The German Church on the American Frontier: A Study in the Rise of Religion among the Germans of the West Based on the History of the Evangelischer Kirchenverein des Westens (Evangelical Church Society of the West) 1840-1866* (St. Louis: Eden Theological Seminary, 1939). There were, though, also older union congregations in the east: “Mixed German communities of Lutherans and Reformed often lacked the resources to maintain separate church buildings and schools, and

- b. Taking part in the services and sacramental rites of heterodox congregations or of congregations of mixed confession;
- c. Participating in heterodox tract and missionary activities.³

What is meant by “renunciation of unionism and syncretism of every description?” The article itself names some instances of it, but it does not define the key terms “renunciation,” “unionism,” and “syncretism.” Renunciation (*Lossagung*), the common feature of sub-points a-c, seems to mean refraining from an activity and a declaration of intent to refrain from such activities.

The original German of the constitution reads:

Cap. II. Bedingungen, unter welchen der Anschluß an die Synode stattfinden und die Gemeinschaft mit derselben fort dauern kann.

§ 1. Das Bekenntnis zu der heiligen Schrift A. u. N. Testaments, als dem geschriebenen Worte Gottes und der einzigen Regel und Richtschnur des Glaubens und Lebens.

§ 2. Annahme der sämtlichen symbolischen Bücher der ev. luth. Kirche (als das sind: die drei ökumenischen Symbole, die ungeänderte Augsburgische Konfession, deren Apologie, die schalkaldischen Artikel, der große und kleine Katechismus Lutheri und die Konkordienformel,) als der reinen und ungefälschten Erklärung und Darlegung des göttlichen Wortes.

§ 3. Lossagung von aller Kirchen- und Glaubensmengerei, als da ist: Das Bedienen gemischter Gemeinden, als solcher, von Seiten der Diener der Kirche; Theilnahme an dem Gottesdienst und den Sacramentshandlungen falschgläubiger und gemischter Gemeinden, Theilnahme an allem falschgläubigen Traktaten= und Missionswesen, u.s.w.⁴

“Lossagung von aller Kirchen- und Glaubensmengerei” is the original German for “renunciation of unionism and syncretism of every description.” Thus, unionism translates *Kirchenmengerei*, the “mixing of churches” and syncretism translates *Glaubensmengerei*, the “mixing of faith”. The use of these Germanic words instead of the terms of Latin or Greek origin like *Unionismus* and *Synkretismus* is probably due to the desire to avoid words of Latin or Greek origin, though at least “Union” was used frequently in *Der Lutheraner*, the journal that became the official organ of the LCMS.

B. Some hermeneutical considerations

A general principle for the meaning of a word or a phrase is that the use defines the meaning. Thus, when we ask what the meanings of unionism and syncretism in the constitution of the

sogenannten lutherischen Predigern bedient werden, die also dann natürlich doppelartig, d.i. den Lutheranern lutherisch und den Reformierten reformiert sein müssen.”

³ 2016 Handbook. Constitution, Bylaws, Articles of Incorporation. St. Louis, Mo: The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, (May 2017 edition), 13.

⁴ Gerhard Bode, *Commission on Constitutional Matters: Historical Background and Interpretation of Article VI.1 of the Constitution of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod*, Draft January 2012, 4.

on this church body, its constitution is criticized as a part of the union movement as it was found in several churches in Germany, which was not based on doctrinal unity.⁵ The word *Unionismus*, though, is not used. It is, nevertheless, important for our context, since the fight against unionism by the Saxon Lutherans and later by the LCMS is not simply a relic of a historical trauma in Germany, but the union was an existing threat to the Lutheran Church in North America.

In 1845, *Der Lutheraner* reprinted an article from *Lutherische Kirchenzeitung* “What are the Principles for the Formation of Orthodox Synods of the Lutheran Church in these Lands?”⁶ Here the words “*Unirerei*” and “*Kirchenmengerei*” are used. Examples of this in the practice of the General Synod are the lack of confessional subscription, the use of Reformed and Union formulas at the distribution of the Lord’s Supper and the administration of the Lord’s Supper to Reformed and *Evangelische*, i.e. members of the union church.

An article that W. Sihler wrote about the seminary in Fort Wayne mentions that the purpose of the school is to educate pastors who will have no part in the “antiscipitral church-mixing (*Kirchenmengerei*) and unionism (*Unionisterei*)” which one finds in many Lutheran churches and congregations, either in their confession or in their practice.⁷ With regard to confession, he states that in many congregations of the General Synod the doctrine of the sacraments is Reformed. Regarding practice, church-mixing and unionism are seen in Methodist practices and in having pastors serve Lutheran and Reformed congregations. The opposite of such church-mixing and unionism is a union that has “the same faith, confession and doctrine in all articles.”

D. The use of the terms “unionism” and “syncretism” till 1887

sometimes formed ‘union’ congregations, in which separate Lutheran and Reformed congregations would share a common building and sometimes even a common pastor for discernable periods of time.” Mark Granquist, *Lutherans in America. A New History*. (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2015), 55.

⁷ „Die evangelische Kirche in Nord-Amerika“, *Der Lutheraner* I (1844/45), 42-44; 45-47; 50-52; 56.

⁸ “Was sind die leitenden Grundsätze zur Bildung rechtgläubiger Synoden der luth. Kirche in hiesigen Landen” (reprinted from the *lutherische Kirchenzeitung*). *Der Lutheraner* 2 (1845/46), 29-30, 33-34, 55-56. - P. 29:

“Wiederum ein Theil dieser Synoden [sc. der General-synode] bekennet sich zwar äußerlich zu stämmlichen Symbolen der lutherischen Kirche, verpflichtet aber sich nicht auf sie als feste Ordnung bei Ertheilung der Ordination, hält eine reformirte und unirte Formel bei der Austheilung des heil. Abendmahls fest, bedient hie und da auch Reformirte und Evangelische mit dem heil. Abendmahl und fördert also die schändliche Unirerei und Kirchenmengerei unserer Tage.”

⁹ W. Sihler, “Das lutherische Seminar zu Fort Wayne” *Der Lutheraner* 3 (1846/47), 29-31, “1.) die da halten an dem Vorbilde der heilsamen Lehre und bleiben in dem, was ihnen vertraut ist, wie die rechtgläubige Kirche, dormalen lutherisch genannt, auf Grund des göttlichen Wortes von Anbeginn glaubt, bekennet und lehrt;

2.) die demgemäß nichts zu schaffen haben mit der schriftwidrigen Kirchenmengerei und falschen Unionisterei unserer Tage, in welcher leider auch hier zu Lande entweder im Bekenntniß und Praxis, oder doch in letzterer die meisten sogenannten lutherischen Synoden und Gemeinde verflochten sind, [Footnote: Es ist eine ganz bekannte Thatsache, daß die sogenannte luther. General-Synode z. B. in der Lehre von den heil. Sakramenten durchaus reformirt und in der kirchlichen Praxis vielfältig methodistisch ist; daß ferner z. B. Glieder der luth. Synoden von Ohio und Michigan gemischte Gemeinde, als solche bedienet; und also z. B. bei der Verwaltung des heil. Abendmahls den Lutheranern lutherisch und den Reformierten reformirt sind.] sondern die vielmehr kämpfen ob dem Glauben der einmal den Heiligen vorgegeben ist, und keine andere Einigung begehren und eingehen, als die da ist in einerlei Glauben, Bekenntniß und Lehre in allen Artikeln der uns von Gott in seinem Worte überlieferten Wahrheit zur Seligkeit”.

C.F.W. Walther died in 1887. We may take that date as the end of the era of the Missouri Synod's founding generation. Therefore, the years 1847-1887 are taken as the context in which the meaning of unionism and syncretism in the constitution of the LCMS can be understood.

In *Der Lutheraner* in 1847, there is a note, “*Zeugniß wider die Religionsmenger*” (“Testimony against the mixers of religion”).¹⁰ In this quote from Cyriacus Spangenberg, the point is the critique of those teachers that invent compromise formulas and gloss over differences. Here, *Religionsmengerei* is not necessarily a church union, but rather an *indifferent* attitude concerning doctrine.

The news section of *Der Lutheraner* in 1866 includes a little article titled “*Religionsmengerei*” whose author is “W[alther].”¹¹ It tells the story of a Reformed pastor who participated in a camp meeting (revivalistic service) of the so-called *Albrechtsleute*. His congregation then asked him to repent of this, and when he refused to do so they deposed him. Walther comments:

We can only praise the reformed congregation, that it does not want to be served by a preacher in the future, who, by his participation in the service (*gottesdienstlichen Übungen*) of the enthusiastic evangelicals made it be known that he is a weathervane who neither holds up the Reformed, nor the “evangelical” faith seriously as pure and correct. For, if he held the “evangelical” faith as pure and correct, he would not have wanted to be a servant of the Reformed church. And would he have held the Reformed faith as pure and correct, he would not have participated in the religious exercises of the “evangelicals.” Such mixing of religions (*Religionsmengerei*) is worse than the strictest insistence on error, because one thinks it to be true. For if an honest man, who is sincere in his error, is convinced by the truth, he will accept it. A unionist and mixer of religions (*Religionsmenger*) though, views truth and error as things indifferent. He may choose one or the other. He is not serious with either. External churchly union when faith is different is the grave of love of truth.¹²

¹⁰ *Der Lutheraner* 4 (1847/48), no. 7, 56: “Cyriacus Spangenberg schrieb in seinem Buch von der geistlichen Haushaltung und Ritterschaft Dr. M. Luthers Folgendes: Die Lehrer sind nicht einer tauben Haselnuß werth, die sich mit allen Secten, Rotten und Verführern vergleichen können, neue Form und Reden, der Schrift unbekannt, erdenken, amnestias (Generalpardon) für alle Ketzer) ausrufen, die Irrthümer vertilchen, verschleiern, glossiren und declariren, damit sie ja nicht wider dieselben streiten und der Welt Ungunst Mühe und Arbeit auf sich laden dürfen. Ein solcher Wendehut ist Dr. Luther nicht gewesen, sondern hat schwarz schwarz, und weiß weiß genennet, und keinen Irrthum in der Lehre unangefochten gelassen.”

¹¹ “*Religionsmengerei*,” *Der Lutheraner* 23 (1866/67), no. 1, p. 7

¹² Wir können die reformierte Gemeinde nur loben, daß sie nicht von einem Prediger ferner bedient sein wollte welcher durch seine Theilnahme an dne gottesdienstlichen Übungen der schwärmerischen Evangelischen zu erkennen gab, daß er ein Wetterhahn sei, der weden den reformierten, noch den „Evangelischen“ Glauben mit Ernst für rein und richtig halte; denn hielte er den „Evangelischen“ Glauben für rein und richtig, so würde er nicht fernem haben ein Diner der reformierten Kirche sein wollen, und hielte er den reformierten Glauben für rein und richtig, so würde er nicht an den religiösen Übungen der „Evangelischen“ sich theilgeligt haben. Solche Religionsmengerei ist ärger, als das härteste Bestehen auf einem Irrthum, weil man denselben für Wahrheit hält. Denn wird ein ehrlicher Mann, der es mit seinem Irrthum ernst mein, von der Wahrheit überzeugt, so nimmt er dieselbe an; ein Unionist und Religionsmenger aber achtet Wahrheit und Irrthum für gleichgültige Dinge. Er mag sich für das eine oder andere entscheiden, so ist es ihm mit keinem von beiden ein wahrer Ernst. Äußere kirchliche Union bei verschiedenem Glauben ist das Grab der Wahrheitsliebe.“

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would not only enter into the fellowship of false faith, but would put the divine seal of approval on false confession by distributing the Lord's Supper to those who hold it.

In § 17, Annotation 5, Walther quotes Balduin (*Tract. De cas. Cons. II, 12, 17, p. 464f*) on the question, if one may receive the Lord's Supper if one of the pastors is orthodox, the other a Calvinist. Balduin says, that one should not participate in such a mixing of religion (*Religionsmengerei*).¹⁶ Thus, the term *Religionsmengerei* here is used for the reception of the Lord's Supper in a congregation that is not orthodox in its practice.

The topic was also discussed in the doctrinal essays of district conventions of the LCMS. Two examples are the Wisconsin District in 1883 and the Canada District in 1885.

The doctrinal essay in the Wisconsin District in 1883 was a continuation of a series of theses on the topic “What are the properties of a well-founded truly Lutheran congregation, for which therefore Lutheran Preachers with their congregations have to strive for as their goal?” Thesis XII, on which Pastor J. Strasen presented, stated: “It (a well-founded truly Lutheran congregation) avoids all mixing of religion (*Religionsmengerei*) as something that is against God.”¹⁷ The definition for mixing of religion in this essay is as follows: “By mixing of religions one understands, in short, the mixing of truth and untruth; the enterprise, to connect pure and false doctrine or to let them coexist in a so-called peace. Such mixing of religion is something well known nowadays and is, unfortunately, practiced all too often, not only by those who live in the so-called union, but even by many who want to be regarded as faithful Lutherans.”¹⁸ How do Lutherans practice mixing of religions? By tolerating false doctrine in their fellowship; by allowing Reformed preachers to be guest preachers and admit non-Lutherans to the Lord's Supper; by allowing their preachers to officially participate in the services of other denominations or by not exercising church discipline against congregations and pastors who do these things.¹⁹

The doctrinal essay on “Pulpit Fellowship with False Believers (*Falschglaubigen*)” at the convention of the Canada District in 1885, states in thesis IV: “By pulpit fellowship [sc. with false believers] one not only shares in hypocrisy, but also in mixing of faith and churches

Here, “*Religionsmengerei*” refers to a pastor's participation in a service of a different denomination, indicating that the term is wider than the organizational union between Christians of different beliefs in one denomination.

Walther published the “Form of a Christian Congregation” in 1863. In §32 of this book, a subsection of the chapter “Concerning the Exercise of a Congregation's Duty to Care for Purity of Doctrine and Life and in Both Relations to Discipline Its Members,” Walther writes:

Lastly, the congregation shall also see to it that neither the congregation nor individual church members enter into any church union [*kirchliche Vereinigung*] with unbelievers or heterodox communions and so become guilty of religious unionism in matters of faith and church [*und sich so der Glaubens-, Kirchen- und Religionsmengerei schuldig macht, literally: “and become guilty of mixing of faith, church, and religion”*] (2 Cor. 6:14-18, 2 John 10, 11. Cf. Rev. 14:9-11.) *Note:* Here should be added common worship with the heterodox, serving as sponsors in heterodox churches, yielding church buildings to heterodox communions, participating in unionistic societies [*religionsmengerischen Vereinen*, lit.: societies or associations which mix religion] to obtain church objectives, and the like.¹³

For Walther “mixing faith, church, and religion” are more or less the same thing. Therefore, “unionism” and “syncretism” are also synonymous.¹⁴ Such an activity is not primarily forming a union church—that probably was not a serious option in the LCMS—but rather on the congregational level to have joint worship, foster the work of heterodox congregations and join associations with a religious purpose. This mixing of faith, church and religion concerns not only the congregation, but also the individual. The only example mentioned here is serving as baptismal sponsors at a heterodox churches. Nevertheless, unionism is not only an issue on the level of congregation or church, but also a matter of individual Christians avoiding the practices and activities of heterodox churches.

In § 6 of his *Americanisch-lutherische Pastoraltheologie* (1872) Walther talks about conditions for accepting a call. One of them is that the congregation is not heretical (*irrgläubig*) or a union congregation (*grundsätzlich gemischt*).¹⁵ It is possible, though, that one may preach at such a congregation without violating the conscience, but it is not possible to become the pastor of such a congregation and serve the Lord's Supper to it, because the orthodox (*der Rechtgläubige*)

¹³ C. F. W. Walther, *Die rechte Gestalt einer vom Staate unabhängigen Ortsgemeinde*, 2. unveränderte Auflage. (St. Louis: Gedruckt bei Aug. Wiebush u. Sohn, 1864), 150. English translation: C. F. W. Walther, *The Form of a Christian Congregation*. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1963), 136.

¹⁴ Thus, syncretism or *Religionsmengerei* is has a meaning different from the modern usage which defines it as the mixing of different religions e.g. Christianity and Hinduism, but does not use it to describe relations between Christians. This understanding of “religion” as equivalent to “denomination” has its roots in German legal terminology. In the Augsburg Religious Peace Treaty of 1555, the Lutheran Church is called the “Augsburgische Confessions-Religion”, the Roman Church “die alte Religion” (*Augsburger Reichsabschied*, §15-16, available at http://www.lwl.org/westfaelische-geschichte/portal/Internet/finde/langDatensatz.php?urlID=739&url_tabelle=tab_quelle).

¹⁵ C. F. W. Walther, *Americanisch-Lutherische Pastoraltheologie*, 5th ed., (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1905), 48-49.

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(*Glaubens- und Kirchenmengerei*) and teaches to think little of lies and to attach little value to truth, indeed, even to destroy it.”²⁰

E. Summary of the meaning of *Kirchen- und Glaubensmengerei* in light of its usage in the Missouri Synod from 1844-1887

As we see from the examples above, *Kirchen- und Glaubensmengerei* or unionism and syncretism do not apply only to union congregations. Rather, these terms also apply to the theological basis of such a union, i.e. the toleration of true and false doctrine in the church. Thus, not only organizational union with false believers, communing members of non-orthodox churches, communing in congregations that are not doctrinally pure, pastors participating officially in services of the heterodox, allowing non-Lutheran pastors to preach as guest preachers, but also the lack of doctrinal discipline against those who tolerate false doctrine in word and deed, are all seen as unionism and syncretism. The constitution binds only the members of synod. But as the example from Walther's *Form of a Christian Congregation* shows, congregations, too, are supposed to watch over their members so that they do not engage in unionistic practices. Thus, the renunciation of unionism and syncretism affects not only members of the Synod, but also members of its congregations according to the usage of the Missouri Synod in the time of the writing of the constitution and forty years following it.

The Biblical Basis for the Renunciation of Unionism and Syncretism

Some members of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod have in recent years expressed questions and, occasionally, skepticism about the Synod's opposition to unionism. The questions have often been confessional and historical in nature. Does the strict opposition to unionism in Article VI accurately reflect the concerns of *The Book of Concord* or does it go beyond anything the Confessions require of us? Is the concern with unionism no more than a reflection of the historical setting of 19th Century German Lutheranism in which biblical and confessional Lutherans were persecuted by the Prussian Union for their faithfulness?

Other questions are also evident—questions which often coincide with or underlie historical and confessional concerns. Is the LCMS position on unionism truly *biblical*? Is there a *biblical* foundation for opposing the practices which have been identified as unionism? The practices mentioned in discussions and debates about the biblical foundation of the Synod's historic position typically include such things as excluding other Christians from the Lord's Table, forbidding members of the Synod to participate in services together with clergy from churches with which we are not in fellowship, forbidding involvement in joint special services with other churches in a community, requiring that pastors not conduct services with clergy from another Christian church, even if it is a wedding or funeral of a family member. Are such “strict”

¹⁶ C. F. W. Walther, op. cit., 182.

¹⁷ “Sie (eine wohlgegründete wahrhaft lutherische Gemeinde) hütet sich vor aller Religionsmengerei als einer Sache, die wider Gott ist.” (*Zweiter Synodal-Bericht des Wisconsin-Distrikts der deutschen evang.-luth. Synode von Missouri, Ohio und andern Staaten, versammelt zu Sheboygan, Wis., vom 12. bis 18. Juni 1883*. St. Louis, Mo.: Luth. Concordia-Verlag. – M. C. Barthel, Agent, 1883, p. 35)

¹⁸ “Unter Religionsmengerei versteht man, kurz gesagt, das Ineinandermengen von Wahrheit und Unwahrheit; das Untermehmen, reine und falsche Lehre miteinander zu verbinden oder doch im vermeintlichen Frieden nebeneinander bestehen zu lassen. Solche Religionsmengerei ist heutigestages etwas ganz Bekanntes und wird leider! nur allzuviel getribt, nicht nur von denen, die in der sogenannten Union leben, sondern selbst von vielen, die als treue Lutheraner angesehen sein wollen.” (ibid., p.36)

¹⁹ “Aber auch mehrere große lutherisch sich nennende Kirchenkörper hierzulande treiben Religionsmengerei, oder halten sich doch nicht frei davon, indem sie falsche Lehre in ihrer eigenen Gemeinschaft dulden, ihren Gemeinden erlauben, teilweise auch reformierte Prediger auf ihren Kanzeln predigen, Andersgläubige zu ihrem Abendmahl zuzulassen; ihren Predigern gestatten, amtlich an den Gottesdiensten Andergläubiger teilzunehmen, oder indem sie doch Prediger und Gemeinden, die in dieser Weise handeln, nicht entschieden in Zucht nehmen.” (ibid., p. 37)

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²⁰ “Durch Kanzelgemeinschaft macht man sich nicht nur der Heuchelei, sondern auch der Glaubens- und Kirchenmengerei theilhaftig und lehrt die Lüge gering achten und die Wahrheit gering schätzen, ja vernichten.” (*Fünfter Synodal-Bericht des Canada-Distrikts der deutschen evang.-luth. Synode von Missouri, Ohio und andern Staaten im Jahre 1885*. (St. Louis: Im Concordia-Verlag, 1885), 44. The essayist was Friedrich Beite, later professor at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis.

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practices biblical? Are they in keeping with the love Christians are to have toward one another (John 13:34; Rom. 12:10; 1 John 3:11)?

While concerns about the scriptural basis for the LCMS position on unionism may seem to be somewhat widespread today, they are not new. The LCMS has throughout its history faced such exegetical challenges to its consistent stance against unionism and syncretism. Article VI in the Synod's current Constitution, as noted earlier was in the Synod's original Constitution and in every subsequent revision. The following paragraphs seek simply to show that this emphasis is not the result of mere traditionalism, but is anchored in the Word of God.

We will first briefly examine three texts referred to in the Constitution as the basis for opposition to unionism—foundational texts which are referenced consistently in LCMS literature on this topic. We will then briefly review nine “Scriptural Principles of Fellowship” from the CTCR’s 1981 report, *The Nature and Implications of the Concept of Fellowship*.²¹

A. Foundational passages

Some who have questioned the Synod’s opposition to unionism have remarked that Article VI provides no scriptural references. On that same basis it is sometimes argued that this Article is important only as internal discipline with a purely human authority for the sake of good order in the Synod. In response, it is important to observe that Article VI of the Missouri Synod’s Constitution flows directly out of the first objective of the Synod as stated in Article III: “The Synod, under Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions, shall—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... ”²² Unity of faith, fellowship with other church bodies, and a defense against threats to unity and fellowship are tied together. In so doing, three passages from Scripture are emphasized: Ephesians 4:3-6; 1 Corinthians 1:10; and Romans 16:17.

The first passage, from Ephesians, is part of Paul’s admonition “to walk in a manner worthy” of Christ’s calling to his Body (Eph. 4:1). This calling includes humility, gentleness, and patient endurance (4:2), together with a zealous intention (σπουδαῖα, used as a participle) to maintain, hold on to, guard, or keep (τηρεῖω, in the infinitive form) the unity already given by the Spirit (4:3). Verses 4-6 are exegetical to [i.e., they serve to explain further] verse 3’s “unity of the Spirit” (τὴν ἐνότητα τοῦ πνεύματος), answering the unspoken question about the sort of oneness that is being asserted. The unity (oneness) of the Spirit consists of: “one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one 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.”

²¹ Commission on Theology and Church Relations of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (St. Louis, 1981). The report is available online at <http://www.lcms.org/Document.fdoc?src=lcms&id=331>.

²² The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, *Handbook 2016*, 11.

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I appeal to you, brothers, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment.

The move is from what is given—what is created by God—to what is expected of the people of God—to the unifying work of the Church. The apostle now “appeals” to believers (he exhorts, urges, implores, παρακαλέω) to foster in their relationships with one another the Spirit’s unity. He calls for believers to “speak as one” (τὸ αὐτὸ λέγῃτε πάντες²⁴) and so to reject division (schism; σχίσμα, is used of a tear in cloth, Matt. 9:16) and be united in mind and judgment. His appeal is based on their communion with Christ (“in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ”). The plea to speak the same thing here is parallel to his common plea to “think the same” (e.g., Rom. 12:16; 2 Cor. 13:11, literally translated). In both same-speaking and same-thinking, the idea of unity in teaching and understanding is present. It is important to see that the expressions indicate a view of unity that goes beyond a mere emotional level to one of shared thoughts and expressions of the truth—doctrinal unity. That this is the case can be seen in the concluding clause, where Paul explains speaking as one without division as “to be united in the same mind and judgment” (κατηρτισμένοι ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ νοῖ καὶ ἐν τῇ αὐτῇ γνώμῃ). The verb used in this final clause, καταρτίζω, is used to refer to the process of repairing nets in Mark 1:19. The noun translated “judgment” by the ESV, γνώμη, is used of the faculty of reason or the concept of judgment or resolve.²⁵ The connection between schism as a tear contrasting with mending torn nets provides an apt visual dimension to the passage. A tear threatens to divide the Church. It can be mended only by means of restored unity of thought and conviction. “Mend the tearing fabric!” is Paul’s plea to the dividing Church. How is this done? Paul’s answer is to make a shared confession of the one truth with one mind and understanding.

The third reference from Article III is without doubt the most challenging.

Romans 16:17²⁶: I appeal to you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine that you have been taught; avoid them.

On its face this might initially appear to be in contradiction to 1 Corinthians 1:10. There is no talk of mending or restoring, but instead his appeal is to be on the watch for those who would divide the Church and to avoid them. Carrying forward the image from 1 Corinthians, would that not tear the garment in two rather than seeking to mend or restore it?

That is not the belief of the Synod. Instead, the necessity of avoiding doctrinal error and errorists is understood as an obvious implication of guarding the unity of the Spirit and speaking and

²⁴ On this phrase, see Gregory J. Lockwood, *1 Corinthians*, Concordia Commentary (St. Louis, Concordia Publishing House, 2000), 40-41.

²⁵ Lockwood translates the phrase “restored to the same mind and the same conviction.” Ibid., 43.

²⁶ The LCMS Constitution and By-Laws references only a single verse, but wider LCMS literature on this matter and the discussion herein include verse 18 and also verses 19-20.

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In its Ephesians citation the Constitution seeks to emphasize this Spirit-given, foundational unity of the church as the body of Christ. Given by the Spirit, this unity is a gift to be “maintained” or “kept,” not manufactured or created by human effort. It is God’s own unity into which believers have been called as the Holy Spirit “calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian church on earth and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith.”²³

The apostle’s references to “the one hope that belongs to your call,” to “one faith,” and to “one baptism” may be singled out for a moment. In each case, there is a point of connection between the people of the Church and the One who creates the Church. He calls people into the sure and certain hope of the Gospel’s promises (see Eph. 1:11-12; 1:18; cf. Rom. 4:18; 5:2; 8:24; 15:12-13). The Church is, moreover, marked by “one faith.” While faith is an inner (personal), trusting reliance on Christ (*fides qua creditur*), it also has a singular content held in common (*fides quae creditur*). Therefore the New Testament provides references to faith both with possessive pronouns or without the article (indicating personal, trusting faith or *fides qua*; e.g., Matt. 9:2, 22; Luke 17:5) and also with the definite article (emphasizing the faith as the Church’s common confession or *fides quae*, e.g., Acts 6:7; 1 Cor. 16:13; Gal. 1:23). So also, individuals are called to receive baptism’s promises (Acts 2:38) as their own name is joined to God’s in a singular baptism instituted by Christ for all the nations (Matt. 28:19).

Thus, Paul incorporates the stunning mystery that he celebrated in Ephesians 2-3: the Gentiles, once alienated and without hope (2:11-12) have been made one with the covenant people of old, reconciled together “in one body through the cross” (2:16), all together “members of the household of God” (2:19), “fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel” (3:6). So it is that the church is established as a multitude of individual believers lacking bonds of language or history or custom, yet one in a single call, a single faith, a single baptism—all one body of one Christ with one Spirit, Lord, God and Father.

This gift of unity—this one Church created by the Holy Spirit as He unites disparate individual believers in one faith in one Lord—is assumed in the Constitution’s move from Ephesians 4 to 1 Corinthians 1:10. Writing to a fracturing church Paul says in this critical verse:

²³ SC Part II, 6. AC VIII defines the Church as “the assembly of all believers” (from the German) and “the assembly of saints and those who truly believe” (from the Latin). Quotations from the Confessions are from Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert, eds., *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000, hereafter KW). C.F.W. Walther emphasizes this important starting point in Thesis I of *Church and Ministry [Office]* when he describes the Church as those persons (1) called by the Spirit (through the Gospel), (2) who “truly believe,” and (3) are “incorporated into Christ.” Two English editions of Walther’s *Kirche und Amt* are now widely used in the LCMS. The first is *Church and Ministry (Kirche und Amt): Witnesses of the Evangelical Lutheran Church on the Question of the Church and the Ministry*, trans. J.T. Mueller (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1987). Second, there is the recent revision of J.T. Mueller’s translation, newly edited and annotated by Matthew C. Harrison, *The Church and the Office of the Ministry: Kirche und Amt: The Voice of Our Church on the Question of Church and Office* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2012). Quotations herein will be from the latter.

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thinking the same thing. Romans 16:17 is thus a foundational supporting text for Missouri Synod literature on unionism. Walther includes Romans 16:17-18 as “Proof from God’s Word” that “Every believer for the sake of his salvation must flee all false teachers, and avoid fellowship with heterodox congregations or sects.”²⁷ *A Brief Statement of the Doctrinal Position of the Missouri Synod (Brief Statement)*²⁸ lists Romans 16:17 first in its assertion on unionism: “We repudiate unionism, that is, church-fellowship with the adherents of false doctrine, as disobedience to God’s command, as causing divisions in the Church, Romans 16:17; 2 John 9, 10, and involving the constant danger of losing the Word of God entirely, 2 Timothy 2:17-21.”²⁹

Neither of these sources provides any interpretation of Romans 16:17. The clarity of this and other passages is viewed as self-evident. Objections to this understanding of Romans 16:17, however, are not lacking. Some argue that the passage is not a general mandate to avoid false teachers, but refers only to specific, well-known individuals in Rome. A similar objection is that the passage refers only to people who are dividing the Church, not to false teachers or false teaching as a whole (“those who cause divisions,” v. 17). Another objection is that Paul’s command to avoid refers only to those who are openly and obviously self-serving and gluttonous (serving “their own appetites,” v. 18). Finally, some object that the passage refers only to the most extreme examples of false teaching, not to all persistent false teaching of any sort.

This brief discussion cannot improve on the study of Romans 16:17-20 by Martin Franzmann, published posthumously in 1981, and will only summarize it.³⁰ Franzmann shows that any attempt to limit the force of Paul’s admonition, as in the objections identified in the previous paragraph, is misguided. “Our study of verse 17 has led to the conclusion that the warning is general and inclusive.”³¹ Paul is likely not referring to any specific individuals, but to a specific danger—any teaching which causes Christians to turn away from the doctrine of Christ, the Gospel in its full dimension.³² He is not judging intentions with his reference to serving the appetite. Rather, the service of the belly or appetite is an attitude that is the opposite of serving the Lord Christ, for serving Him is holding to His teaching without reservation. “The word

²⁷ *Church and Ministry/Office*, Thesis VIII.B., 106.

²⁸ Published in 1932 (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House), also available online at <http://www.lcms.org/Document.fdoc?src=lcms&id=958>.

²⁹ §28.

³⁰ “Exegesis on Romans 16:17ff,” *Concordia Journal* (January 1981): 13-20. Well aware of the contention over Romans 16:17 present also in his own day, Franzmann chose not to cite LCMS fathers on the exegesis of Romans 16. Instead, he says in his Introduction on page 13: “The authorities cited are all scholars not involved in the present controversy; when a passage becomes a matter of controversy, it is salutary to appeal to objective witnesses.”

³¹ Ibid., 16.

³² Ibid., 14-15, on teaching or doctrine (τὴν διδασκίαν). “The ‘teaching’ is best left in its broadest and fullest sense: all that the Christians of Rome had heard, learned, believed, obeyed, and said yea to, all that had made *mathetai* of them—that is the norm by which the divisions and offenses, and the creators of them, are to be measured and rejected. The point of cleavage is, in a word, the Gospel.”

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douleuein [to serve, used in v. 18] is perhaps the strongest possible expression of entire and undivided devotion to a lord.”³³

Franzmann also argues convincingly that one cannot limit Paul’s appeal to avoid false teachers only to extreme examples—to heretics who have repudiated the Christian faith. No. “If we study occurrences of *skandalon* [a cause of stumbling, v. 17] and *skandalizo* [the verb form] in the New Testament, we shall find that in almost every instance where *men* cause (or are) offenses, they are within the church visible.”³⁴ It is simply not the case that dangerous teachings come only from non-Christians or heretics. “It is the Christian who is peculiarly liable to be or occasion an offense to his fellow Christian, to cause him to fall, to mislead him into unbelief, or false belief.”³⁵

So Franzmann concludes his argument:

Our findings suggest that the interpretation traditional in our circles is essentially sound. It is not the exegete’s business, strictly speaking, to go beyond the interpretation of the text itself to its application; but he may with propriety remind the church: 1) that Romans 16:17f. is not the whole of New Testament teaching on error and errorists and that the whole of that teaching should be brought to bear on any given situation; 2) that the traditional interpretation, which our study has confirmed, does not, by any means, mean an easy way out for the church: the warning both in its breadth and its severity lays upon the church a solemn obligation which can be met only by long, intensive, and loving theological work—the church should not be startled to find that the decision on error is not always easy or the question of fellowship always simple; and 3) that the passage is to be applied to ourselves, too, in constant self-scrutiny and self-judgment—a church that complacently deems itself above the possibility of belly service is already dangerously close to serving its belly.³⁶

This brief review of three foundational texts shows that the Synod’s reliance on these passages as formative for its constitutional expectations with regard to the matter of unionism and syncretism is appropriate. The Synod rightly affirms the church’s Spirit-wrought unity and the necessity of doing everything possible to prevent schism among Christians, churches, and church bodies. So also, the Synod rightly affirms that the ultimate source of division is human sin and error, a sin and error that remains among Christians and non-Christians alike and, where it persists, must be recognized, repudiated and avoided.

B. Scriptural principles of fellowship

³³ *Ibid.*, 16; see also 17 on *scôlô*, the Greek noun translated belly or appetite.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 19. Franzmann cites Matt 13:41; 16:23; 18:6-7 (Luke 17:1); Rom. 14:13; 1 Cor. 8:13.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 19.

³⁶ *Op. cit.*, 19.

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5. **Love, which heads the list of "the fruit of the Spirit," always seeks the edification of the members of the body of Christ** (Gal. 5:22-25; 6:1-5; 1 Cor. 8:1; 13:4-7; 14:12; 2 Cor. 2:4; Rom. 15:1-3; 12:9-13; Eph. 4:15-16; Col. 3:14-15. Cf. Ap. IV, 125, 225-226, 231-232; FC SD, IV, 10-12). Love, which is a response to the Gospel, stands uppermost in the realm of sanctification (1 Cor. 13). But because love always seeks the edification of the members of Christ’s body, it manifests itself in a variety of ways, depending on the situation and need. At one time it shows itself in tears, at another time in rejoicing, at yet another time in admonition, but never by compromising the means by which the spiritual unity of the church comes into being.
6. **The confession of the apostolic faith (*fides quae*) as it is taught in the Scriptures is mandated by God for the sake of the edification and extension of Christ’s body, the church** (Matt. 28:18-20; 1 Tim. 1:3-5; 6:3 f.; 2 Tim. 2:14-18; Acts 20:28-32; Gal. 2:4-5, 14; Eph. 4:14-16; Heb. 13:9. Cf. Preface to *The Book of Concord*, p. 13; Preface to Apology, 15-17; Ap. XX, 6-8; FC SD, Rule and Norm, 14 f.). Faith in the heart (*fides qua*) continues to be saving faith as long as it has as its object the Scriptural Gospel of Jesus Christ. God therefore commands that the church teach and confess the faith (*fides quae*) as it has been recorded by the prophets and apostles in order that the body of Christ may be edified and extended.
7. **Church fellowship (in the sense of external unity in the church) is constituted by agreement in the faith which is confessed (*fides quae*) and not by faith in the heart (*fides qua*)** (Matt. 3:12; 13:24-30, 36-43; 1 Cor. 1:10; 2 Tim. 1: 13-14; 2:19; Gal. 2:9; Acts 2:42. Cf. Ap. VII and VIII, 12-13, 17-19; Preface to *The Book of Concord*, p. 6; FC SD, XI, 94-96; FC SD, VII, 33; FC SD Rule and Norm, 14; FC SD, Rule and Norm, 1). Faith in the heart (*fides qua*) is, to be sure, presupposed in those who confess faith in the Gospel. However, if this faith in the heart constituted church fellowship, it would be impossible to speak of church fellowship in the sense of external unity in the church, since spiritual fellowship in the body of Christ is a matter of faith in the heart (Thesis I) and is hidden from human eyes. According to the Scriptures, external unity in the church is a matter of the right confession of the prophetic and apostolic faith.
8. **The refusal to affirm church fellowship (in the sense of external unity in the church) with those who do not confess the faith (*fides quae*) as it is taught in the Scriptures is not an optional matter but a Scriptural mandate** (Rom. 16:17-20; Gal. 1:6 f.; Matt. 7:15-16; Acts 19:8-10; Titus 1:9-16; 2 John 9-11; 2 Thess. 3:14; Treatise, 41-44; FC SD, X, 21 f.; AC, XXVIII, 21-26, FC SD, VII, 33). Just as the law of Christian love leads members of the body of Christ to assume that faith (*fides qua*) exists in the heart of all those who profess faith in the Gospel (narrow sense), so it also, in the interest of the Gospel and that faith, forbids the affirmation of church fellowship where there is a lack of agreement in the confession of the faith (*fides quae*). Although the Scriptures do not present a timetable or the specific procedures to be followed in delineating external

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In its 1981 report, *The Nature and Implications of the Concept of Fellowship*, the CTCR included under the heading the Nature of Fellowship, a section on scriptural principles. The principles provide both a rich catena of appropriate scriptural and confessional references and brief commentary. Because of their value, they are reproduced here in whole.

1. **Spiritual fellowship with Christ and with all believers is given with faith in the heart (*fides qua*)** (1 Cor. 1:2; John 10:16; 17:20-21; Rom. 3:28; 12:4-5; 1 Cor. 12:4 f.; Eph. 1:15-23; 2:8-9; 4:3-6; Gal. 3:26-28; 1 John 1:1-4. Cf. AC, VII, 2; Ap. VII and VIII, 5, 31; SC, II, 5). All Christians are united in a spiritual unity with Christ by faith in the heart (*fides qua*). As members of the one holy Christian Church they are also one with every other Christian who lives or who has ever lived on the face of the earth.
2. **Faith in the heart (*fides qua*) comes into being through the power of the Holy Spirit working through the Gospel** (Mark 16:16; Rom. 1:16-17; 10:17; 1 Cor. 1:21; 4:15; 12:3; 2 Thess. 2:14; John 17:20; Titus 3:5; 1 Peter 1:23. Cf. AC, V; AC, VII, 1, 2; IX, 1, 2; XIII, 1; Ap. VII and VIII, 8; SC, 11, 6; IV, 1-14). The word Gospel is here used in its narrow sense (i. e., “the delightful proclamation of God’s grace and favor acquired through the merits of Christ”). Faith in the heart (*fides qua*) is produced not by the teaching that the Bible is a holy book, not by the acceptance of the inerrancy of Scripture, and not by concern for pure doctrine, but only by the Holy Spirit working through the means of grace, i. e. Word and sacrament.
3. **For the church today Holy Scripture is the only judge, rule, and norm of the Gospel** (Ps. 119:105; Luke 1:1-4; John 20:31; Rom. 1:2; 15:4; 1 Thess. 2:13; 2 Tim. 3:15-16; Gal. 1:8. Cf. LC, V, 31-32; Ap. IV, 81; Ap. XV, 17; FC Ep, Rule and Norm, 1, 2; FC SD, Rule and Norm, 3; SA, II, ii, 15). Although the first proclamation of the Gospel preceded the writings of the prophets and apostles, for us today in the post-apostolic church Holy Scripture is the only norm for the preaching and teaching of the Gospel. The Holy Spirit creates faith in the heart through the *Scriptural* Gospel. Any qualification of the divine authority of Scripture (for example, through the use of historical criticism as it has been developed over the past two hundred years in the investigation of Scripture) endangers the Gospel in the narrow sense and consequently the unity of the church.
4. **Good works flow out of faith and are responses to the Gospel** (John 15:1-11; 17:17; Eph. 4:1-3; Gal. 5:6; 1 Peter 1:22; 1 John 3:14; 4:7-12. Cf. AC, XX, 27-34; Ap. IV, 74, 106, 111; XII, 37, 82; FC Ep, IV, 11; FC SO, III, 27; IV, 9-12). Justification comes before sanctification. Apart from faith in the Gospel there can be no good works. But when the Holy Spirit is given through faith, the heart is moved to do good works. In the same way that faith precedes good works, it is proper and necessary to speak of the priority of the truth of the Gospel over love.

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relationships with those who do not correctly confess the faith (*fides quae*), they do clearly teach that separation from them (refusal to affirm or continue church fellowship) is commanded by God.

9. **The quest for church fellowship (in the sense of external unity in the church), as well as its acknowledgement when agreement in the confession of the faith has been achieved, are not optional matters but Scriptural mandates** (Rom. 12:14-21; 15:5-6; Eph. 4:1-3; 1 Cor. 1:10-13; 2 Cor. 13:11; Gal. 2:9; Phil. 4:2. Cf. Preface to *The Book of Concord*, pp. 13-14; Preface to the Augsburg Confession, 4, 10; FCSD, Rule and Norm. 14; X, 31). The refusal of church fellowship for any reason other than disagreement in the confession of the faith (e. g., differences in ceremonies, polity, national origin, language), violates the law of Christian love, even as does all loveless and misguided “concern” for the truth. Separatism (sectarianism) is condemned by God’s Word. The Scriptures command those who are one in Christ both to seek agreement in the confession of the faith (*fides quae*) with all those who profess faith in Christ and to acknowledge the existence of church fellowship once this agreement has been reached.

C. Concluding reflections

Only brief further comment is necessary. The distinction between the faith that is believed (*fides qua creditur*) and the faith that is confessed (*fides quae creditur*) is a critical element in these principles. Principles 1 and 2 clearly emphasize the former, for it is only by faith in Christ that one is a Christian and, so also, a member of the church we confess in the creeds. As Galatians 3:26-28 reminds us: “In Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”

We believe in this one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church—the assembly of all who believe in Christ Jesus from every time and place—a Church which we will not see in its fullness until the age to come. But we also know and confess a church of men and women that gathers to hear the preached Word and receive the administered sacraments. Thus the purity of the proclamation of the Gospel and fidelity in the administration of the sacraments are of the highest necessity and can be judged by only one norm, sacred Scripture (Principle 3), which alone “is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness” (2 Tim. 3:16).

Good works and the love that impels them flow only from faith and therefore, as vital and necessary as they are, may not be given priority over faith (Principles 4 and 5). Rom. 12:9: “Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good.” Truly edifying love for the body of Christ seeks the growth of believing faith (*fides qua*) and, therefore, values and emphasizes the need to abhor all evil and falsehood and to keep pure and to confess the faith that is believed (*fides quae*) (Principle 6).

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Fellowship (external unity) between believers and church bodies in specific times and places—in the world here and now—is manifested where there is agreement in what is believed (*fides quae*) for it is agreement in teaching and practice that binds and unites (Principle 7). So also, where there is disagreement in what is believed and taught there can be no external unity or church fellowship because men are divided by words and acts and can judge only words and acts, not hearts (Principle 8). “Follow the pattern of the sound words that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. By the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, guard the good deposit entrusted to you” (2 Tim. 1:13-14).

Last, Christ’s holy people are mandated to seek to foster and extend agreement in teaching and practice and, with it, external fellowship among Christians (Principle 9). “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” (2 Cor. 13:11). “May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom. 15:5).

The Confessional Basis for the Renunciation of Unionism and Syncretism

For theologians of the first generation of the LCMS, the scriptural basis for the renunciation of all forms of unionism and syncretism was decisive. But they also quoted the Lutheran Confessions for their position. In this section, the passages on this topic from the Book of Concord quoted in C. F. W. Walther’s *Church and Office*, adopted by the Synod in convention, are presented and their relevance to the topic explained.

- A. Ap VII-VIII, 48: “The ungodly teachers must be avoided because they no longer act in the person of Christ, but are Antichrists. Christ says [Matt. 7:15]: ‘Beware of false prophets,’ and Paul says [Gal. 1:9]. ‘If anyone proclaims to you a gospel contrary to what you received, let that one be accursed!’”³⁷

Ministers act in the place of Christ, they do not represent their own person. But this representation of Christ is bound to their preaching of what is commanded to them. False teachers—that is ministers who do not speak what Christ has commissioned them to say—are no longer acting in the place of Christ, and are to be avoided. Thus, in the church false teachers are not to be allowed to teach, and Christians have to avoid them, which precludes accepting their ministrations.

- B. Tr 38: “Even if the Roman bishop possessed primacy and superiority by divine right, one would still not owe obedience to those pontiffs who defend ungodly forms of worship, idolatry, and teaching inimical to the gospel. On the contrary, one should regard such pontiffs and such rule as anathema. So Paul clearly teaches: ‘If ... an angel from heaven should proclaim to you a gospel contrary to what we proclaimed to you, let that one be

accursed’ [Gal. 1:8]. Again, in Acts [5:29]: ‘We must obey God rather than any human authority.’”

This quote emphasizes that Christians are not bound by any ecclesiastical authority when this authority is not in agreement with the Word of God. The consequences of this refusal to obey are stated in the next quotation.

- C. Tr 41-42: “This being the situation, all Christians must beware lest they become participants in the ungodly teachings, blasphemies, and unjust cruelty of the pope. Indeed, they ought to abandon and curse the pope and his minions as the realm of the Antichrist, just as Christ commanded: ‘Beware of false prophets.’ [Matt. 7:15]. Paul also commanded that ungodly teachers are to be shunned and denounced as accursed, and in 2 Corinthians 6[:14] he says: ‘Do not be mismatched with unbelievers. For what fellowship is there ... between light and darkness?’ To dissent from the consensus of so many nations and to be called schismatics is a grave matter.

However, divine authority commands all people not to be accomplices and defenders of ungodliness and unjust cruelty. Thus, our consciences are sufficiently absolved.”³⁸

Error has no right to be in the church, and Christians are called to beware of and refuse to obey any institution of authority in the church when it condones and propagates error, and to shun, denounce and separate from it.

- D. Tr 72: “Consequently, when bishops either become heretical or are unwilling to ordain, the churches are compelled by divine right to ordain pastors and ministers for themselves. Moreover, the cause of this schism and dissension is to be found in the ungodliness and tyranny of the bishops, for Paul warns that bishops who teach and defend false doctrine and impious forms of worship are to be considered accursed.”³⁹

Schisms and dissensions are a fruit of false doctrine. Because of false doctrine, the faithful followers of the word of God have separated from false teachers and are now free to call pastors, that is, they do not depend on Roman Catholic bishops for pastors. False teachers are accursed and thus to be shunned even if that requires the establishment of new ecclesial orders or entities.

- E. FC SD X, 5-6: [5:] “Moreover, we must not include among the truly free adiaphora or indifferent matters ceremonies that give the appearance or (in order to avoid persecution) are designed to give the impression that our religion does not differ greatly from the papist religion or that their religion were not completely contrary to ours. Nor are such ceremonies matters of indifference when they are intended to create the illusion (or are demanded or accepted with that intention), as if such two actions brought the two contradictory religions into agreement and made them one body or as if a return to the papacy and a deviation from the pure teaching of the gospel and from the true religion had taken place or could gradually result from these actions.” [6:] “For in such a case

³⁷ KW, 183.

what Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 6[:14, 17] should and must be determinative: ‘Do not be mismatched [with unbelievers.] ... What fellowship is there between light and darkness?’ ‘Therefore, come out from them, and be separate from them, says the Lord ...’”⁴⁰

This quote states first the necessity that false doctrine not be tolerated in the church, and, that separation from false teachers for the sake of the truth is not only permissible, but necessary if there is no repentance from false teaching. Secondly, even in regard to adiaphora, that is in things beneficial for the church but not commanded by God, the appearance of agreement with false teachers is to be avoided in a time of persecution.

Conclusion

The renunciation of unionism and syncretism in every form presupposes that in the church only the Word of God is to be preached and that deviations from it are not tolerated. False teachers are to be avoided, even if this means organizational rupture. Avoiding false teachers means not only that pastors are not to serve congregations of mixed or differing confession, but that all members of Synod shun and avoid false teachers.⁴¹ Since the words of the New Testament refer to all Christians, these words also have consequences for the life of members of congregations of the LCMS who are not technically members of the Synod.⁴²

Adopted by the CTCR
April 26, 2019

⁴⁰ KW, 636.

⁴¹ Such an understanding of unionism and syncretism does not exclude ecumenical discussions with other Christians; cf. the document *Theological Dialogue with Other Christian Church Bodies*, adopted by the CTCR in 2011 and available for download at <http://www.lcms.org/Document.fdoc?trc=lcms&id=1508>.

⁴² Attached as Appendix 2 to this document is a November 1957 article by Martin Franzmann titled “The Nature of the Unity We Seek: A Missouri Synod Lutheran View,” which we find to be a useful way of framing this discussion in a positive way. We strongly recommend it for study and discussion.

APPENDIX 1 Congregations Walking Together in Mission with Covenants of Love

RESOLUTION 8-30B

To Study Article VI of Synod’s Constitution

TF Report (*CW TFR*, pp. 21-22); (*CW TFR A*, 1.5-6); *Overtures* 8-16, 8-46-48 (*CW*, pp. 227, 237)

WHEREAS, The Blue Ribbon Task Force on Structure and Governance has proposed an amendment to Constitution Article VI (Requirements of Membership) for the purpose of clarification and affirmation; and

WHEREAS, Concerns have been expressed throughout the history of the Synod, including recently, about the proper understanding and application of Article VI with respect to the conditions or requirements for acquiring and holding or retaining membership in the Synod; and

WHEREAS, These concerns as well as misunderstandings and misapplications of Article VI have included such matters as “subscription ... to [Synod’s] Constitution,” “Renunciation of unionism and syncretism of every description;” “Exclusive use of doctrinally pure agenda, hymnbooks, and catechisms in church and school;” and “examination and approval of [congregation’s] constitution and bylaws by the district;” and

WHEREAS, The requirements for membership reflect the identity and values of Synod; and

WHEREAS, The ministers of religion—ordained and the ministers of religion—commissioned of the Synod have an important role and responsibility in the life of the church; and

WHEREAS, Membership in the Synod carries clear expectation; and

WHEREAS, The LCMS is made up of congregations from a great diversity of cultural contexts, calling for an appropriate measure of flexibility in communicating the saving message of the Gospel; therefore be it

Resolved, That the President of the Synod in consultation with the Council of Presidents, the

2010 Convention Proceedings, pp. 168-69
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 and the current and historic bylaws that elucidate the article; and be it further Resolved, That the study involve the Council of Presidents, the districts, circuits, and seminaries; and be it further

Resolved, That the congregations of the Synod be encouraged to engage in the study to promote unity, harmony, and understanding; and be it further

Resolved, That following the study, the Commission on Handbook, in consultation and concurrence with the Synod President, the Commission on Constitutional Matters and the Council of Presidents, submit a proposal to clarify and affirm or amend Article VI to the next convention of Synod; and be it finally

Resolved, That we give thanks to the almighty God for the privilege and opportunity He gives us to work and walk together in this Synod as His ambassadors in and to the worlds in which we live.

Action: Adopted (11)

(An earlier version of this resolution, Res 8-30A, “To Amend Article VI,” was introduced by the committee in Session 5 After a number of committee changes, proposed amendments, and a substitute resolution attempt, the matter was “laid on the table” without objection from the assembly Res 8-30B was introduced in place of Res 8-30A during Session 11 During discussion, a proposal to amend the fourth resolve by replacing “clarifying and affirming amendment of” with “to clarify and affirm or amend” was accepted by the committee as a friendly amendment An amendment to delete that entire fourth resolve failed [Yes: 273; No: 828] When debate was ended, Res 8-30B was adopted as changed [Yes: 850; No: 286]

APPENDIX 2

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"The Nature of the Unity We Seek"

A Missouri Synod Lutheran View

By MARTIN H. FRANZMANN

[EDITORIAL NOTE: This article appeared in the spring 1957 issue of *Religion in Life*, published by Abingdon Press, Nashville, Tenn., and is reprinted by the kind permission of its editor. It was one of five contributions in a symposium under the title "The Nature of the Unity We Seek." Other contributors were: Leslie Newbigin, bishop in the Church of South India; Edward John Carroll, president of Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, Calif.; Theron D. Price, professor of church history at the Southern Baptist Seminary, Louisville, Ky.; and John Yoder, director of the relief activities of the Mennonite Central Committee in France.]

THE nature of the unity we seek" has the obviousness of a platitude. Like most platitudes, it is more easily stated (by those who hold it) and more readily caricatured (by those who reject it) than it is appreciated, appropriated, and lived. It is worth while, therefore, to spell out this platitude, in order that both we and those with whom we seek unity may be made aware of its basic simplicity and of its practical complexity and difficulty.

We seek unity in the common, free subjection of man to God as the God who has in measureless condescension drawn near to man. This means: We desire that men be united in a gladly resolute, radical, and total submission of faith to God as he has revealed himself in his Son Jesus Christ; for we can know and have the God of measureless condescension only in Christ, in the once-for-all historic act of his life, death, and resurrection. If we are to hear a word from God which does not annihilate us but gives us life in communion with him, that word must be the Word made flesh. This Word made flesh, this Son of God, in turn, is known to us only and can become ours only by the apostolic word of those who witness to him, those words which the living, potent, and creative presence of the Paraclete has made to be the divinely valid witness

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home to him, at the very beginning and basis of his encounter with God, that God and God's revelation of himself lie completely outside the domain of man's disposing. We are not consulted; and we are not permitted to see into the matter. God's verdict in the Law strikes us in the totality of our existence—there is no place within that existence where we can stand and speak and think of that verdict objectively and critically, as if we were not being struck by it.

And if God's universal verdict of condemnation in the Law lies outside the domain of our disposing and is opaque to our reason, so also is the verdict of acquittal spoken upon all men in the cross and resurrection of Christ and universally proclaimed in the gospel. God's grace is past all finding out and beyond all accounting, being, an act of holy love for the weak who cannot merit it; for sinners who do not want it; for the godless who despise it; and for enemies who resent it. And the way which that grace of God went, the way of the vicarious atonement on the cross, is lucid only to adoration and becomes transparent only in the doxology of the redeemed. And so faith, the inevitable correlate of grace, is man's purely passive and merely receptive *yes* to God's act in Christ, is (as Schrenk has called it) "Pure relatedness to God's redemptive action." Believing man stands before God as Abraham once stood, at dead end so far as all human possibilities were concerned, with all human guarantees and securities stripped from him and only the naked word of Almighty God to hold to—"He staggered not at the promise of God."

Faith holds to the promise, the word of God, against reason, against experience, against feeling. This is *what* makes the question of the inspiration and the authority of Scripture so important and so crucial in the question of church unity; for "Scripture" and "Word of God" belong together, and it is our conviction that they cannot be too tightly bracketed. The statement, "The Bible is the Word of God," unquestioned for more than a millennium and a half of the church's history, is questioned on all hands today; a *significat* of some sort has in our days replaced the forthright *est* of earlier days here, as it has so widely in the case of the Sacrament. As in the case of the Sacrament, so here in the case of Scripture, the truth will not be discovered and the reality will not be found from without.

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to Christ, the effectual loosing and binding word by which Christ and the opened heavens are gained or lost. We have Christ in this inerrantly loosing and binding apostolic word, or we do not have him at all. We seek unity, then, as we seek it under God and in Christ, in a full and common obedience to the Holy Scriptures.

None of this is as yet peculiarly "Missourian" (indeed, we believe and hope that nothing in the nature of the unity we seek is peculiarly "Missourian" in the sense that it first came into the life of the church through us or exists only in us). There is nothing here as yet to set Missouri apart from other communions, much less other Lutherans. What seems to be peculiarly "Missourian" is the radicalness, or stringency, with which Missouri conceives of and applies the criteria of *theocentricity*, *christocentricity*, and *biblicentricity* in its quest for church unity. This is, we trust, no mere whim of rigor on our part but is grounded in the revealed facts of the case, in the nature of man's situation before God, both under his judgment and under his grace.

The Second Article of the Augsburg Confession may serve to illustrate the inner necessity of Missouri's radical insistence on the three notes mentioned above. Here "our churches" set over against the God "of infinite power, wisdom, and goodness" who is confessed in Article One, man as the judicature of God reveals him; they teach "that since the fall of Adam, all men begotten in the natural way are born with sin, that is, without the fear of God, without trust in God, and with concupiscence; and that this disease or vice of origin is truly sin, even now condemning and bringing eternal death upon those not born again through Baptism and the Holy Ghost." Man as man, man by definition, when confronted by the immeasurable might of God will not fear him; confronted by his unfathomable wisdom, will not trust him; confronted by the immeasurable goodness of God, will not turn from his fatal inversion upon himself to find life in him—except by God's creatively renewing action.

Man being man, he has no option as to how seriously he may take God in his revelation of himself, in his dealings with man. From birth and by his birth man literally dies by the word that proceedeth from the mouth of God. However opaque this may be to man's vision, however impenetrable to his probing, it brings

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The question, "To what extent and in what sense is the Bible God's Word?" is not answered by disquisition and definition; it can be answered only in the act of submission. Only in submitting to the verdict of the law and in accepting the promise of the gospel in the concrete fullness with which Scripture conveys both, do we know the Bible as the word of God, as God's word *to us*, but also as God's word quite independently of our response to it nevertheless. For here is the voice of him whom we cannot control or master, who rather masters and controls us in might and mercy, whose word goes its triumphatorial way through mankind, cutting a furrow between life and death and evincing itself as the inescapably divine word in both its effects. It is only when the question of Nicodemus, "How can these things be?" and the question of the men of Nazareth, "Whence hath this man all these things?" have been replaced by the questions of Paul, "Who art thou, Lord?" and "What shall I do, Lord?"—it is only then that we shall be able to say with confidence, "The Bible is the Word of God."

It is therefore perhaps not merely the historical fact that the authority of Scripture was not in dispute between the Reformers and the Roman Church in the sixteenth century that accounts for the absence of an article on Scripture as such in the Lutheran Confessions; nor is that absence viewed by us as a lamentable omission, in view of present-day antitheses. If we give to the Scriptures the glad and whole assent which the Confessors gave them, we shall have our article *De Scriptura* plain and explicit enough for all purposes.

It is this glad and full assent to Scripture as the Word of God that we "Missourians" painfully miss in large areas of Christendom, including Lutheranism, today. It constitutes a block to unity, not merely formally (as constituting a lack of common ground for theological conversation and rapprochement) but also substantially; for here, in the question of Scripture, the fullness and soundness of our Yea to grace in faith becomes concrete and to some degree empirical; for here our Yea is tested in a way peculiarly offensive to our scholarship, our rationality, our intellectual respectability as modern men. Here we are asked whether Theology wants to preen herself as a science among sciences or even as queen of the sciences, or is ready to come under the cross of men's contempt. Here we

are asked in a concrete, inexorable way: "How seriously do you take the verdict of the Second Article of the Augsburg Confession upon man? How radical is your repentance, how resolute your assent to God's verdict in Christ?"

In a day when so little sacrifice is asked of most of us as theologians, this sacrifice looms large, because it is often the only one. It is not, however, a *sacrificium intellectus* that is being called for (the intellect will always be called into full and fruitful play by theology) but a sacrifice of will: are we willing to be consciously and boldly noncritical in our approach to Scripture and thus bear the stigma of being "uncritical" or, what cuts even deeper, "pre-critical"? If we are, we are on the way to discovering that the Bible is not a perplexity and an agony but the good gift of God, the Good Book of which our fathers affectionately spoke. And we are on the way to unity.

The hyphenation "historic-critical," as used of the approach to Scripture, is an insidious one, for it brackets two entities that have become highly disparate. In interpreting Scripture historically man is remaining faithful to Scripture itself, is remaining obedient to the dictates of its "sundry times and divers manners" proclamation. Since God is the God of history and not of myth, since his making and shaping of history together with his interpretation of it (which makes the "secular" transparent as the *magnalia Dei*) is the essential content of Scripture, our study of Scripture must be historical if we would have Scripture as what it is, the continuing revelation of that God who has acted, does act, and shall act for us men and for our salvation.

But there is a tremendous fallacy involved in the hyphenation *historico-critical*, at least when "critical" is understood as it usually is—in the sense that the interpreter steps, as it were, out of his baptism and scrutinizes the words of God "objectively," and puts their validity as God's revelation under question. Is not this to attempt to determine *a priori* what ways the God of history can go and should go? Is not this a regression behind one's baptism to the Adamite man, without fear of God, without trust in him, and with a concupiscence which makes the "*eritis sicut Deus*" ring sweetly in his ears? And is it not in the last analysis as stultifying as it is irreverent—has not the interpreter, who should be the historian of

sentimental preference or on the subjectivity of what we at any given point in history deem to be suited to the needs of the then modern man, makes little difference.

If we Missourians "still" speak of the verbal inspiration of Scripture, we are primarily confessing the incredible miracle of a divine word spoken to sinful man and are proclaiming that that word, for all its servant's form, is of an inviolable sanctity; that if it means anything, it means everything.

The basis of the unity we seek is essentially very simple; it is what St. Paul calls "the obedience of faith." But since it is personal, it is both profound and comprehensive. The verdict of the Law strikes man in the totality of his existence, and the acquittal of the gospel transforms his whole existence. Revolt and perversion are a possibility at a thousand points, and are a real threat at every point; the obedience of faith is actualized at a thousand points and is crucial, for weal or woe and forever, at every point. Therefore the unity we seek takes creedal, confessional form, and The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod appoints a Committee on *Doctrinal* Unity. For the essentially simple act of theocentric, christocentric, bibliocentric submission in this aeon, where men are still in the flesh, needs spelling out.

Ours is a theology of wayfarers, wayfarers who, for all their triumphant and jubilant certainty of the goal, have a very realistic sense of the way they still must go, of the loose stones of uncertainty under their feet, of the crevasses to the right and to the left, and of the invisible but whipping and palpable winds of saranic assault all about them. And in this we are sure that we stand in the apostolic succession. For what is Paul's letter to the Colossians but a spelling out of what it means to call Jesus Lord, to call Him Lord wholly and without reserve, with our whole thought and will, and with all our lives, down to our eating and drinking? And what is Paul's letter to the Romans but an elaborate and detailed spelling out of that common obedience to Christ the Lord without which there can be no common work? If the Romans are to be partners in the gospel as it goes to Spain, their lives, in Paul's opinion, must be brought wholly under that gospel.

We treasure and subscribe to the Lutheran Confessions because they are a classic spelling out of the revelation given in Scripture,

the mighty and overwhelming acts of God, become the pseudo-historian of whom Stauffer has said that he can make no discoveries because he always knows in advance what can happen and what cannot?

The alliance between "historical" and "critical" is therefore theologically not tolerable. Intolerable, too, is any alliance between theology and philosophy. For philosophical man is no longer man under the verdict of God, minded to live by every word which proceedeth from the mouth of God, but is man in revolt against God, whether he knows it or not, whether he wills it or not. The church which mingles the water of philosophy with the wine of God's word is not merely diluting that wine; it is drawing water from poisoned wells. Any attempt to shore up, or to give shape to, theology by means of philosophy is not, therefore, a more or less legitimate approach, depending on how valid or germane the philosophy which is employed happens to be. It is the repetition within Christendom of that "ungodliness" which Paul in the first chapter of the Epistle to the Romans scores as the prime sin of man; it is, in however partial or modified form it may appear, the attempt of man to be something apart from God, to stand outside the judicature of God. And so we have to do here, not with a tolerable latitude in approach but with intolerable revolt.

Any attempt to reduce the revelation of Scripture to philosophy is, moreover, a desperate one. For that very quality of God's revelation which makes it accessible to the simple and therefore makes it universal—the fact that it is the proclamation, not of ideas and of principles, but of an act and a fact—makes it highly resistant to abstraction and any kind of theoretic schematization. Fact and act are not malleable quantities; they will not lie upon the anvil of men's minds or take shape from the hammers of men's reasonings. Creation, redemption, and the eschatological consummation confront us in the banality of once-and-for-all actions of God; when we wrap them in the rawer breath of our speculation, we do not thereby make them more accessible to men who are offended at the fact; we lose them.

It goes almost without saying, therefore, that any attempt at selectivity over against the revelation of God in his word is doomed to failure—whether the selection be based on the subjectivity of

a spelling out with a clarity and a profundity not given to every generation or every century of the church. They are to our minds and hearts the classic response of the church to the great gift of the inspired word. They do not, of course, make every other or further explication of the church's confession superfluous.

The practice of men and of churches, their confession in act to the faith and the hope that is in them, also belongs under the rubric of "the unity we seek." For the word of God deals with whole men; the law of God convicts them wholly; the good news of God transforms their lives wholly; the grace of God in Christ Jesus claims them inexorably and completely. The apostolic word would create men in the image of the apostles and of the Lord who sent them: "Be ye imitators of me, as I am of the Lord." Pure doctrine calls for and creates pure lives. This does not mean that we would overleap the church militant and seek to establish the church triumphant here and now, and make a "pure" church, such as cannot exist this side of the Parousia, the condition and criterion of unity. The church in this aeon is a pure church and has pure doctrine when it knows that it is made up of sinners under the forgiveness of God in Christ; it is translating pure doctrine into practice when it calls sin sin and summons the sinner to repentance, and forgives him with divine authority and without measure or restraint. The church leaves no repentant sinner outside her full fellowship; and she cannot include the man who prefers his sin to that fellowship.

That is why what is usually termed church discipline (a not too happy term, perhaps, for what Matthew 18 describes as the cumulatively benign pressure of the love of the brotherhood upon the erring brother with the intent to win him) looms large in our thinking on unity. It was no Missourian, however, but Adolf Schlatter who said that the church which has lost the power to exclude has lost all real inclusiveness also. This is the basis, to cite but one example, of our often-misunderstood witness against the fraternal orders; James has hard and penetrating words for the two-souled man, and the man who seeks to cleave himself between the cross and the deism and moralism of the fraternal orders is a two-souled man indeed.

Such, then, is the unity we seek. And we do seek unity. If we have remained aloof from ecumenical aggregations, it is because we

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have not seen in them any real and divinely given opportunity for the advancement of real unity, and not because we have sought to hide our light under a bushel. One may seek unity by founding a club, loosely organized and broadly inclusive; or one may seek it by raising a standard about which men may rally. In this embattled aeon the standard would seem to be the more apt and likely figure for the search for unity.

But the military metaphor should not becloud the fact that we seek this unity in meekness, that we have sought to keep ourselves free of arrogance, of doctrinaire cocksureness, and of sectarian bigotry. We are deeply conscious of the fact that we hold this standard aloft with most frail arms and strive to hold it ever more firmly, in the certitude of faith and with a sense of eschatological responsibility. We take no particular pleasure in the role of "His majesty's loyal opposition" which current ecclesiastical history seems to have thrust upon us; and we would assure all men that we seek unity not on our terms but on our Lord's, and that that is an act of love.

*CTCR Response to Request from
Minnesota South and North District Congregations and Calling Entities
regarding Minnesota Statute 604.202*

In correspondence to the CTCR dated July 9, 2018, the Secretary of the Synod, Rev. John W. Sias, submits “a request on behalf of the congregations and other calling entities of the Minnesota South and North Districts” relative to Minnesota Statute 604.202 (previously numbered Statute 148a) and the CTCR’s 1998 opinion on that statute (originally published in the 1998 CW, p. 51, and reaffirmed in its 2003 report on the *Theology and Practice of the ‘Divine Call,’* pages 41-42).

While explicitly noting various “caveats” to his request based on supplementary materials provided along with it, and “without being entirely clear on a workable replacement process,” Rev. Sias nonetheless “respectfully request[s] that the commission evaluate the noted 1998 theological opinion and the related guidance in the 2003 document, *Theology and Practice of the Divine Call*, ‘May Calls Be Conditional?’ to see if the congregations and districts of Minnesota might be granted the freedom to consider a process in which the check is delayed to a period beginning with ‘determination to call, subject to a clear check,’ extension of call, or acceptance and ending with either acceptance or installation.” He goes on to say: “It does seem, after reviewing all this material, that the uncertainty involved may be better accommodated in the present process than in any apparent alternative (Cf. Exhibit 5 [3]); nonetheless, it would be good for the districts to know if there are theologically acceptable options.”

After careful consideration of this request and the supplementary materials accompanying it, the CTCR is of the opinion that “best practice” in this case, both theologically and procedurally, is for congregations and calling entities of the Minnesota North and South Districts to continue to follow the advice and counsel given in the CTCR’s 1998 opinion, i.e.: “It is our recommendation...that as congregations comply with Statute 148a [now 604.202] they be encouraged to exhibit patience and await the response called for in this statute before issuing a call.”

From a theological perspective, such a practice avoids any appearance that the LCMS is or may be departing from its historic position and practice of rejecting “conditional calls” as inconsistent with Lutheran theology. From a practical perspective, it is unclear and uncertain (at best) whether an alternative practice that involves some attempt to comply with Minnesota Statute 604.202 (whether initiated by the districts or by district congregations/calling entities) *after* issuing a call is likely to solve the difficulties involved in the current practice. Indeed, on the basis of some of the information provided in the supplementary materials, there is reason to believe that such an alternative practice may create additional problems and questions (both theological and practical).

At the same time, the CTCR acknowledges the validity of certain questions raised in the supplementary materials about what may or may not constitute a “conditional call.” It is true that “the Divine Call is not wholly ‘unconditional’” in the sense that “the Lord places many

conditions upon the man who can be considered for a call, which explicitly includes being ‘above reproach’” (Pres. Woodford letter of Feb. 5, 2019) and that it is “an intrinsic and biblically defensible condition of any call, that the pastor called not prove to be a sexual exploiter of his counselees” (Rev. Sias letter of July 9, 2018).

In this sense, any call extended to (or held by) a pastor is “conditional” upon his fitness for ministry as defined by Scripture, and (within the LCMS) as further delineated by the Lutheran Confessions and by the rostering requirements and expectations of the Synod itself. This line of argumentation, however, seems to support the point made by the CTCR in the footnote to its 1998 opinion: “State regulations providing for a review of a pastoral candidate’s integrity in the area of sexual ethics need not be feared by the church. Such a statute is not an infringement on the church’s independence or integrity...Such a review seeks to establish that a candidate is not unworthy of the call because of prior sexual misconduct.”

The testimony of the former MNS President, Rev. Lane Seitz, that “during my 21 years as DP, [the current process used by the districts to comply with the statute] did uncover several instances of previously unknown inappropriate behavior by those being considered for a call” (Exhibit 5 of Rev. Sias letter) seems quite relevant here. Despite the “onerous nature” of the current process, the possibility of uncovering inappropriate behavior by a pastor in the area of sexual ethics *prior* to issuing a call seems much preferable to discovering such behavior *after* issuing a call.

*Adopted by the CTCR
April 26, 2019*

1. National Witness

REPORTS

**R1–R1.2.1, R1.2.4–R1.2.5, R1.3,
R5.2, R6, R8, R16–R19, R21–R59**

OVERTURES

Ov. 1-01

To Aid Churches Unable to Support Sole Pastor

WHEREAS, Many congregations in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) are facing declining membership to the point that they are no longer financially able to support the cost of compensating a full-time pastor; and

WHEREAS, The members of these congregations desire to continue to receive Word and Sacrament ministry from an ordained pastor; and

WHEREAS, Most members of the LCMS have little prior knowledge or experience with a congregation shrinking to the point of being unable to support a full-time pastor; and

WHEREAS, In recent years individual churches, circuits, and districts have been forced to deal with this problem through the combining of congregations, transition to worker/priest pastorates, multi-congregation pastorates, part-time pastorates, and closure of congregations; and

WHEREAS, The experiences of these congregations and pastors could prove invaluable to churches facing these same challenges and help to avoid critical mistakes; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Southern District create a task force to investigate and identify the best options for congregations to attempt to address the problem of no longer being able to financially support a pastor and the mistakes congregations should avoid in such situations; and be it further

Resolved, That the task force identify other key problematic areas congregations in such situations have faced that should be addressed early on when facing such challenges; and be it further

Resolved, That the task force present its finding and conclusion in the form of a manual that congregations, circuit visitors, district presidents, and other leaders in the church may use as a tool to competently and proactively address such situations; and be it finally

Resolved, That this same resolution be forwarded as an overture to the Synod at convention to be considered for implementation throughout our church body.

Southern District

Ov. 1-02

To Study Dual- and Multi-Congregation Parish Ministry Situations within the Synod

WHEREAS, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) has currently over 500 dual and multiple parish arrangements being served by sole pastors (which constitutes over 15 percent of our congregations); and

WHEREAS, Due to converging factors of economics, demographics, and unavailability of pastors willing to serve in such ministry situations, many more congregations will be exploring and entering into 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 diverse localities; and

WHEREAS, There are few available materials on this topic, and even fewer from an LCMS perspective; and

WHEREAS, A shortfall of available ministerial candidates may also increase the need for faithful ministry to be conducted under these circumstances; therefore be it

Resolved, That the LCMS in convention direct the Office of National Mission to conduct a study of pastors who have served or are currently serving in dual- or multi-congregation parish settings, as well as the from the partnering congregations themselves to help acquire information on how best to select, prepare, and support those in such settings; and be it further

Resolved, That resources be produced from such study and made widely available that identify “best practices” as well as “pitfalls” (from the perspective of pastors as well as congregations) in arranging and conducting such ministry for the purpose of enhancing the effectiveness of ministry conducted in these contexts.

Circuit 1 (Altenburg)
Missouri District

Ov. 1-03

To Provide and Support Pastors Serving Small Congregations

WHEREAS, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) has hundreds, if not thousands, of congregations in small towns and rural areas; and

WHEREAS, Many of these congregations have less than 50 communicant members; and

WHEREAS, Small congregations have issued numerous calls to pastors which have been declined; and

WHEREAS, Calls are often declined because the salaries offered are insufficient to support a pastor and his family and the cost of benefits including Concordia Plan Services far exceeds the ability of congregations to pay; and

WHEREAS, In many geographical areas small LCMS congregations are often far from any other confessional Lutheran congregation; and

WHEREAS, The souls ministered to in these areas are precious in the eyes of God and Jesus died for them too; and

WHEREAS, Such small and often isolated congregations are centers not only for Word and Sacrament ministry but social and emotional support as well; and

WHEREAS, Such congregations are closing at an alarming rate since pastors are not available to live nearby or serve them with any regularity; and

WHEREAS, In the parable of the lost sheep, the shepherd leaves the 99 sheep to seek the one that is lost, indicating the priceless value of even one soul to Jesus (Matt. 18:10–14); and

WHEREAS, St. Paul urged the congregations in Corinth and Rome to support the ingathering of funds to help the congregation in Jerusalem (Rom. 15:25–28; 1 Cor. 16:1–4; 2 Cor. 8–9); and

WHEREAS, Even the congregations of Macedonia gave generously despite their great poverty (2 Cor. 8:1–5); and

WHEREAS, The poorest among us is rich compared to most of the rest of the world; and

WHEREAS, A one-time offering would be insufficient to abate the great need for pastors in small congregations that are in danger of closing; and

WHEREAS, Other Christian church groups such as Baptists have mission boards and agencies that recruit pastors and assist them in gaining financial support so they can serve small rural churches and live in the communities where they minister; and

WHEREAS, There seems to be a need for a similar board or agency in the LCMS and there are pastors willing to serve small congregations if their financial needs were met; and

WHEREAS, The alarming trend of closures of small congregations will continue unless steps are taken to reverse it; therefore be it

Resolved, That the convention instruct the director of the Office of National Mission and the director of Rural and Small Town Mission to appoint and supervise a committee to study this issue and determine alternative ways of supplying and supporting pastors willing to serve small congregations; and be it further

Resolved, That, should it be determined that the best way to supply and support pastors willing to serve small congregations is through a recognized service organization (RSO), one be organized, activated, and approved as soon as possible, at least before the next Synod convention; and be it further

Resolved, That a new RSO intended to recruit, supply, and assist in supporting pastors for small congregations be enthusiastically endorsed and promoted to the membership of the LCMS; and be it finally

Resolved, That the above appointed committee report back to the next Synod convention detailing its work and progress.

Immanuel
Las Vegas, NM

Ov. 1-04

To Increase Mission Efforts to Immigrants and Ethnic Minorities in North America

WHEREAS, The Lord has obliged his church to preach repentance and forgiveness of sins in his name to all nations (Luke 24:47); and

WHEREAS, The Lord has brought people from all over the world to the United States; and

WHEREAS, Many of the immigrants are non-Christians and live in areas where congregations of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod are not located; and

WHEREAS, The Synod's membership is 95 percent White, 3 percent African American and 2 percent all other ethnicities; and

WHEREAS, The Synod membership in 2018 showed a 21 percent decrease since 2003 (Rosters and statistics, *The Lutheran Witness*, Nov. 2018, 137, 11; Joe Isenhower, "LCMS Congregations Report Membership of 2,488,936." *Reporter*, Oct. 2004, blogs.lcms.org/2004/lcms-congregations-report-membership-of-2488936); and

WHEREAS, Synod in the past has reached and assimilated new immigrants; and

WHEREAS, Synod has the human and financial resources to carry on such mission efforts; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Synod recognize and promote the fact that the United States is a mission field with many ethnic groups and unreached immigrants; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod establish a task force to study what current mission efforts to immigrants and ethnic minorities are taking place within the districts and determine how these ministries can be supplemented; and be it further

Resolved, That the Office of National Mission (ONM) in the next triennium develop five new ethnic ministries in the United States; and be it further

Resolved, That ONM formulate a plan for reaching out to the unreached people in the cities by the use of the Synod's current facilities; and be it further

Resolved, That ONM develop a funding model and a plan for sending out church planters, who would be called by the Synod and sent to the districts; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod support the seminaries in their objective to educate workers for ethnic and immigrant ministries and church planting; and be it finally

Resolved, That the Synod encourage the annual celebration of a Mission Sunday in the congregations.

Faculty
Concordia Theological Seminary

Ov. 1-05

To Include Prison Ministry as Mission Program and Objective of the Synod

Preamble

Our Savior clearly commands us to visit those in prison (Matt. 25:36–40). Jesus also asked us to serve those in prison while reading Isaiah 61:1 in the temple. This is a mission for all Christians and The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) recognizes this ministry as a specific mission ministry with all its resources and strength, noting "reasons the program is so important":

Theological Foundation: Our Savior clearly asks us to visit those in prison. Mathew 25:36–40 reads, "'I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick, and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.' Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?' The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'"

The Scriptures also tell us that Jesus asked us to serve those in prison when he spoke in the temple, reading Isaiah 61:1, "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and the opening of the prison to those who are bound."

Sociological Foundation: We live in an age of mass incarceration. More Americans have been arrested and jailed than ever before in history. This means also a greater number

living under correctional controls such as probation, parole, and court ordered supervision. Rehabilitation poses yet another problem, namely recidivism. Two thirds are rearrested within three years after release, four fifths within nine. Christian concern raises questions of societal safety as well. Almost 3 out of 4 households are burglarized at least once every 20 years. Theft without forcible entry impacts 9 out of 10 families. An effective prison ministry is needed, not only to address the spiritual needs of those who have committed crimes, but also to play an active role in their rehabilitation even after the day of their release. An effective prison ministry is equally concerned with both the criminal and the victims of crime.

Furthermore, according to Synodical Resolution 6-10, adopted at the 1998 [sic; 1995] LCMS National Synodical Convention; The Lutheran Church Missouri Synod, by way of the Synod, Districts, and congregations, endeavors to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ with prisoners, ex-offenders, families of prisoners, prison staff, and victims of crime as it seeks to carry out “The Great Commission.”

Our mission is to share the Gospel message of life and salvation in Jesus Christ with the incarcerated to reach the lost, strengthen the faith of Christian inmates, and encourage them in their faith-walk along with the recently released and those whose lives have been impacted by crime (LCMS Specialized Pastoral Ministry, “Prison and Jail Ministry Plan—‘Not Forgotten,’” *files.lcms.org*, Accessed March 16, 2023).

This ministry is also historically important. The 1998 Synod convention adopted Res. 6-04A, “To Encourage Ministry to the Imprisoned, Ex-Offenders, Their Families, and to Victims of Crime,” referencing 1995 Res. 6-10, “To Emphasize Importance of Prison Ministry,” as a reminder that in some meaningful way the importance of “ministry to the imprisoned, ex-offenders, their families, and to victims of crime” would lead to a viable program providing this ministry on a large scale. Unfortunately, the resolution lost its champion because he was called to be with the Lord and there was no one at that time to take his place.

There can be no mistake of the value and positive reasons why this ministry is important. Jesus himself spoke of this ministry when he was in the temple reciting the words of Isaiah 61:1. Matthew 25:36–40 also speaks clearly that our Savior commands us to do this ministry. The Christology is high, perhaps as high as can be found in all the New Testament. The eschatological discourse in these verses, as Dr. Jeffrey Gibbs says, speaks to it as he offers this prayer in his *Concordia Commentary* on Matthew 25 ([St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2018], 1362) and as the authors of the *Lutheran Service Book (LSB)*, write “For Guidance in our Calling”:

Lord God, You have Your servants to ventures of which we cannot see the ending, by paths as yet untrodden, through perils unknown. Give us faith to go out with good courage, not knowing where we go but only that Your hand is leading us and Your love supporting us; through Jesus Christ, our Lord (*LSB*, 311).

WHEREAS, 1995 Res. 6-10 was approved to emphasize the importance of prison ministry; and

WHEREAS, 1998 Res. 6-04A was approved to encourage ministry to the imprisoned, ex-offenders and families, and to victims of crime; and

WHEREAS, The Synod, empowered by the Holy Spirit in Word and Sacrament, is in a vital position to offer comfort and hope to

people affected by crime so that they may share in reconciliation and abundant life; and

WHEREAS, The goal of the prison ministry program is to include and motivate the Church to seize Gospel opportunities and responsibilities to the imprisoned, ex-offenders, their families, and train persons for ministry with the above; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Synod include prison ministry as a mission program of the Synod and designate this as a mission objective; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod include prison ministry in their activities, provide recruiting and training; and be it finally

Resolved, That the Synod link this mission to all of its districts by providing a web page that will be a central information source for support of all the activities and programs of the mission.

Grace
Los Angeles, CA

Ov. 1-06

To Continue to Address Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Issues

Preamble

Over the course of the 2019–2023 quadrennium, the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) Office of National Mission (ONM) staff reflected on how best to respond to the Synod’s ongoing desired goals, objectives, and possible beneficial actions pertaining to sexual orientation and gender identity issues. The ONM leadership especially considered 2019 Resolution 11-03A, “To Encourage Synod to Develop Resources to Aid Congregations and Schools regarding Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Issues,” particularly its eight resolved statements:

Resolved, That the LCMS in convention affirm and faithfully confess the biblical truth that God created humanity as male and female; and be it further

Resolved, That we regard all those who experience sexual orientation and gender identity issues as our neighbors, beloved of God, and therefore condemn acts of abuse committed against them; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod in convention gives thanks for those individuals who, despite same-sex attraction or gender identity confusion, continue to live chaste and decent lives in repentant faith, and that LCMS congregations, districts, and Synod entities seek the counsel and leadership of such individuals in developing faithful approaches to minister to those who experience same-sex attraction and gender identity confusion; and be it further

Resolved, That pastors and congregations of the Synod be encouraged to minister compassionately to those who experience sexual orientation and gender identity issues through prayer, the proclamation of Law and Gospel, the Sacrament of Holy Baptism, corporate and individual confession and absolution, the proper administration of the Lord’s Supper, the mutual conversation and consolation of the brothers and sisters, and pastoral care; and be it further

Resolved, That pastors and congregations of the Synod be encouraged to minister compassionately to the families, friends, and all others impacted by those who experience same-sex attraction, those who are involved in same-sex relationships, and those whose sexual self-understanding is shaped by a distressing

conflict between their biological sex and their perceived gender identity through prayer, the proclamation of Law and Gospel, the Sacrament of Holy Baptism, corporate and individual confession and absolution, the proper administration of the Lord's Supper, the mutual conversation and consolation of the brothers and sisters, and pastoral care; and be it further

Resolved, That church workers and congregations in the Synod 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*; as well as the treatment of these matters in *Luther's Small Catechism with Explanation* (Concordia Publishing House, 2017); and be it further

Resolved, That the CTCR be directed to prioritize the updating of the 1981 study, *Human Sexuality*; and be it finally

Resolved, That the Synod in convention direct the Office of National Mission, Concordia Publishing House, the seminaries, and the Concordia University System to continue to provide resources that enable the church to confess the truth boldly and minister compassionately both to those who experience sexual orientation and gender identity issues and those who care for them.

The ONM eventually determined to establish an ad hoc task force to undertake further study, immediately feasible actions and the development of recommendations aimed at future Synod actions, and initiatives to address sexual orientation and gender identity issues. The ONM is grateful for the direct participation of the following individuals on the ad hoc task force, chaired by Rev. Christopher Esget (Immanuel Lutheran Church, Alexandria, Va.); Rev. Kevin Robson (Chief Mission Officer); Deac. Dr. Tiffany Manor (ONM); Dr. Mark Rockenbach (faculty member, Concordia Seminary); Ms. Nicole Chappell (ONM); Dr. Gifford Grobien (faculty member, Concordia Theological Seminary); Rev. Kevin Karner (Immanuel Lutheran Church, Bristol, Conn.); Rev Jonathan Lange (St. Paul Lutheran Church, Kemmerer, Wyo. and Our Saviour Lutheran Church, Evanston, Wyo.); Rev Brian Barlow (Resurrection Lutheran Church, Quartz Hill, Calif.); and Rev Jared Melius (Mt. Zion Lutheran Church, Denver, Colo.).

The ad-hoc task force sought to: study, summarize and articulate the current state of Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity resources available to Synod's people and institutions; determine the preferred means of elevating awareness and increasing the use of such resources in the mission and ministry of our congregations, schools, and families; identify and prioritize additional resource development according to current, and future needs; and to outline learnings, recommendations, and future planned work emerging from these outcomes. Pandemic constraints did not allow the task force to complete all of the objectives during the quadrennium.

In view of the still-applicable whereas statements of 2019 Res. 11-03A (*Proceedings*, 215–16), which are entrusted to delegates to 2023 Synod convention for additional reflection, and the ongoing criticality of the work described above, this ad hoc task force is hereby commending, through the LCMS Board for National Mission, the following overture to the 2023 Synod convention.

WHEREAS, In the beginning God created man in his own image, "male and female, he created them" (Gen. 1:27); and

WHEREAS, As the Small Catechism (SC) teaches, "I believe that God has made me and all creatures. He has given me my body and soul, eyes, ears, and all my members" (SC II, First Article); and

WHEREAS, After humanity's fall into sin, Jesus again affirmed God's continuing work: that from the beginning he created them "male and female" (Matt. 19:4); and

WHEREAS, All sexual corruption and confusion result from humanity's fall into sin and often lead to rebellious and sinful acts against God's will (James 1:14–15); and

WHEREAS, All sexual acts outside of faithful, biblical marriage, which is between one man and one woman, are sinful and contrary to God's will (Rom. 13:13; 1 Cor. 6:9–11); and

WHEREAS, Sex, a physical reality created by God, is now considered by many in our culture to be a social construct; and

WHEREAS, The Federal Government of the United States has ruled that marriages may be contracted between two persons of the same sex; and

WHEREAS, The Body of Christ has been called to proclaim His saving Gospel to all the world, including those who are uncertain whether they are "truly" male or female (this does not include intersex individuals, see excursus in LCMS Commission on Theology and Church Relations [CTCR], *Gender Identity Disorder or Gender Dysphoria in Christian Perspective*), those who present themselves as members of the opposite sex in dress and physical appearance, and those who participate in hormonal and/or surgical procedures in an attempt to modify their anatomy from male to female or from female to male; and

WHEREAS, We are called to preach repentance and forgiveness of sins with clarity and compassion to all; and

WHEREAS, The LCMS parochial schools, congregations, seminaries, the Concordia University System (CUS), and individuals in our Synod are experiencing mounting pressure as a result of cultural and legal changes; and

WHEREAS, LCMS church workers and laity have asked for guidance in pastoral care for individuals and families struggling with matters of same-sex attraction and sexual identity issues; and

WHEREAS, The Church is called to support and proclaim the Gospel to all those who struggle with the corrupting power of concupiscence, including those with the propensity toward a myriad of sexual sins and identity confusion; and

WHEREAS, The LCMS has produced resources such as the following CTCR reports: *Gender Identity Disorder or Gender Dysphoria in Christian Perspective* (adopted Sept. 2014); *Human Sexuality: A Theological Perspective* (adopted Sept. 1981); *Response to Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust* (adopted April 2012); and *The Creator's Tapestry: Scriptural Perspectives on Man-Woman Relationships in Marriage and the Church* (adopted Dec. 2009); as well as the treatment of these matters in *Luther's Small Catechism with Explanation* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House [CPH], 2017); and

WHEREAS, The ONM has already established an ad hoc Created Male and Female task force in response to 2019 Res. 11-03A which has begun work on these and related issues; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Synod direct the continuance of said task force for the new triennium, consisting of the current ad-hoc task force members (which includes parish pastors, commissioned church workers, representation from the Council of Presidents, ONM, and the seminaries), and also add to the existing membership

as necessary, to include but not be limited to representation from LCMS Communications, CUS, and CPH; and be it further

Resolved, That the task force consider conducting field research; and be it further

Resolved, That the task force recommend and advocate for strategies and structural approaches to better serve the Church and address the challenges posed by contemporary sexual ethics, and recommend and coordinate implementation with Synod entities and organizations that will best deliver resources to the Church; and be it finally

Resolved, That the task force report to the next Synod convention its work and further recommendations.

Board for National Mission

Ov. 1-07

To Encourage Synod to Develop Resources to Aid Congregations and Schools regarding Gender Identity Issues

WHEREAS, Before mankind's fall into sin, God created Adam and Eve to be distinctly male and female (Gen. 1:27–28; Gen. 2:18–25); 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, Our society includes many persons who are uncertain whether they are truly male or female, others who present themselves as a member of the opposite sex, some who participate in hormonal or surgical procedures in an attempt to change their God-given sex, and yet others who reject that there are only two genders; and

WHEREAS, Congregations, schools, and individuals in our Missouri District are experiencing mounting pressures as a result of cultural changes and legal challenges on this topic; and

WHEREAS, Many church workers and laity have asked for guidance in pastoral care for individuals and families struggling with matters of gender identity issues; and

WHEREAS, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) has recently produced resources such as the Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR) document, *Gender Identity Disorder or Gender Dysphoria in Christian Perspective* (adopted 2014); therefore be it

Resolved, That the district in convention affirm and faithfully confess the biblical truth that God creates people as male and female; and be it further

Resolved, That the pastors, congregations, and schools of the district continue to deal compassionately with those who experience 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, congregations, and schools of the district continue to deal compassionately with the family, friends, and all others impacted by those who suffer with gender identity issues through the Means of Grace; and be it further

Resolved, That church workers and congregations in the district be encouraged to study and discuss 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 gender identity issues as well as with those who care for them.

Missouri District

Ov. 1-08

To Direct Districts and Council of Presidents to Provide Strategic and Comprehensive Plan for Worker Care

WHEREAS, One of the objectives of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) is to “Recruit and train pastors, teachers, and other professional church workers and *provide opportunity for their continuing growth*” (Constitution Article III 3); and

WHEREAS, Another objective of the LCMS is to “Provide evangelical supervision, counsel, and *care for pastors, teachers, and other professional church workers* of the Synod in the performance of their official duties” (Const. Art. III 8); and

WHEREAS, Yet another objective of the LCMS is to “Aid in *providing for the welfare of pastors, teachers, and other church workers, and their families* in the event of illness, disability, retirement, special need, or death” (Const. Art. III 10); and

WHEREAS, 2016 Resolution 18-02A tasked the Board for National Mission to develop policies for assessing worker wellness and make recommendations for worker care; and

WHEREAS, A report was made to the 2019 Synod convention stating the progress of such policies, which includes a webpage on worker wellness on the Synod website; and

WHEREAS, Worker wellness and health—physically, spiritually, emotionally, and relationally—continues to be a significant issue for the church, especially post-COVID and in light of a March 2022 Barna report indicating that 42 percent of pastors considered quitting full-time ministry in the past year, and 46 percent of pastors under the age of 45 considered the same; and

WHEREAS, Such statistics indicate the need to further prioritize this Synod objective; and

WHEREAS, There were no resolutions passed addressing worker wellness and care in the 2019 Synod convention, nor was there a floor committee to consider any such resolutions (which followed the 2016 Synod convention where the 18th and last floor committee focused on worker wellness); and

WHEREAS, A significant aspect of ecclesiastical supervision is “evangelical encouragement and support, care, protection, counsel ...” (Bylaw 1.2.1 [j]), a responsibility intentionally passed down to district presidents to be more effectively administered on a local level; and

WHEREAS, Such care takes on various forms and takes place to differing degrees across the Synod's districts; and

WHEREAS, The Texas District provides one model for care that has positively impacted the health of church workers and their families through a strategic and comprehensive collaboration of counselors, coaches, and mentors, a model which could either potentially be replicated by other districts individually or through partnerships, or could serve as a guide to other district presidents and the members of the Council of Presidents (COP) to develop and

provide a strategic and comprehensive plan for worker care as part of their responsibility for ecclesiastical supervision; therefore be it

Resolved, That the COP prioritize the matter of wellness of church workers and their families through the development of a strategic and comprehensive plan of worker care that can be disseminated to and replicated by the district presidents; and be it further

Resolved, That the 2023 Synod in convention direct the district presidents and district boards of directors to establish such plans for care of workers and their families, utilizing the COP resources or their equivalent; and be it finally

Resolved, That Texas District Board of Directors memorialize the 2023 Synod in convention with this overture.

Board of Directors
Texas District

Ov. 1-09

To Address Mental Health among Called Church Workers

WHEREAS, In the post COVID-19 world, stress, worker burnout and other mental health issues have become an even greater issue for professional church workers; and

WHEREAS, According to Barna research conducted in 2021, 40 percent of America's pastors rated themselves as average and below in emotional well-being (Barna Group, www.barna.com/research/pastors-well-being, November 16, 2021); and

WHEREAS, The results of a Barna research poll conducted in March of 2022 (Barna Group, www.barna.com/research/pastors-quitting-ministry, April 27, 2022) found that 42 percent of American pastors have "given real, serious consideration to quitting being in full-time ministry within the last year," which is a 13 percent increase from January 2021 (Barna Group, www.barna.com/research/pastors-well-being, November 16, 2021); and

WHEREAS, The results of a Barna research poll conducted in March of 2022 found that "Over half of pastors who have considered quitting full-time ministry (56 percent) say 'the immense stress of the job' has factored into their thoughts on leaving" (Barna Group, www.barna.com/research/pastors-quitting-ministry, April 27, 2022), a sentiment consistent with all professional church workers; and

WHEREAS, As reported in the October 22, 2021 edition of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) *Reporter*, "50 percent of the Synod's current, active pastors are 55 years or older" and predicts that "if seminary enrollment and pastor retirements continue at their current rates, the Synod could go from 6,000 to 3,000 pastors in the next 15 years," a total that does not include pastors resigning from their call due to mental health concerns or "burnout" (Cheryl Magness, "'Set Apart to Serve': Church Worker Recruitment Initiative gets new name," *Reporter Online*, October 22, 2021, reporter.lcms.org/2021/set-apart-to-serve-church-worker-recruitment-initiative-gets-new-name); and

WHEREAS, Our called church workers are encouraged to obtain a physical exam each year and mental health should be a part of that self-care, which is consistent with the eighth objective of the Synod and the fifth mission priority of the Synod, as both are intended to

promote the care and the well-being of pastors and professional church workers; and

WHEREAS, With support and help, professional church workers can help to remove some of the stigma associated with mental health care by taking care of their own mental health and informing their congregation of their needs; therefore be it

Resolved, That all church workers on the roster of the Synod be encouraged to use the Concordia Plan Services Employee Assistance Program, or other similar programs to obtain mental health care as needed; and be it further

Resolved, That the congregations of the LCMS be encouraged to support the mental well-being of their pastors and called church workers and allow them paid time away from the congregation for respite and renewal which is not counted against their vacation time; and be it further

Resolved, That the congregations of the LCMS be encouraged to support their pastors and called church workers in times of mental distress; and be it finally

Resolved, That each district of the LCMS be encouraged to make available a mental health advocate, for pastors and all professional church workers, which can be a paid or a voluntary position, to provide care, support and encouragement in addressing mental health concerns and or to communicate mental health related educational opportunities, resources, and grant opportunities for the support of mental well-being to the pastors, church workers and congregations of each district of the Synod.

Board of Directors
Nebraska District

Ov. 1-10

To Address Mental Health among Called Church Workers

WHEREAS, According to Barna research conducted in 2021, when asked to rate their emotional well-being choosing between excellent, good, average, below average, and poor, 40 percent of America's pastors rated themselves as average and below in emotional well-being (Barna Group, www.barna.com/research/pastors-well-being, November 16, 2021); and

WHEREAS, The results of a Barna research poll conducted in March of 2022 (Barna Group, www.barna.com/research/pastors-quitting-ministry, April 27, 2022) found that 42 percent of American pastors have "given real, serious consideration to quitting being in full-time ministry within the last year," which is a 13 percent increase from January 2021 (Barna Group, www.barna.com/research/pastors-well-being, November 16, 2021); and

WHEREAS, The results of a Barna research poll conducted in March of 2022 found that "Over half of pastors who have considered quitting full-time ministry (56 percent) say 'the immense stress of the job' has factored into their thoughts on leaving." (Barna Group, www.barna.com/research/pastors-quitting-ministry, April 27, 2022); and

WHEREAS, The October 22, 2021 edition of the *Reporter* stated that "50 percent of the Synod's current, active pastors are 55 years or older" and predicts that "if seminary enrollment and pastor retirements continue at their current rates, the Synod could go from

6,000 to 3,000 pastors in the next 15 years” and these statistics do not include pastors resigning from their call due to mental health concerns (Cheryl Magness, “‘Set Apart to Serve’: Church Worker Recruitment Initiative gets new name,” *Reporter Online*, October 22, 2021, reporter.lcms.org/2021/set-apart-to-serve-church-worker-recruitment-initiative-gets-new-name); and

WHEREAS, Our called church workers are encouraged to obtain a physical exam each year; and

WHEREAS, The brain is also an organ in the body; and

WHEREAS, The world is in a fallen state (Genesis 3) and sin separates us from God (Isa. 59:2), corrupting creation as it groans for freedom from its state of decay (Rom. 8:21–22); and

WHEREAS, The fall of mankind has had physical ramifications for the body and spiritual effects on the soul and mental health is not guaranteed any more than physical health is, and, like the body, the mind can get sick or injured; and

WHEREAS, Constitution Article III 8 states that “The Synod, under the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions, shall...provide evangelical supervision, counsel, and care for pastors, teachers, and other professional church workers of the Synod in the performance of their official duties”; and

WHEREAS, It would be beneficial to their work for pastors and other called church workers to be mindful of their mental health; and

WHEREAS, Pastors and other called workers can be instrumental in removing the stigma associated with mental health by seeing to their own mental health and informing their congregation; therefore be it

Resolved, That circuit visitors encourage the church workers within their respective circuits on the roster of the Synod to use the Concordia Plans Employee Assistance Program, or another program available to them, to obtain an annual mental health check-up; and be it further

Resolved, That district presidents and circuit visitors encourage the congregations of the Synod to support the mental well-being of their called church workers and allow them paid time away from the congregation for respite and renewal which is not counted against their vacation time; and be it further

Resolved, That district presidents and circuit visitors encourage and work with the congregations of their district and circuit to support their called church workers in times of mental distress; and be it finally

Resolved, That the Office of National Mission encourage the board of directors of each district to work towards a goal of creating a position of mental health advocate, which can be paid or voluntary, to provide the called church workers of each district support and encouragement in addressing mental health concerns—with the provision that the mental health advocate shall not report confidential mental health information to the district and its officers—and to communicate mental health related educational opportunities, resources, and grant opportunities for the support of mental well-being to the church workers and congregations of the district.

Pastors’ Conference
Indiana District

Ov. 1-11

To Address Mental Health among Called Church Workers

WHEREAS, According to Barna research conducted in 2021, when asked to rate their emotional well-being choosing between excellent, good, average, below average, and poor, 40 percent of America’s pastors rated themselves as average and below in emotional well-being (Barna Group, www.barna.com/research/pastors-well-being, November 16, 2021); and

WHEREAS, The results of a Barna research poll conducted in March 2022 found that 42 percent of American pastors have “given real, serious consideration to quitting being in full-time ministry within the last year,” which is a 13 percent increase from January 2021, (Barna Group, www.barna.com/research/pastors-quitting-ministry, April 27, 2022); and

WHEREAS, The results of a Barna research poll conducted in March 2022 found that “Over half of pastors who have considered quitting full-time ministry, 56 percent say ‘the immense stress of the job’ has factored into their thoughts on leaving” (Barna Group, www.barna.com/research/pastors-quitting-ministry, April 27, 2022); and

WHEREAS, The October 22, 2021 edition of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) *Reporter* stated that “50 percent of the Synod’s current, active pastors are 55 years or older” and predicts that “if seminary enrollment and pastor retirements continue at their current rates, the Synod could go from 6,000 to 3,000 pastors in the next 15 years” and these statistics do not include pastors resigning from their call due to mental health concerns (Cheryl Magness, “‘Set Apart to Serve’: Church Worker Recruitment Initiative gets new name,” *Reporter Online*, October 22, 2021, reporter.lcms.org/2021/set-apart-to-serve-church-worker-recruitment-initiative-gets-new-name); and

WHEREAS, Our called church workers are encouraged to obtain a physical exam each year; and

WHEREAS, The brain is also an organ in the body; and

WHEREAS, Constitution Article III 8 states that “The Synod, under the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions, shall...provide evangelical supervision, counsel, and care for pastors, teachers, and other professional church workers of the Synod in the performance of their official duties”; and

WHEREAS, It would be beneficial to their work for pastors and other called church workers to be mindful of their mental health; and

WHEREAS, Pastors and other called workers can be instrumental in removing the stigma associated with mental health by seeing to their own mental health and informing their congregation; therefore be it

Resolved, That all church workers on the roster of the LCMS be encouraged to use the Concordia Plan Services Employee Assistance Program, or another LCMS doctrinally approved program available to them to obtain an annual mental health check-up; and be it further

Resolved, That the congregations of the LCMS be encouraged to support the mental well-being of their called church workers and allow them paid time away from the congregation for respite and

renewal which is not counted against their vacation time; and be it further

Resolved, That the congregations of the LCMS be encouraged to support their called church workers in times of mental distress; and be it finally

Resolved, That each district of the LCMS be encouraged to create a position of Mental Health Advocate, which can be paid or voluntary, to provide the called church workers of each district support and encouragement in addressing mental health concerns and to communicate mental health related educational opportunities, resources, and grant opportunities for the support of mental well-being to the church workers and congregations of the district.

Professional Workers' Conference (Western Region)
English District

Ov. 1-12

To Address Mental Health among Called Church Workers

WHEREAS, According to Barna research conducted in 2021, when asked to rate their emotional well-being choosing between excellent, good, average, below average, and poor, 40 percent of America's pastors rated themselves as average and below in emotional well-being (Barna Group, www.barna.com/research/pastors-well-being, November 16, 2021); and

WHEREAS, The results of a Barna research poll conducted in March of 2022 (Barna Group, www.barna.com/research/pastors-quitting-ministry, April 27, 2022) found that 42 percent of American pastors have "given real, serious consideration to quitting being in full-time ministry within the last year," which is a 13 percent increase from January 2021 (Barna Group, www.barna.com/research/pastors-well-being, November 16, 2021); and

WHEREAS, The results of a Barna research poll conducted in March of 2022 found that "Over half of pastors who have considered quitting full-time ministry (56 percent) say 'the immense stress of the job' has factored into their thoughts on leaving." (Barna Group, www.barna.com/research/pastors-quitting-ministry, April 27, 2022); and

WHEREAS, The October 22, 2021 edition of the *Reporter* stated that "50 percent of the Synod's current, active pastors are 55 years or older" and predicts that "if seminary enrollment and pastor retirements continue at their current rates, the Synod could go from 6,000 to 3,000 pastors in the next 15 years" and these statistics do not include pastors resigning from their call due to mental health concerns (Cheryl Magness, "'Set Apart to Serve': Church Worker Recruitment Initiative gets new name," *Reporter Online*, October 22, 2021, reporter.lcms.org/2021/set-apart-to-serve-church-worker-recruitment-initiative-gets-new-name); and

WHEREAS, Our called church workers are encouraged to obtain a physical exam each year; and

WHEREAS, The brain is also an organ in the body; and

WHEREAS, The world is in a fallen state (Genesis 3) and sin separates us from God (Isa. 59:2), corrupting creation as it groans for freedom from its state of decay (Rom. 8:21–22); and

WHEREAS, The fall of mankind has had physical ramifications for the body and spiritual effects on the soul and mental health is not guaranteed any more than physical health is, and, like the body, the mind can get sick or injured; and

WHEREAS, Constitution Article III 8 states that "The Synod, under the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions, shall...provide evangelical supervision, counsel, and care for pastors, teachers, and other professional church workers of the Synod in the performance of their official duties"; and

WHEREAS, It would be beneficial to their work for pastors and other called church workers to be mindful of their mental health; and

WHEREAS, Pastors and other called workers can be instrumental in removing the stigma associated with mental health by seeing to their own mental health and informing their congregation; therefore be it

Resolved, That all church workers on the roster of the Synod be encouraged to use the Concordia Plans Employee Assistance Program, or another program available to them, to obtain an annual mental health check-up; and be it further

Resolved, That the congregations of the Synod be encouraged to support the mental well-being of their called church workers and allow them paid time away from the congregation for respite and renewal which is not counted against their vacation time; and be it further

Resolved, That the congregations of the Synod be encouraged to support their called church workers in times of mental distress; and be it finally

Resolved, That each district be encouraged to create a position of mental health advocate, which can be paid or voluntary, to provide the called church workers of each district support and encouragement in addressing mental health concerns and to communicate mental health related educational opportunities, resources, and grant opportunities for the support of mental well-being to the church workers and congregations of the district.

Ascension, Fort Wayne, IN; Our Hope, Hometown, IN;
St. James, Logansport, IN; Circuit 10 (Lafayette), Indiana District

Ov. 1-13

To Address Mental Health among Called Church Workers

WHEREAS, According to Barna research conducted in 2021, when asked to rate their emotional well-being choosing between excellent, good, average, below average, and poor, 40 percent of America's pastors rated themselves as average and below in emotional well-being (Barna Group, www.barna.com/research/pastors-well-being, November 16, 2021); and

WHEREAS, The results of a Barna research poll conducted in March of 2022 (Barna Group, www.barna.com/research/pastors-quitting-ministry, April 27, 2022) found that 42 percent of American pastors have "given real, serious consideration to quitting being in full-time ministry within the last year," which is a 13 percent increase from January 2021 (Barna Group, www.barna.com/research/pastors-well-being, November 16, 2021); and

WHEREAS, The results of a Barna research poll conducted in March of 2022 found that “Over half of pastors who have considered quitting full-time ministry (56 percent) say ‘the immense stress of the job’ has factored into their thoughts on leaving.” (Barna Group, www.barna.com/research/pastors-quitting-ministry, April 27, 2022); and

WHEREAS, The October 22, 2021 edition of the *Reporter* stated that “50 percent of the Synod’s current, active pastors are 55 years or older” and predicts that “if seminary enrollment and pastor retirements continue at their current rates, the Synod could go from 6,000 to 3,000 pastors in the next 15 years” and these statistics do not include pastors resigning from their call due to mental health concerns (Cheryl Magness, “‘Set Apart to Serve’: Church Worker Recruitment Initiative gets new name,” *Reporter Online*, October 22, 2021, reporter.lcms.org/2021/set-apart-to-serve-church-worker-recruitment-initiative-gets-new-name); and

WHEREAS, Our called church workers are encouraged to obtain a physical exam each year; and

WHEREAS, The brain is also an organ in the body; and

WHEREAS, The world is in a fallen state (Genesis 3) and sin separates us from God (Isa. 59:2), corrupting creation as it groans for freedom from its state of decay (Rom. 8:21–22); and

WHEREAS, The fall of mankind has had physical ramifications for the body and spiritual effects on the soul and mental health is not guaranteed any more than physical health is, and, like the body, the mind can get sick or injured; and

WHEREAS, Constitution Article III 8 states that “The Synod, under the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions, shall...provide evangelical supervision, counsel, and care for pastors, teachers, and other professional church workers of the Synod in the performance of their official duties”; and

WHEREAS, It would be beneficial to their work for pastors and other called church workers to be mindful of their mental health; and

WHEREAS, Pastors and other called workers can be instrumental in removing the stigma associated with mental health by seeing to their own mental health and informing their congregation; therefore be it

Resolved, That all church workers on the roster of Synod be encouraged to use the Concordia Plans Employee Assistance Program, or another program available to them, to obtain an annual mental health check-up; and be it further

Resolved, That the congregations of the Synod be encouraged to support the mental well-being of their called church workers and allow them paid time away from the congregation for respite and renewal which is not counted against their vacation time; and be it finally

Resolved, That the congregations of the Synod be encouraged to support their called church workers in times of mental distress.

Circuit 12 (Kokomo)
Indiana District

Ov. 1-14

To Encourage Production, Promotion, and Use of Online Resources

WHEREAS, The Lutheran church has a rich history of using emerging media for the sake of spreading the Gospel and training lay persons and professional church workers, as evidenced by such things as Luther’s *Small Catechism* and the Lutheran Hour Ministries (LHM) radio ministry; and

WHEREAS, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and Concordia Publishing House (CPH) are to be commended for their use of print media throughout the history of Synod for the training and support of many; and

WHEREAS, CPH and LHM are to be commended for their production of video materials in recent years; and

WHEREAS, The emergence of the COVID-19 lockdown has pushed many ministries to gain the ability to produce video and emerging media resources in their local congregations; and

WHEREAS, Recognizing that, due to the time and effort put into these endeavors, organizations such as CPH and LHM may not be able to keep up with the demand of congregations; and

WHEREAS, “The Board for National Mission is charged with developing and determining policies for the coordination of and in support of district ministries which support congregations and schools” (Bylaw 3.8.2); and

WHEREAS, “Policies determined by the board (implemented by staff) may include but not be limited to:

- strong national mission leadership
- Lutheran school ministries and accreditation
- human care and domestic mercy efforts
- stewardship
- evangelism
- church planting and revitalization
- youth ministry” (Bylaw 3.8.2)

therefore be it

Resolved, That the Board for National Mission (BNM) be charged with an additional responsibility of the development and determination of policies that will aid districts in the task of creation and curation of Gospel proclamation using new and emerging media; and be it further

Resolved, That the BNM oversee the creation of a synodwide online database of online training and Gospel proclamation tools made by local congregations and districts for use by Synod congregations; and be it further

Resolved, That the BNM seek to provide these resources under Creative Commons licensing or other licensing that allows for congregational use without copyright infringements; and be it finally

Resolved, That local congregations and districts of the Synod be equipped and encouraged to engage in the task of content creation in new and emerging media that may be shared with all the congregations of the Synod.

Board of Directors
Florida-Georgia District

2. International Witness

REPORTS

**R1–R1.2, R1.2.2, R1.2.4, R5.2,
R7–R8, R12, R56–R57, R66.7**

OVERTURES

Ov. 2-01

To Strengthen and Support Key International Mission Initiatives

WHEREAS, The Office of International Mission (OIM), under the objectives of Synod (Constitution Article III), this past quadrennium's mission emphasis (*Making Disciples for Life*), and seven mission priorities adopted and affirmed by the Synod in convention (2019 Resolution 4-03A, "To Commend to Synod Priorities for Mission and Ministry Emphasis for the 2019–2022 Triennium"), the supervision of the Synod President and Chief Mission Officer, and the oversight and policies of the Board for International Mission (BIM), has continued to carry out its work under the trifold framework of spreading the Gospel, planting Lutheran churches, and showing mercy; and

WHEREAS, Since the 2019 convention, the Synod has been blessed with pleasing progress and outcomes realized by the OIM in close collaboration with the Synod's international church partners, congregations and congregation members, contributors, districts, universities and seminaries, auxiliaries, recognized service organizations (RSO), and synodwide corporate entities, all working to advance key international mission initiatives both ongoing and new; and

WHEREAS, Such pleasing progress and outcomes with respect to these key international mission initiatives have been frequently recorded and joyously reported through various Synod publications (including *Reporter*, *The Lutheran Witness*, and *Lutherans Engage the World*) and media produced and disseminated through The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod Communications department, Synod board and committee meetings and minutes, and the Office of the President; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Synod give thanks to God, commend, and direct the BIM and OIM over the coming triennium to continue to establish and refine policies, strategic and operational plans, and budgets and further develop, expand, and strengthen implementation of the Synod's international mission work inclusive of, but not limited to, the following categories:

- international pastoral and diaconal formation and continuing education for partner church workers, including international seminaries, other theological education and pastor and church worker conferences;
- church planting, including collaboration with international church partners;
- the Alliance Missionary Project, deploying rostered church workers called and sent by international church partners, with administrative and financial support and supervisory coordination provided by the OIM;

- network supported missionary funding and other direct support for missionaries called by the BIM and deployed and supervised by the OIM;
- collaboration in partnership and engagement in international mission efforts with direct involvement of the Synod congregations, congregation members and church workers (i.e., using the successful FORO model used within the OIM's Latin America-Caribbean Region);
- short-term volunteer mission teams;
- Ministry to the Armed Forces;
- mercy initiatives, including international disaster response, in close proximity to Word and Sacrament ministry; and
- missionary recruitment;

and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod direct district officers, leadership, and staff to give intentional priority and advocacy for district support (i.e., in the distribution of literature or other media, provision of opportunities for presentations to individuals or groups, gifts, volunteer or compensated labor) for international mission work under the aforementioned categories; and be it finally

Resolved, That the Synod encourage congregations and congregation members, contributors, universities, and seminaries, auxiliaries, RSOs and synodwide corporate entities to give intentional priority and advocacy for their support (i.e., in the distribution of literature or other media, provision of opportunities for presentations to individuals or groups, gifts, volunteer or compensated labor) for international mission work under the aforementioned categories.

Board for International Mission

Ov. 2-02

To Commend, Strengthen, and Give Thanks for Alliance Missionary Project

WHEREAS, The Alliance Missionary Project of the Office of International Mission (OIM) is an initiative crossing decades of the Synod's recent history, under which church workers on rosters of the Synod's international Lutheran church partners are called and sent by their own church bodies into foreign mission areas of the Synod, with administrative and financial support and supervisory coordination provided by the OIM; and

WHEREAS, Over the past quadrennium, the Alliance Missionary Project notably has been expanding with respect to the number of church workers called, sent, and supported as they spread the Gospel, plant Lutheran churches, and show mercy in the foreign mission areas of the Synod; and

WHEREAS, The Alliance Missionary Project currently embraces 20 active alliance missionaries called and sent from eight calling and sending Lutheran church partners (located in Australia, Bolivia, Brazil, Kenya, Nigeria, Paraguay, Taiwan, and Venezuela), working in 15 mission fields (Belize, Dominican Republic, Ethiopia, Guatemala, Jamaica, Macau, Panama, Peru, Puerto Rico, Republic of Congo, South Africa, Spain, Taiwan, Uganda, and Uruguay) and proclaiming the Gospel in four languages (English, French, Mandarin, and Spanish); and

WHEREAS, Two of these currently-serving alliance missionaries began their work in 2003 and 2008, respectively; and

WHEREAS, The Alliance Missionary Project draws on long-held generational relationships, that are dearly held between the Synod and beloved Lutheran church partners, in which richly accumulated and mutually shared histories and experiences are directly applied to contemporary mission opportunities facing global Lutheranism; and

WHEREAS, The Alliance Missionary Project expands the overseas mission capacity of the Synod as we jointly take the Gospel into foreign mission areas along with, in many cases, historic daughter churches of the Synod that were originally planted out of the work of Synod missionaries; and

WHEREAS, The Alliance Missionary Project expands the overseas mission capacity of the Synod's international Lutheran church partners, for which they have expressed deep joy and thanksgiving; and

WHEREAS, Alliance missionaries strongly complement and enrich the work of Synod-called or appointed missionaries; and

WHEREAS, The Alliance Missionary Project affords numerous opportunities for excellent stewardship of collective resources (i.e., funds, materials, manpower, administration) shared between the Synod and international church partners; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Synod commend the OIM for its comprehensive work in continuing, developing, and expanding the Alliance Missionary Project and for its ongoing efforts to improve the same; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod direct the OIM, working under established policies and oversight provided by the Board for International Mission, to continue to identify and address new opportunities in the Synod's foreign mission areas where alliance missionaries might be appropriately called and deployed to carry out the church's mission; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod encourage congregations and districts to continue to support the Alliance Missionary Project with gifts, prayers, and coordinated efforts under the supervision of the OIM; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod give thanks to God for the expansion of the Church's global mission resulting from the Alliance Missionary Project and for all of the Synod's beloved international church partners involved in the Alliance Missionary Project to date; and be it finally

Resolved, That the Synod give special commendation and thanks to the *Igreja Evangélica Luterana do Brasil* (Evangelical Lutheran Church of Brazil) for its recent close partnership and engaged co-development and improvement of the Alliance Missionary Project, including its committed investment in the calling, deployment, and continuing support of its rostered church workers in the furtherance of this important initiative.

Board for International Mission

Ov. 2-03

To Further Refine and Improve Ecclesiastical Supervision and Pastoral Care of Missionaries

WHEREAS, Owing to the exceptional nature of the family, life, and work circumstances of missionaries and their family members who are called or appointed and deployed to serve in overseas foreign mission areas of the Synod, especially with respect to residing and working in locations far removed from their

originating U.S.-based home congregations, pastors, district, and ecclesiastical supervisors, the Office of International Mission (OIM) intentionally provides, without exception, pastoral and spiritual care and visitation to Synod missionaries by considering carefully their placement and service in proximity to regularly available Word and Sacrament ministry, often through local Lutheran church partner bodies and congregations, or alternatively through locally-available OIM chaplains; and

WHEREAS, The willing receptivity of Synod overseas missionaries and their families to receive such pastoral and spiritual care and visitation through regular means provided by the OIM is but one expression (among others) of church worker health, wellness, and unity with other Synod missionaries and OIM staff, especially those deployed together in overseas foreign mission areas of the Synod; and

WHEREAS, It must be acknowledged that consistent and effectual pastoral and spiritual care, visitation, and ecclesiastical supervision, especially in the ministry of Word and Sacrament, is challengingly difficult to provide—if not impossible in some instances—to the Synod's overseas missionaries from U.S.-based home congregations, pastors, districts, and ecclesiastical supervisors; and

WHEREAS, The OIM is profoundly thankful to God for the ongoing prayers and active expressions of love, pastoral and spiritual care, visitation, and ecclesiastical supervision provided by U.S.-based home congregations, pastors, districts, and ecclesiastical supervisors to the Synod's overseas missionaries; and

WHEREAS, Such situations occasionally present ambiguities about individual, ongoing roles and responsibilities with the respect to the provision of pastoral and spiritual care, visitation, and ecclesiastical supervision to the Synod's overseas missionaries, raising questions from the Synod's overseas missionaries such as, "Who is my pastor?" or "Which congregation do I belong to?" or "Do I transfer my congregation membership?" or "Who is my ecclesiastical supervisor in this matter?"; and

WHEREAS, Such ambiguities and questions may only increase if the OIM is blessed to deploy increasing numbers of overseas missionaries, as is prayed for and anticipated; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Synod direct the Board for International Mission (BIM), working over the 2023–2026 triennium in collaboration and consultation with the Chief Mission Officer, the OIM, and the Council of Presidents (COP), to undertake an assessment of current policies, procedures, and practices pertaining to the Synod's ecclesiastical supervision and pastoral and spiritual care of the Synod's missionaries who are called or appointed and deployed to work in overseas foreign mission areas of the Synod; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod, reflecting a desire for expeditious and continuous improvement wherever feasible, encourage the BIM, OIM, and COP to identify and promptly implement measures to improve the ecclesiastical supervision and pastoral and spiritual care of the Synod's missionaries working in the overseas foreign mission areas of the Synod, even while the aforementioned assessment is being carried out; and be it finally

Resolved, That the Synod direct the BIM to prepare and publish a concluding report of its assessment, including changes to policies, procedures, and practices implemented over the 2023–2026 triennium and additional recommendations for further Synod action (potentially including, but not limited to, overtures for beneficial

Synod bylaw amendments) in the *Convention Workbook* of the 2026 Synod convention.

Board for International Mission

Ov. 2-04

To Provide Resources to Assist Consideration of Requests to Support Mission Work

WHEREAS, The Synod's church workers, congregations, congregation members, districts, universities and seminaries, auxiliaries, recognized service organizations (RSO), and synodwide corporate entities are not infrequently approached by organizations or individuals requesting consideration for support—in the form of financial contributions, materials, or manpower (volunteer or otherwise)—for various mission initiatives, objectives, and actions located both in the U.S. and around the globe; and

WHEREAS, Many organizations or individuals requesting such support have little or no discernable connection or coordination with the Synod's confessional and scriptural standards, Synod mission objectives, emphases and priorities or Synod boards, committees, and staff who have been assigned and authorized by the Synod to carry out same or similar mission initiatives, objectives, and actions (i.e., to cite only one example, the assignments and responsibilities given to the Synod's mission boards and offices under Bylaw Section 3.8); and

WHEREAS, Synod church workers, congregations and congregation members, districts, universities and seminaries, auxiliaries, RSOs, and synodwide corporate entities who receive requests for such support sincerely desire to expand the church's mission and ministry of the Gospel in a manner that: (1) expresses excellent stewardship of the abundant resources that God graciously provides for such worthy endeavors; (2) reflects a continuing determination to walk together as a Synod in unity of confession, purpose, and action; and (3) demonstrates such unity in an intentional, praiseworthy practice of communication, coordination, cooperation, and collaboration ("4C's"); and

WHEREAS, The Synod has already laid high expectations and standards on her auxiliaries (i.e., Bylaws 6.1.1; 6.1.2.1 [c–d]; 6.1.3 [c, f–g]) and RSOs (i.e., Bylaws 6.2.1; 6.2.1 [b–e]) for the planning and implementation of mission initiatives, programs and actions that reflect such excellent stewardship, unity, and "4C" practices; and

WHEREAS, Where such excellent stewardship, unity and "4C" practices are lacking, the Synod's church workers, congregations, congregation members, districts, universities and seminaries, auxiliaries, RSOs, and synodwide corporate entities may suffer unintended confusion, disruptive developments, disappointing outcomes and losses in the church's joyful work and life together, and protocols established with Synod's global church partners may be breached, resulting in unintended offense against such church partners' expectations regarding mutually-acknowledged rights and work in fellowship with the Synod; and

WHEREAS, To cite a prior successful example of stewardship, unity, and "4C" practices, a revised short-term mission "Best Practices" document, developed and disseminated by the Office of International Mission (OIM) in fulfillment of 2019 Resolution 2-06, "To Encourage Support of Short-Term International Mission Activities" has been well-used and much appreciated by the Synod's members; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Synod direct the OIM, working in collaboration with the Office of National Mission (ONM) and under established policies and oversight provided by the Synod's mission boards, to prepare practical resources to assist church workers, congregations, congregation members, districts, universities and seminaries, auxiliaries, RSOs, and synodwide corporate entities who are approached by organizations or individuals requesting consideration for support (i.e., in the distribution of literature or other media, provision of opportunities for presentations to individuals or groups, financial contributions, materials or manpower, volunteer or otherwise) for mission programs and initiatives, objectives, or actions, located either overseas or in the U.S.; and be it further

Resolved, That in the preparation of these resources, the OIM consider the development and dissemination of items such as guidelines, frequently asked questions, survey questions, or other assessment tools among other options; and be it further

Resolved, That once such resources are developed, the OIM, working coordinatively with the ONM, LCMS Communications and the Council of Presidents be tasked with the effective publication and dissemination of the same to Synod church workers, congregations, districts, universities and seminaries, auxiliaries, RSOs, and synodwide corporate entities; and be it finally

Resolved, That the Synod direct districts and encourage church workers, congregations, universities and seminaries, auxiliaries, RSOs, and synodwide corporate entities to make full use of such resources, once developed and subsequently disseminated under this resolution.

Board for International Mission

Ov. 2-05

To Thank God for the Synod's International Schools and Pray for God's Guidance in Furthering Their Role in the Church's Mission

WHEREAS, Our Lord Jesus said to the disciples, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you ..." (Matt. 28:19–20 AKJV); and

WHEREAS, The Synod in convention in 2016 resolved to commend and support Synod's international schools and their role in the Church's mission; and

WHEREAS, The Chief Mission Officer, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) Asia region, and the Board for International Mission (BIM) in convention in 2019 reported that a major objective this past triennium (extended to 2023) was to strengthen the relationship between the international schools (all of which are located in Asia) and the Synod, and encourage these schools to be steadfast and thorough in a Lutheran Christian identity and mission; and

WHEREAS, Hong Kong International School, Concordia International School—Shanghai, and Concordia International School—Hanoi have, in the extended past triennium, continued to present the Synod with a multitude of mission opportunities; grown as world-class, highly-respected educational institutions; and endeavored in good faith to strengthen their work with Synod; all done in the face of extraordinary constraints arising from the COVID-19 pandemic during March 2020–February 2023; and

WHEREAS, Church of All Nations, Lutheran, Hong Kong, whose founding pastor Rev. Lenard Galster and congregation worked in 1962–1963 with LCMS educator Dr. Mel Kieschnick to propose that Synod engage in educational mission for the international community in Hong Kong, is in 2023 giving thanks to God for 61 years of church ministry to international and local families in Hong Kong and Asia; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Synod in convention thank God for the mission and ministry of its three international schools over the last 57 years, especially during the last three years operating under extraordinary COVID-19 constraints, and that the individuals and congregations of the Synod be encouraged to lift up these schools, their communities, and the countries they serve in prayer on a regular basis; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod in convention pray that the Holy Spirit continue to guide, inspire, and encourage the LCMS Board of Directors, the BIM, and the respective boards and heads of school of the international schools to build on the mission and ministry of proclaiming the Gospel of our Savior Jesus through the education of children in international schools.

Church of All Nations
Hong Kong

3. Mercy

REPORTS

R1, R1.2–R1.2.2, R1.2.4, R5.2, R6–R7, R66.1

OVERTURES

Ov. 3-01

To Mark Fiftieth Anniversary of *Roe v. Wade* with More Fervent Teaching, Proclamation, and Efforts to Promote God's Gift of Life

WHEREAS, On January 22, 1973, the United States Supreme Court issued a 7–2 decision granting a fundamental right for a woman to have an abortion; and

WHEREAS, Abortion is murder, the killing of an innocent living human being, regardless of the stage of human development beginning at conception, and transgresses God's law in the Fifth Commandment which teaches that we are “not to hurt or harm our neighbor in his body, but help and support him in every physical need” (Small Catechism I 9–10); and

WHEREAS, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod has identified abortion as a sin and against the Word of God in printed *Luther's Small Catechism with Explanation*, most recently the 2017 edition from Concordia Publishing House; and

WHEREAS, A true Christian witness demands fear of God, not man (Matt. 10:28) and not adding to or taking away from God's Word (Rev. 22:18–19); and

WHEREAS, Since the *Roe v. Wade* decision, over 61 million abortions have tragically been performed in the United States; and

WHEREAS, The 50th anniversary of the *Roe v. Wade* decision will have occurred during the current triennium of the Synod on Jan. 22, 2023; and

WHEREAS, Two generations of citizens in the United States have grown up and lived only knowing legal abortion; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Synod in convention mark the 50th anniversary of *Roe v. Wade* by reaffirming its opposition to the destructive sin of abortion; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod in convention encourage prayer and good works to overturn, not just curb, the *Roe v. Wade* decision and to end legal abortion in our nation and throughout the world; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod offer additional youth resources which catalogue the 50-year struggle of faithful Christians standing for life; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod encourage all congregations to take up a special thank offering in 2023 to be given to Lutherans For Life, a crisis pregnancy center, or other life ministry; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod leadership encourage congregational involvement with life ministry in ways such as: forming a life team, participating in sidewalk counseling, and contacting legislators; and be it further

Resolved, That churches provide care for those suffering from the effects of abortion and encourage congregations to take steps and advocate for adoption; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod encourage all pastors and congregations to mark the 50th anniversary of *Roe v. Wade* by teaching and proclaiming human life as sacred and by holding out forgiveness and life to the full in Jesus Christ our Savior (John 10:10); and be it finally

Resolved, That the Mid-South District, meeting in convention, submit this as a memorial to the 2023 Synod convention.

Mid-South District

Ov. 3-02

To Offer Clearer Information for Couples Using the Pill for Birth Control as to When and How Often It Acts as an Abortifacient

WHEREAS, In an article titled, “Contraception: An Embryo's Point of View,” (*Concordia Theological Quarterly*, January/April 2020, 137–59), the author, a board-certified obstetrician and gynecologist, explains that use of the pill for contraception can sometimes act as an abortifacient; and

WHEREAS, Whether or not a contraceptive method causes harm is an important question for the Church, since God gives life and commands us to protect it, and for faithful couples who desire to live according to God's commands and to protect their embryonic human being(s); and

WHEREAS, Use of the pill for contraception is possibly the most popular contraceptive in spite of the known problems that the pill can cause to the woman's body; and

WHEREAS, Doctors may not always take the time to explain how contraceptives work; and

WHEREAS, It is incumbent that not only pastors but also parishioners are able to address the theological issues; and

WHEREAS, The prophet writes, “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge” (Hos. 4:6); and

WHEREAS, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod teaches that life begins at conception and wishes members to know how to keep that embryonic life safe; therefore be it

Resolved, That in order to disseminate this crucial information to a wider audience than those who read the *Concordia Theological Quarterly*, the Synod publish the above article or one similar to it in our most widely lay read periodical, *The Lutheran Witness*; and be it further

Resolved, That the North Wisconsin District convention send this resolution as an overture to the 2023 Synod convention.

North Wisconsin District

Ov. 3-03

To Increase Awareness among Synod Congregations of Human Trafficking

WHEREAS, Human trafficking, including forced labor and sex trafficking, affects an estimated 24.9 million victims worldwide at any given time (United States Department of State, www.state.gov/humantrafficking-about-human-trafficking/#profile, accessed June 18, 2021) and

WHEREAS, The Office of National Mission (ONM) and Lutherans For Life (LFL) have addressed human trafficking (ONM, “Human Trafficking” and “Identify, Understand and Intervene” www.lcms.org/social-issues/human-trafficking; LFL

lutheransforlife.org/event/for-life-live-human-trafficking-prevention-righteousness-works/, accessed June 6, 2021); and

WHEREAS, Many people in Synod congregations are unaware of the magnitude of this deplorable act against humanity; and

WHEREAS, God created all life and sent His Son Jesus to redeem all life, and He desires that all people come to the knowledge of Him and be saved (1 Tim. 2:4), and He desires all to have abundant life in Him (John 10:10) and He has commanded us to love our neighbor as our self (Matt. 19:19, Mark 12:31, Luke 10:29f); therefore be it

Resolved, That the Mid-South District in convention memorialize the Synod in convention to update the resources provided; and to also direct the Commission on Theology and Church Relations to produce a document addressing human trafficking; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod in convention rise to pray that almighty God would by His power bless and direct all law enforcement agencies in their fight against human trafficking and that He would through His Church and other relief organizations provide healing, support and ministry to the victims of human trafficking; and that He would bring an end to these deplorable acts.

Mid-South District

Ov. 3-04

To Direct LCMS Life Ministry to Support Congregations in Developing Mercy Ministries to Promote Culture of Life

WHEREAS, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) has long supported the pro-life movement, both politically and culturally; and

WHEREAS, A one-million dollar grant has been established by the LCMS available as matching funds for congregations to support local life issues; and

WHEREAS, There are many pro-life organizations whose primary purpose is to inform people on pro-life issues and engage them in the political process; and

WHEREAS, The duplication of these services wastes precious time and resources; and

WHEREAS, Establishing a culture of life begins in our churches and communities; therefore be it

Resolved, That the district in convention memorialize Synod that the Life Ministry of the LCMS continue to support congregations in establishing new mercy ministries that support a culture of life; and be it further

Resolved, That the district in convention memorialize Synod that the Life Ministry of the LCMS continue to establish support and training material for the aforementioned to write grants and support their efforts; and be it finally

Resolved, That the district in convention memorialize Synod to extend life ministries, support, and training materials, including but not limited to production of policy manuals, grant writing instruction, guidance to life ministry agencies, encouragement to access grants from allied institutions, and maintenance of the English District's Lifeline program as a resource for life and mercy ministries.

English District

Ov. 3-05

To Continue the Synod's Efforts to Address Mental Health and Mental Illness

Preamble

Over the course of the 2019–2023 quadrennium, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) Office of National Mission (ONM) staff reflected on how best to respond to the Synod's ongoing desired goals, objectives, and possible beneficial actions pertaining to mental health and mental illness. Mental illness is considered the most severe yet diagnosable form of a mental health problem, with diagnosable mental illness affecting 20+ percent of the U.S. population in any given year. As the ONM leadership considered 2019 Resolution 3-04A, "To Encourage Training of Our Pastors, Church Workers and Congregations to Recognize and Provide Pastoral Care for Those Suffering from Clinical Depression, Mental Illnesses, and Other Mental Disorders," particularly its four *resolves*,

Resolved, That our seminaries, universities, and recognized service organizations be encouraged to continue to strive for improved training in mental illness, health, and wellness for those studying to be pastors and church workers; and be it further

Resolved, That we encourage the seminaries and universities to include continuing education opportunities and resources regarding the topic of mental illness; and be it further

Resolved, That The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod districts work to provide additional training to all workers through partnerships with our seminaries, our Concordias, and other trusted experts in the field; and be it finally

Resolved, That we encourage our pastors, church workers, and congregations to actively advocate for mental health and wellness in their congregations, among their people, and provide Christ-centered compassion and ministerial supportive care to those in need through prayer, private confession and absolution, and the means of grace,

the ONM eventually determined to establish an ad hoc task force to undertake further study, immediately feasible actions, and the development of recommendations aimed at future Synod actions and initiatives to address mental health and mental illness issues among both church workers and laity. The ONM is grateful for the direct participation of the following individuals on the ad hoc task force, chaired by Rev. Steven Briel, D. Litt. (Chair, LCMS Board for National Mission [BNM]); Mr. Steve Gruenwald (Concordia Plan Services); Deaconess Dr. Tiffany Manor (ONM); Dr. Richard Marrs (faculty member, Concordia Seminary); Ms. Jenna McMiller (ONM, task force secretary); Dr. Gerhard Munding (Chair, Concordia University System Board of Directors); Rev. Daniel Ognoskie (Zion Lutheran, Wilton, Iowa); Dr. Todd Peperkorn (faculty member, Concordia Theological Seminary); Dr. Stephen Saunders (faculty member, Marquette University); Ms. Martha Ulmer (Augsburg Lutheran, Shawnee, Kan.); Rev. Wayne Palmer (Concordia Publishing House).

Following the diminishment of the COVID-19 pandemic, over the past two years this ad hoc task force has subsequently undertaken a number of considerations and actions, including but not limited to:

- preparation of various mental health and mental illness resources (textual and audiovisual)—most notably resources aimed to assist in the recognition of mental illness—for distribution to the Synod's church workers via print and

electronic means (commenced and continuing), i.e., those available at the Synod's website:

- www.lcms.org/how-we-serve/mercy/church-worker-wellness;
- www.lcms.org/how-we-serve/mercy/health-ministry;
- preparation of accessible reference tools pointing church workers, congregations and congregation members to additional useful resources pertaining to mental health and mental illness (commenced and continuing); and
- an issue of *The Lutheran Witness* (February 2023) devoted to the topic of mental health and mental illness.

In view of the still-applicable *whereases* of 2019 Res. 3-04A (*Proceedings*, 130–1), which are entrusted to delegates to the 2023 Synod convention for additional reflection, and the ongoing criticality of the work described above, this ad hoc task force is hereby commending, through the Synod BNM, the following overture to the 2023 Synod convention.

WHEREAS, Mental health issues are distressing, disabling, common, and costly; and

WHEREAS, Mental health issues include diagnosable mental illnesses and less severe but distressing and disabling mental health problems; and

WHEREAS, Decades of research show that mental illness affects one in five persons of all ages in any given year; and

WHEREAS, Many persons experience mental health problems that are very distressing but are not serious enough to warrant diagnosis of mental illness; and

WHEREAS, Families, spouses, siblings, children, and friends are impacted by mental health issues of loved ones; and

WHEREAS, Mental health issues are similar to physical and medical issues in that they affect Christians as likely as any other person; and

WHEREAS, Research clearly shows that persons with mental health issues are likely to seek help from their church; and

WHEREAS, Research shows that persons with mental health issues have a preference to seek help from their church rather than from a health professional; and

WHEREAS, Jesus Christ commands His followers to show mercy to those in need and to carry one another's burdens (Gal. 6:2); and

WHEREAS, The Synod's church workers, congregations, schools, and congregation members desire, appropriately from within their respective abilities, to help persons located within our communities and families to address mental health issues; and

WHEREAS, Those wanting to provide such help should never take the place of mental health professionals but will desire to assist through recognition of potential mental health problems, providing mercy at every opportunity, and referral to mental health professionals as necessary and appropriate; and

WHEREAS, The Synod's church workers, congregations, schools and congregation members have limited capacity and training to help for reasons related to inadequate awareness and understanding of mental health issues; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Synod give thanks to God and commend the ONM, in particular the efforts to date of its ad hoc task force, to address the broad spectrum of issues related to the fostering of mental health and the recognition of mental illness among the Synod's church workers, congregations, schools, congregation

members, families, and communities, and to advance thorough education concerning the same; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod direct the continued furtherance of such intentional efforts by leadership and coordination coming from within the Health Ministry program unit (housed under the ONM's Human Care and Ministry Services area) under established policies and oversight provided by the BNM; and be it further

Resolved, That these intentional efforts include the identification of potential opportunities for easily-accessed and widely-available mental health resources and programs already existing and the development of new mental health resources and programs for use by church workers, congregations, schools, congregation members, families, communities, districts, and the Synod; and be it further

Resolved, That these intentional efforts be focused on the overarching goal of our church workers, congregations, schools, and congregation members to better help persons both within and outside the Church who are directly and personally or indirectly, through family and other connections, affected by mental health problems or mental illness; and be it further

Resolved, That the ONM Health Ministry program unit, in identifying and coordinating such intentional efforts and providing such resources and programs, consider and employ all reasonable means available to the Synod for the promotion of mental health, including the provision of textual and audiovisual media distributed by print and electronic means, conferences and other training events, and closely coordinated collaboration within and between the Synod's agencies, auxiliaries, and recognized service organizations; and be it finally

Resolved, That the ONM Health Ministry program unit provide a standalone report on its progress against the above-listed objectives over the 2023–2026 triennium to the 2026 Synod convention.

Board for National Mission

Ov. 3-06

To Recognize and Thank the Synod for Strengthened and Expanded “Soldiers of the Cross” COVID-19 Response Initiative

WHEREAS, The pandemic of 2020 shuttered schools in the middle of the school year, furloughed workers, caused many churches to temporarily close, caused others to pivot towards a digital presence for which they were unprepared, and created stress upon the financial well-being of many churches and their workers; and

WHEREAS, Many of our teachers and school workers were without the additional tuition or budget income needed to support the immediate response to the transition and additional regulations that were placed upon them through the Centers for Disease Control and the Executive Orders of local, state, and national government; and

WHEREAS, Many recognized service organizations (RSO) of our Synod were also without the means to adapt to these additional burdens and struggled financially; and

WHEREAS, Many of our pastors and other church workers bore a great financial burden in adapting to new realities and maintaining ongoing care for the members of our churches; and

WHEREAS, The need for compassionate support and financial assistance was great; and

WHEREAS, The Synod and the Lutheran Church Extension Fund (LCEF) worked together to identify funds for immediate assistance for all who served in Lutheran ministries; and

WHEREAS, Many of our church, school, and child development workers, rostered and non-rostered, benefited from this generous act of compassion; and

WHEREAS, To date, \$1,643,715 was awarded to 967 workers (The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 2022); therefore be it

Resolved, That the SELC District in convention publicly thank God for the generosity of His people, the Synod, and LCEF for supporting all who serve in our churches, schools, childcare centers, and RSOs.

SELC District

Ov. 3-07

To Recognize and Thank the Synod for Strengthened and Expanded “Soldiers of the Cross” COVID-19 Response Initiative

WHEREAS, COVID-19 shuttered schools in the middle of the school year, furloughed workers, and caused others to pivot towards a digital presence for which they were unprepared; and

WHEREAS, Many of our teachers and school workers were without the additional tuition or budget income needed to support the immediate response to the transition and additional regulations that were placed upon them through the Centers for Disease Control and the executive orders of local, state, and national governments; and

WHEREAS, The need for compassionate support and financial assistance was great; and

WHEREAS, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) and the Lutheran Church Extension Fund (LCEF) worked together to identify funds for immediate assistance for all who served in Lutheran ministries; and

WHEREAS, Many of our school and child development workers who were both rostered and lay benefited from this generous act of compassion; and

WHEREAS, As of August 2021 more than \$1,575,835 was awarded to 938 workers; therefore be it

Resolved, That on behalf of the workers of our Lutheran churches, schools, and centers, we publicly thank the LCMS and the LCEF for supporting all who serve in our schools and child care centers.

North Wisconsin District

4. Life Together

REPORTS

**R1, R1.2–R1.2.1, R1.2.5, R5.2, R6–R8, R10, R12,
R21–R57, R66.4, R66.9–R66.11**

OVERTURES

Ov. 4-01

To Affirm and Continue Making Disciples for Life as Mission and Ministry Emphasis for 2023–26 Triennium

WHEREAS, The Great Commission, “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, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you” (Matt. 28:19–20) is our Lord’s mandate and is at the center of the Church’s mission and ministry; and

WHEREAS, Disciples of Jesus are baptized repentant sinners who believe in Christ for salvation by faithfully receiving the Lord’s preaching, catechesis, and sacraments in the fellowship of the Christian congregation; trust in His Word for all aspects of human life; confess faith in Christ before the world; and live in Christ and His forgiveness in Christian vocation toward others; and

WHEREAS, The apostle Peter encourages the disciples of Christ to always be prepared to make a defense of their faith with gentleness and respect to anyone who asks of them about the hope they have in Christ (1 Peter 3:15); and

WHEREAS, The Small Catechism’s Table of Duties describes how being a disciple of Christ touches every station in which Christians find themselves, such as civil authorities and citizens, husbands and wives, fathers and mothers, children and youth, employers and workers; and

WHEREAS, *Making Disciples for Life* was first adopted in 2019 (Resolution 4-03A) as the triennial mission and ministry emphasis of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS); and

WHEREAS, The current triennial mission and ministry emphasis *Making Disciples for Life*, established in 2019, has only just begun to serve our Synod and give direction to districts and congregations and to guide the policymaking work of mission and ministry through the Board for National Mission (BNM) and Board for International Mission (BIM); and

WHEREAS, The BNM and BIM under Bylaws 3.8.2.2 and 3.8.3.2 began conversations with the leadership of every district of the Synod to gather information and input to help facilitate the assessment and evaluation of the Synod’s triennial mission and ministry emphasis with the plan to continue ongoing fraternal communication with district presidents and staffs over the next triennium toward enhancing Synod *koinonia*, unity, and cooperation in the Synod’s mission and ministry; therefore be it

Resolved, That Synod in convention affirm *Making Disciples for Life* as its mission and ministry emphasis for the 2023–26 triennium; and be it further

Resolved, That Synod in convention direct the Office of National Mission (ONM) and Office of International Mission (OIM), in response to fraternal discussions with the districts regarding their unique contexts, challenges, and opportunities, and consistent with

policies established by the BNM and BIM, to support congregations, schools, circuits, and districts to:

- plant new congregations and schools;
- strengthen existing congregations and schools;
- evangelize the lost;
- retain the faithful;
- care for church workers;
- engage in international mission in partnership with the OIM; and
- engage in domestic mission with the support of the ONM through the district offices;

and be it further

Resolved, That the BNM and BIM increase opportunities for conversation and collaboration with the districts of the Synod toward greater “walking together” under the Synod’s triennial mission and ministry emphasis; and be it finally

Resolved, That the Synod encourage all LCMS districts, congregations, and schools to ground their local mission and ministry upon the Synod’s emphasis of *Making Disciples for Life* to the glory of God and for the extension of Christ’s kingdom.

Board for National Mission; Board for International Mission

Ov. 4-02

To Provide Triennial Synod Emphases

WHEREAS, Bylaw 4.2.1 (d) reads: “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 Texas District established a goal to raise up 500 new servant-leaders to reach 500 new communities with the Good News of Jesus by the 125th anniversary of the district in 2031; and

WHEREAS, Jesus has called us to pray for harvest workers: “And he said to them, ‘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); and

WHEREAS, The pandemic of 2020 has had a detrimental effect on congregational life, outreach efforts, and in-person worship; therefore be it

Resolved, That the district encourage its congregations, schools, and members to earnestly pray for harvest workers according to our Lord’s bidding and invite the Synod in convention to do the same Synodwide; and be it further

Resolved, That the district forward “lay evangelist training” to the national convention for consideration as a triennial mission and ministry emphasis; and be it further

Resolved, That the district forward “congregation revitalization” to the national convention for consideration as a triennial mission and ministry emphasis; and be it finally

Resolved, That the district forward “outreach” to the national convention for consideration as a triennial mission and ministry emphasis.

Texas District

Ov. 4-03**To Prioritize “Living as the Baptized” as a Mission and Ministry Focus for the 2022–2025 Triennium**

WHEREAS, Holy Baptism is a treasured gift through which God claims us as His own, forgives our sins, and grants us life and salvation (Rom. 6:3–11; 1 Peter 3:21); and

WHEREAS, We, as baptized children of God, are members of the royal priesthood, living stones “rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious...being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 2:4–5); and

WHEREAS, Our citizenship as the baptized is in heaven (Phil. 3:20), and as such, we are called to live according to the Word, not the world; and

WHEREAS, Living according to our baptismal identity is becoming more challenging, as norms and values of our post-Christian culture, many of which are rooted in ideas antithetical to God’s Word, exert ever stronger pressure on Christians to think, act, and believe in ways contrary to their God-given identity in Christ; and

WHEREAS, Church membership in the U.S. has continued to decline while the percentage of those claiming no religious affiliation—“nones”—has increased (Gallup Poll, 2021), pointing to a general weakening of Christian identity; and

WHEREAS, Lutherans confirmed in the faith acknowledge in the Rite of Confirmation their intention “to remain steadfast in this confession and church, and to suffer all, even death, rather than fall away from it,” (*Lutheran Service Book Agenda*, 30) yet a 2017 Synod study of millennials and the church found that Synod is retaining only 33 percent of its young people into adulthood, reflecting general societal trends (“Executive Summary: 2017 Millennial Research”, www.youthsource.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/Exec-Summary-Millennial-Research-FinalRFP.pdf, accessed March 17, 2023); and

WHEREAS, Lack of a strong baptismal identity, especially in the context of an increasingly secular culture, is a serious obstacle in our calling to proclaim, teach, and share the Gospel, leaving the baptized ill-equipped to engage in mission and ministry activities; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Kansas District and its members prioritize strengthening baptismal identity in the coming triennium, equipping and encouraging the baptized to stand firm in the faith and resist being conformed to the world (Rom. 12:2) and to move forward boldly as the baptized people of God to expand the kingdom; and be it further

Resolved, That the district promote the use of resources by congregations and schools designed to strengthen habits central to a strong sense of baptismal identity, including faithful worship, reception of the Lord’s Supper, prayer, Bible study, home devotions, mutual upbuilding, and living out one’s vocation; and be it further

Resolved, That congregations and schools be encouraged to equip the saints in their midst to boldly “proclaim, teach, and share” by providing training and opportunities in evangelism, apologetics, and lifelong discipleship, with the help of Synod and district resources (*Every One His Witness*; *re:Vitality*, “Shepherding the Strays”; *Mission Field: USA*); and be it finally

Resolved, That the district memorialize the Synod as it gathers at the 2023 Synod convention recommending adoption of a mission and ministry emphasis consistent with helping Lutheran Christians hold fast to their baptismal identity, as is the case with the Synod’s current emphasis of *Making Disciples for Life* (2019 Resolution 4-03A, “To Commend to Synod Priorities for Mission and Ministry Emphasis for the 2019–2022 Triennium”).

Kansas District

Ov. 4-04**To Suggest Mission and Ministry Emphases for the Synod**

WHEREAS, “The district convention is the instrument to receive overtures (Bylaw 3.1.6.2), including overtures and recommendations for synodwide mission and ministry emphases” (Bylaw 4.2.1 [b]); and

WHEREAS, “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” (Bylaw 4.2.1 [d]); and

WHEREAS, The Florida-Georgia District convention passed Resolution 01.4-2022 concerning mission and ministry emphases for the Synod; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Synod adopt the mission and ministry emphasis of “Multicultural Inclusion,” including the support of ethnically diverse pastors and church workers and calling for racial equality in our Synod and world; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod adopt the mission and ministry emphasis of “Next Generation Leadership Development,” including the support of raising up church worker and lay leaders, as well as the support of campus and youth ministry.

Florida-Georgia District

Ov. 4-05**To Affirm and Continue Mission Priorities for 2023–26 Triennium****Preamble**

The Board for National Mission (BNM) and the Board for International Mission (BIM) give thanks to God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit for the blessing of mutual conversation, encouragement, and insight shared between representatives of the BNM, the BIM, and the Synod’s 35 district presidents along with members of their respective staffs over this past quadrennium. This expression of walking together was a powerful reminder that the Synod must always continue to foster and strengthen its unity through face-to-face meetings, flowing out of a salutary commitment to “conserve and promote the unity of the true faith” (Constitution Article III 1). One of the main goals of these meetings was to discuss and evaluate the current mission and ministry priorities of the Synod. From these and other considerations, the BNM and BIM recommend affirming and continuing the Synod’s current seven mission priorities for continued development and implementation into the Synod’s coming triennium (2023–2026).

WHEREAS, Our commitment as The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod congregations and workers is to walk together with the Word of God as the only norm and guide for doctrine and practice; and

WHEREAS, Bylaws 3.8.2.2 (BNM) and 3.8.3.2 (BIM) direct the Synod's mission boards "to gather pertinent and sufficient information from the Synod's members that will facilitate the boards' assessment and evaluation of the effectiveness of the Synod's triennial mission and ministry emphases, and shall develop accordingly a joint overture to the national convention for beneficial amendments thereto"; and

WHEREAS, Invaluable feedback was gathered from the Synod's two mission boards' meetings with the Synod's 35 district presidents along with members of their respective staffs, which demonstrated a spirit of cooperation, coordination, and collaboration; and

WHEREAS, Synod district presidents, along with members of their respective staffs, had a mixed reaction to the Synod's current mission priorities. Many recognized them as a self-evident description of the Bible's theology and practice of mission and ministry. Others indicated that, while faithful to the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions, the priorities did not play a significant role in giving direction to their work at the district level; and

WHEREAS, The Synod's Constitution states that we shall "1. Conserve and promote the unity of the true faith (Eph. 4:3-6; 1 Cor. 1:10) ...; 6. Aid congregations by providing a variety of resources and opportunities for recognizing, promoting, expressing, conserving, and defending their confessional unity in the true faith; 7. Encourage congregations to strive for uniformity in church practice, but also to develop an appreciation of a variety of responsible practices and customs which are in harmony with our common profession of faith" (Const. Art. III); and

WHEREAS, The Synod's current mission priorities are contemporary applications of the Synod's Article III objectives; and

WHEREAS, The Synod's current mission priorities were previously affirmed at two preceding Synod conventions (2016 Resolution 4-02A; 2019 Res. 4-03A); and

WHEREAS, The Synod and the baptized faithful were wearied and distracted by an exhausting worldwide pandemic for over two years together with escalating threats of war, internal domestic violence, ongoing disasters brought by fire and flood, and a growing left-hand kingdom divide, all of which combined to challenge our ability to further promote, develop, and inculcate the Synod's current mission priorities; and

WHEREAS, The Synod's current mission priorities clearly uphold both the Great Commission of our Lord Jesus Christ (Matthew 28) to make disciples of all nations as well as the Great Commands of our Lord Jesus Christ (Matthew 22) to love the Lord our God and our neighbors; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Synod give thanks to each district president and staff who met with the BNM and BIM for such collegial conversations; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod reaffirm the Synod's current seven mission priorities as they exemplify our fervor in being faithful to the Lord and loving our neighbor, and also encourage their use to affirm our unity as Synod as lived out by congregations, national servant-leaders, district servant-leaders, and circuit servant-leaders in accord with the Synod's current mission 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; and
- strengthen and support the Lutheran family in living out God's design;

and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod encourage servant-leaders of the districts and national mission boards to commit to regular, frequent, and fraternal meetings in keeping with our shared *koinonia* at all levels of Synod, so that our walking together consistently demonstrates our common confession, especially as plans are carried out under the Synod's mission priorities; and be it finally

Resolved, That the Synod's mission boards and mission offices serve, challenge and inspire the Synod's districts to identify the best ways to implement the Synod's mission priorities in the cultural contexts, challenges, and opportunities for the Gospel in each district for the best possible provision of services and resources for congregations, schools, and circuits.

Board for National Mission; Board for International Mission

Ov. 4-06

To Encourage Return to In-Person Worship

WHEREAS, God's people are called to "[r]emember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy" (Ex. 20:8); and

WHEREAS, This day is intended as a day of sacred assembly: "Six days shall work be done, but on the seventh day is a Sabbath of solemn rest, a holy convocation. You shall do no work. It is a Sabbath to the Lord in all your dwelling places." (Lev. 23:3); and

WHEREAS, Numerous epistles are written to the saints in certain places and were read publicly when they gathered together, for example, "To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints together with all those who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours" (1 Cor. 1:2); and

WHEREAS, Paul exhorts Timothy to focus upon the public reading and teaching of God's Word: "Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching. Do not neglect the gift you have, which was given you by prophecy when the council of elders laid their hands upon you. Practice these things, immerse yourself in them, so that all may see your progress. Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers." (1 Tim. 4:13-16); and

WHEREAS, Our Savior comes to us through his Word and Sacraments as means of grace to forgive, strengthen, comfort, and guide us as his people as he bids us to do in Matthew 11:28, "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest"; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Texas District in convention encourage a return to in-person worship for the proclamation of the Word and administration of the Sacraments to God's saints; and be it further

Resolved, That every pastor and congregation hold in-person services as they are able, recognizing that this will vary based on

location, need, and specific accommodations in regard to the number of worship services and people in attendance; and be it further

Resolved, That this resolution not be understood to devalue or seek to stop the use of streaming or recorded services to proclaim God's Word; and be it finally

Resolved, That the Texas District memorialize the Synod to do the same.

Texas District

Ov. 4-07

To Reaffirm Biblical Practice of Gathered Local Congregations with Rightly Called Local Pastors and to Encourage Congregations to Practice In-person Worship, Teaching, and Administration of Sacraments

WHEREAS, The churches of the Lutheran Confession have consistently maintained membership rosters for the sake of good order and pastoral care; and

WHEREAS, Local congregations have long striven to work with one another fraternally and for the sake of good order in regard to transfers and changes in membership, as well as honoring church discipline when such has been necessary; and

WHEREAS, Pastors are instructed to "shepherd the flock of God that is *among* [emphasis added] you, exercising oversight," (1 Peter 5:2) and they have vowed to "perform the functions of a pastor in an evangelical manner; to aid, counsel, and guide members of all ages and social conditions; to visit the sick and the dying; to admonish the indifferent and the erring" (Supplement to the Diploma of Vocation); and

WHEREAS, A pastor who is not physically among his people is not able to shepherd the flock by visiting the sick and the dying or to exercise oversight or to administer the Sacraments in person; and

WHEREAS, The emerging practice of congregations seeking and receiving as members those who are geographically distant, especially when there is a local congregation near such individuals, creates confusion and division in congregations, circuits, and districts while generating many questions about pastoral oversight and visitation, care at the time of death, and Christian burial, etc.; and

WHEREAS, There are already a number of "churches" in the quickly expanding online world of remote pastors who teach and guide virtual members; and

WHEREAS, A growing number of Christians are choosing to join virtual churches and participate exclusively online, and our Lutheran congregations are not immune from this temptation to abandon the traditional gathered body of believers as recorded in Acts 1:12-14; and

WHEREAS, The writer to the Hebrews teaches, "let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting 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. 10:24-25); therefore be it

Resolved, That the pastors and congregations of the Montana District be encouraged to study God's Word and our Lutheran Confessions to be reminded what it means to be a Christian congregation and a member of the Body of Christ; and be it further

Resolved, That the congregations of the district be encouraged to limit online worship; and be it further

Resolved, That congregations of the district be discouraged from practicing remote membership and virtual congregations; and be it further

Resolved, That the congregations of the district be encouraged to teach our members the specific dangers of remote and virtual worship attendance; and be it finally

Resolved, That this resolution be forwarded to the Synod for adoption at its 2023 convention.

Montana District

Ov. 4-08

To Hold Day of Fasting, Prayer, and Repentance for Response to 2020-22 COVID-19 Pandemic

WHEREAS, God commands, "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy" (Ex. 20:8); and

WHEREAS, Our Lord and Savior proclaims, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God" (Matt. 4:4); and

WHEREAS, The apostle Peter declares, "We must obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29); and

WHEREAS, The Scriptures admonish Christians to "consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting 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. 10:24-25); and

WHEREAS, One's Christian liberty should not be determined by someone else's conscience (1 Cor. 10:29); and

WHEREAS, It is erroneous to teach that the Sacrament of the Altar is "a matter of liberty, not of necessity, and that it is enough if [Christians] simply believe. Thus, the great majority go so far that they become quite barbarous and ultimately despise both the Sacrament and God's Word" (Large Catechism V 41 [Tappert]); and

WHEREAS, During the years 2020, 2021, and 2022, responses to the COVID-19 pandemic by congregations, pastors, Synod leadership, and affiliated educational institutions included the cancellation of communal, in-person worship services, the "online" administration of the Sacrament, the urging of experimental and controversially-sourced vaccinations, and the submission to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration's vaccine mandate; and

WHEREAS, These responses inculcated in God's flock and the world at-large the ideas that communal, in-person worship is non-essential, that worship of God should give way to earthly fear, and that public opinion or government demand can supersede the command of God; and

WHEREAS, These responses undoubtedly led to a burdening of Christian consciences and false accusations of not loving one's neighbor as oneself; and

WHEREAS, The great societal distress over the COVID-19 pandemic ought to have finally compelled the Church to keep her doors open; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Synod appoint a Sunday as a day of fasting, prayer, and repentance, for the response to the COVID-19 pandemic during the years 2020, 2021, and 2022, and encourage all Synod

congregations, pastors, Synod leadership, and affiliated educational institutions to observe it.

Circuit 10 (Middle Tennessee), Mid-South District;
Circuit 9 (Nashville), Mid-South District

Ov. 4-09

To Rejoice in 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 a 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 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 finally

Resolved, That the Synod President give emphasis 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.

St. Paul
Brookfield, IL

Ov. 4-10

To Use Only Sustainable Bible Translations

WHEREAS, We accept without reservation that the "Scriptures of the Old and the New Testament are the written Word of God and the only rule and norm of faith and of practice" (Constitution Article II 1); and

WHEREAS, Passages of Holy Scripture are used throughout the hymnals, catechisms, and other printed resources of the Synod: "All scripture [is] given by inspiration of God, and [is] profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (2 Tim. 3:16 KJV); and

WHEREAS, Our printed resources must use accurate and consistent translations of Holy Scripture from the original biblical languages into the language of the people: "For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and [from] the things which are written in this book" (Rev. 22:18–19 KJV); and

WHEREAS, Concordia Publishing House (CPH) and the Synod currently use the English Standard Version (ESV) translation of the Bible for most purposes; and

WHEREAS, The copyright for the ESV is not controlled by the Synod but is owned by Crossway, a pan-Reformed entity that does not subscribe to a Lutheran understanding of the Sacraments of Holy Baptism and the Lord's Supper (Crossway, www.crossway.org/statement-of-faith/, accessed Feb. 28, 2023); and

WHEREAS, Crossway retains the right to change the text of the ESV and has done so on multiple occasions making hundreds of changes (Crossway, "Word Changes in the ESV Bible Text – 2011", *Bible Researcher*, Feb. 28, 2023, www.bible-researcher.com/esv2011changes.pdf), with the result that the prior versions are no longer licensed, similar to the situation that occurred when the New International Version (1984) of the Bible—at one time, a primary translation used by the Synod—was withdrawn by its copyright owners; and

WHEREAS, This creates an untenable situation with respect to printed materials of the Synod, because it allows a third party—Crossway—to forcibly change the content of written resources of the Synod by withdrawing the copyright to the prior versions of ESV, unless Synod can persuade Crossway to allow Synod to use alternate wording at Crossway's sole discretion; and

WHEREAS, Contemporary or political considerations should not impact the faithful translation of God's Word, yet the ESV has chosen to replace the word "slave" in its original translation with

the word “bondservant” in many verses because, according to the ESV editors, “the word ‘slave’ currently carries associations with the often brutal and dehumanizing institution of slavery particularly in nineteenth-century America” as though we should be ashamed to be called “a slave of Christ” (1 Cor. 7:22 ESV [pre-2011]); and

WHEREAS, Such continuing changes in translation create a sort of “plastic text” which hinders the commonality of text necessary for memorization and undermines confidence in the translation as a whole; therefore be it

Resolved, That in order for the Synod to discern for itself the preferred translation of Holy Scripture, the Synod in convention direct the Synod, CPH, and agencies of Synod to use, for Scripture quotations in their printed materials for public worship and teaching, only sustainable translations of Holy Scripture, meaning translations that either are in the public domain, or have a copyright license that allows Synod, in its sole discretion, to continue to use and republish such translation without being subject to the veto power or permissive rights of any outside body.

St. Paul
Brookfield, IL

Ov. 4-11

To Accept *Himnario Luterano* as the Synod’s Spanish Language Hymnal and Commend Its Use with Thanksgiving

WHEREAS, Over the past quadrennium, the Office of International Mission (OIM) Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) region, in mutually supportive planning, financial contributions, extensive collaboration, and intensive work assignments jointly with the Iglesia Luterana Confesional de Chile (Confessional Lutheran Church of Chile), the Iglesia Evangélica Luterana del Paraguay (Evangelical Lutheran Church of Paraguay), the Iglesia Evangélica Luterana Argentina (Evangelical Lutheran Church of Argentina), and the Lutheran Heritage Foundation, and with additional generous financial support from the Marvin M. Schwan Charitable Foundation, has completed required major tasks in the co-development, testing, and production of the first edition of a new Spanish language hymnal, *Himnario Luterano*; and

WHEREAS, *Himnario Luterano* was submitted to and passed The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) doctrinal review (described in Bylaw section 1.9); and

WHEREAS, An initial print run of 19,000 copies of the first edition of *Himnario Luterano* resulted in the distribution of approximately 3,000 copies to LCMS congregations and individuals located in the U.S., with the balance of approximately 16,000 copies distributed to congregations and individuals located elsewhere globally (20+ countries), with most of these copies distributed in the LAC region of OIM; and

WHEREAS, In preliminary testing and in the subsequent distribution of copies from the initial print run, *Himnario Luterano* has been received by its users with joy, thanksgiving, and strongly positive general acclaim; and

WHEREAS, A second edition of *Himnario Luterano* has been prepared and a corresponding second print run has been completed, correcting typographical and printing errors, most of which were of a minor housekeeping nature; and

WHEREAS, Complimentary digital media (i.e., phone app, Kindle) versions of *Himnario Luterano* are under development, with the objective of making the hymnal accessible to an even wider global audience; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Synod in convention accept the newly completed Spanish language hymnal *Himnario Luterano* as an official service book and hymnal of the Synod; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod’s congregations, agencies, and church partners, as well as other Synod-related entities, be encouraged to make extensive use of the new hymnal in Spanish-speaking contexts; and be it finally

Resolved, That the Synod give thanks to God for all partners involved in the development and production of *Himnario Luterano*, especially the Iglesia Luterana Confesional de Chile, the Iglesia Evangélica Luterana del Paraguay, the Iglesia Evangélica Luterana Argentina, the Lutheran Heritage Foundation, the Marvin M. Schwan Charitable Foundation and the OIM LAC region.

Board for International Mission

Ov. 4-12

To Condemn Use of Internet Forums for Dispute Resolution and Grievance Airing within the Synod

WHEREAS, We are called in Scripture to resolve our disputes and disagreements in a manner that is worthy of our new life in Christ (Matt. 18: 15–17, James 1: 19–20, 1 Peter 3: 8–11, Eph. 4:26, Rom. 12: 17–21, Col. 3:13, John 13: 34); and

WHEREAS, The Synod has a dispute resolution process in place in its Bylaws for the sake of good order and administration of the church (Bylaw Section 1.10); and

WHEREAS, *Koinonia* has been widely accepted in the life of the church, calling parties to meet each other, learn about each other, celebrate areas of unity, and discuss areas of discord in a manner that seeks to understand and bring forth peace and resolution; and

WHEREAS, The 2016 Synod convention passed Resolution 4-05A, “To Continue and Expand the *Koinonia* Project”, which the last resolve states: “Resolved, That each member of the Synod and each member of a Synod congregation will follow the principles of the *Koinonia* Project, namely, that when there is a 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” (*Proceedings*, 148);

WHEREAS, The use of the Internet including social media, blogs, chatrooms, etc., may have inaccurate information and provide space for speculation, gossip, and slander; and

WHEREAS, These same forms of social media frequently provide a forum for comments that are not regulated or monitored and may provide a forum for participants to respond to issues and events contrary to the Scriptures, the dispute resolution process and *Koinonia*; and

WHEREAS, Such comments may lead a brother or sister to break the Eighth Commandment; and

WHEREAS, The use of live-streaming for the sake of the Gospel is now being employed for the good of the Kingdom but so often is used out of context concerning individuals and/ or ministries, that enable criticism without any attempt to express concerns to the individuals and ministries; and

WHEREAS, That the Southeastern District Board of Directors at its regularly called meeting in December 2022 voted unanimously to submit this overture; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Synod in convention condemn the use of live-streaming to find fault or criticized members of the Synod and the use of social media and its various forms to air grievances and disputes within the church and against fellow brothers and sisters in Christ; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod in convention instruct the Council of Presidents to create policy and consequences for members of the Synod who inappropriately use the Internet to air grievances and disputes; and be it further

Resolved, That members of the Synod and especially leaders of the Synod including the President, vice-presidents, Secretary, district presidents, and circuit visitors disassociate themselves from organizations within and outside of the Synod who promote the misuse of the Internet to air such grievances and disputes; and be it finally

Resolved, That the Synod in convention affirm the dispute resolution process and *Koinonia* for the health and wellbeing of the church as means to seek resolution, peace, and harmony among brothers and sisters in Christ.

Board of Directors
Southeastern District

Ov. 4-13

To Condemn Use of Internet Forums for Dispute Resolution and Grievance Airing

WHEREAS, We are called in Scripture to resolve our disputes and disagreements in a manner that is worthy of our new life in Christ (Matt. 18:15–17; James 1:19–20; 1 Peter 3:8–11; Eph. 4:26; Rom. 12:17–21; Col. 3:13; John 13:34); and

WHEREAS, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) has a dispute resolution process in place in its bylaws for the sake of good order and administration of the church (Bylaw section 1.10); and

WHEREAS, *Koinonia* has been widely accepted in the life of the church, calling parties to meet each other, learn about each other, celebrate areas of unity, and discuss areas of discord in a manner that seeks to understand and bring forth peace and resolution; and

WHEREAS, The use of the Internet including social media, blogs, chatrooms etc., may have inaccurate information and provide space for speculation, gossip, and slander; and

WHEREAS, These same forms of social media frequently provide a forum for comments that are not regulated or monitored and may provide a forum for participants to respond to issues and events contrary to the scriptures, the dispute resolution process, and *Koinonia*; and

WHEREAS, Such comments may lead a brother or sister to break the Eighth Commandment; and

WHEREAS, The use of live-streaming for the sake of the Gospel is now being employed for the good of the kingdom but so often is used out of context concerning individuals and/or ministries, that enable criticism without any attempt to express concerns to the individuals and ministries; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Synod in convention condemn the use of social media and its various forms to air grievances and disputes

within the church and against fellow brothers and sisters in Christ; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod in convention instruct the Council of Presidents to create policy and consequences for members of the Synod who inappropriately use the Internet to air grievances and disputes; and be it further

Resolved, That leaders of the LCMS including the President, vice-presidents, Secretary, district presidents, and circuit visitors disassociate themselves from organizations within and outside of the Synod who promote the misuse of the Internet to air such grievances and disputes; and be it finally

Resolved, That the Synod in convention affirm the dispute resolution process, and *Koinonia* for the health and wellbeing of the church as a means to seek resolution, peace, and harmony among brothers and sisters in Christ.

Board of Directors
California-Nevada-Hawaii District

Ov. 4-14

To Affirm and Engage *Koinonia* Project to Resolve Conflict Due to Differences in Ministry and Practice

WHEREAS, The Scriptures teach us to love one another and seek unity (1 Peter 1:3–8; Col. 3:12–14; Eph. 4:3); and

WHEREAS, In a fractured society, where division and discord are celebrated and encouraged, the church has an opportunity for witness; and

WHEREAS, The members of the church, including the workers, are to be the light of Christ and the example of forgiveness, restoration, and love; and

WHEREAS, The *Koinonia* Project materials were written by Rev. Dr. Herbert Mueller, are available for review (www.lcms.org/about/leadership/president/koinonia-project), is approved for use by the Synod Council of Presidents (COP), is currently being used successfully by the COP; and

WHEREAS, The Southeastern District in its 2022 convention voted to forward this overture to the Synod convention for consideration; therefore be it

Resolved, That the members of the Synod commit to seeking unity with each other, bearing with each other, putting the best construction on every situation, and offering the benefit of the doubt to each other; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod leadership provide training for all professional church workers and others across the Synod in the *Koinonia* Project during the next triennium; and be it finally

Resolved, That the members of the Synod affirm and engage in the *Koinonia* Project prior to and as part of the dispute resolution process.

Board of Directors
Southeastern District

Ov. 4-15

To Encourage Meeting and Fellowship across Circuits and Districts

WHEREAS, It was deemed expedient for the sake of good order to divide The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod into districts and

circuits, but these divisions do not reflect a division of the fellowship we have together; and

WHEREAS, These divisions sometimes separate churches and pastors which are close to one another and have good reason to communicate and work with one another; and

WHEREAS, Psalm 133:1 says, “Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity,” Proverbs 27:17 says, “Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another,” Paul says in Romans 14:19, “So then let us pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding,” and the apostles and leaders of the Early Church regularly met together to settle disputes and strengthen one another as shown in Acts and the epistles; and

WHEREAS, The Church suffers a loss when congregations and pastors do not interact with one another because of circuit and district divisions, particularly when they do not support and encourage one another in their mutual work for the kingdom of God; therefore be it

Resolved, That the districts of the Synod be encouraged to meet with one or more neighboring districts through a joint pastors conference at least once per triennium; and be it further

Resolved, That the pastors of circuits be encouraged to meet with the pastors of one or more neighboring circuits within or outside of their own district at least once a year.

Holy Trinity
Walnut, IL

Ov. 4-16

To Prohibit District Conventions and Pastors Conferences during Lent and Advent

WHEREAS, It is both necessary and required to meet together for the regular business of the districts; and

WHEREAS, It is important and required for the pastors of the districts to regularly meet together and study God’s Word and matters of importance; and

WHEREAS, These things ought not to interfere with the exercise of the pastoral office as outlined in the *Book of Concord*, the Synod Constitution, and ordination rite; therefore be it

Resolved, That Bylaw 4.2.1 be amended as follows:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

4.2.1 Conventions of the districts shall afford opportunities for worship, nurture, inspiration, fellowship, and the communication of vital information. They are the principal legislative assemblies, which amend the district’s Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws, consider and take action on reports and overtures, and handle appropriate appeals.

...

(h) The convention of districts shall not be held during Lent, so as to not interfere with the increased duties of pastors, commissioned workers, and those laity who assist with services, such as elders and musicians.

and be it further

Resolved, That Bylaw 4.8.2 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.

...

(e) No official conferences shall be held during the seasons of Lent or Advent, so as to not interfere with the increased duties of pastors and commissioned workers during those periods.

Holy Trinity
Walnut, IL

Ov. 4-17

To Encourage House Blessings

WHEREAS, Holy Scripture speaks often of the divine blessing of house and home (Psalm 104; 128, Luke 10; 19); and

WHEREAS, Martin Luther’s Small Catechism includes devotions and prayers for use in the home; and

WHEREAS, The *Lutheran Service Book*, Lutheran hymnals, and agendas include liturgies for the blessing of a home for pastoral and congregational use; and

WHEREAS, The blessing of a home provides opportunity for a ministry of congregational hospitality in mission for both member families and those requesting such blessing; therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Atlantic District commend to her own congregations and pastors the ministry of house blessings; and be it further

Resolved, That the President of the Atlantic District, through Task Force 2: Revitalization, share resources and avenues to begin this ministry in the congregations and regions of the Atlantic District with resources in the next triennium; and be it finally

Resolved, That these resources and this commendation be brought to the national assembly of the 2023 LCMS convention for use and guidance.

Atlantic District

Ov. 4-18

To Mark Fiftieth Anniversary of 1974 Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, “Walkout” with Thorough Teaching about the Controversy and Renewed Emphasis on Pure Doctrine

WHEREAS, On Feb. 19, 1974, the majority of the faculty and students “walked out” of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis (CSL), in protest of an investigation into the teaching at the institution, and in order to form “Seminex,” a seminary in exile; and

WHEREAS, The investigation was an attempt to determine if there was false teaching, specifically the historical-critical method by which the clear words of Scripture are doubted or treated as myth, legend, or analogy; and

WHEREAS, For years prior to the fact finding inquiry and the “Walkout,” pastors and members of Synod congregations were hearing disturbing accounts of CSL professors allowing for interpretations of the Bible that did not uphold the doctrine of the inerrancy of Scripture (2 Tim. 3:16–17; 2 Peter 1:21); and

WHEREAS, The Fact Finding Committee found that some professors “held or permitted”:

1. A confusion on the doctrine of Scripture, especially its verbal inspiration and the inerrancy, as well as disagreement on the relationship between the formal and material principles of Scripture.

2. A commitment to the use of the historical-critical method as a valid and preferred method for the interpretation of the Bible.
3. A possibility that many of the Old and New Testament stories are not really historical.
4. An acceptance that words attributed to Jesus in the Gospels were in fact never spoken by Him, but were later additions or interpretations made by the Christian community after the death of Jesus.
5. A reluctance to attribute Old Testament prophecies as pointing directly to Jesus Christ; that is, the minimalization of predictive prophecy in the Old Testament.
6. An insistence that Moses was not the author of the Pentateuch, Isaiah did not pen his entire book, and Paul may not have written all the books attributed to him in the New Testament

("Summary of the Findings," Report of the Synodical President, pp. 21–25, cited in *Exodus From Concordia: A Report on the 1974 Walkout*, Concordia Seminary Board of Control, 1977, p. 35)

and

WHEREAS, An example of the teaching which met objection is found in the comments made by Concordia Seminary professor Dr. Walter Bartling at a Louisiana Pastoral Conference, April 17–20, 1972. Bartling stated:

I can't answer the question, "Do you believe in the historicity of Adam and Eve?" Historicity and facticity are not even in my dictionary.

One thing they caught most of us on is, were Adam and Eve historical persons? I don't know. I don't think so. It is not important...

I believe that many of my Christian brothers have problems with the virgin birth of Christ.

Don't ask me, "Do you believe in a 6-day creation?"...I have problems with the virgin birth, real presence, bodily resurrection....I can't bear the burden of Scriptural infallibility.

(*Exodus From Concordia: A Report on the 1974 Walkout*, Concordia Seminary Board of Control, 1977, p. 56);

and

WHEREAS, The Walkout had a devastating impact on CSL, and The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS), pitting allegiances, the unity of congregations, and even family ties against sound hermeneutical principles, the Lutheran Confessions, and accepted synodical statements of belief; and

WHEREAS, Seminex and its supporters eventually folded in with the church bodies that produced the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) which does not insist on the inerrancy of Scripture or unconditional subscription to the Lutheran Confessions; and

WHEREAS, The uncompromising response of the LCMS leadership to the Walkout is a rare instance in which the all-too-common slide of church bodies to the way of the world was checked and resisted; and

WHEREAS, The grassroots movement in LCMS congregations in the late 1960s and early 1970s was key to calling for doctrinal integrity at CSL; and

WHEREAS, The 50th Anniversary of the 1974 Walkout will be observed in the next triennium of the Synod, on Feb. 19, 2024; and

WHEREAS, Two generations of LCMS members have been born since the Walkout and may know little or nothing about this time period and the story of God graciously rescuing our Synod from capitulating to the culture; and

WHEREAS, The cultural pressure to compromise on Scriptural inerrancy is just as great on the present generation with evolution, abortion, same-sex "marriage," and universalism as part of the accepted civil religion; and

WHEREAS, On the 40th Anniversary of the Walkout, Dr. Karl Barth, the last living member of the Fact Finding Committee at the time, and president emeritus of CSL, was asked by Rev. Todd Wilken on an Issues, Etc. program, "Why should a young Lutheran who is listening to us care about the 'Battle of the Bible' in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod back in the 1970s?", to which Dr. Barth replied:

Well, he should be thankful that the Church, though it was plagued at that time with things that were not pleasant, returned to a solid basis, so that when they hear the sermons preached today they know they are coming from a man who is firmly convinced that the will of God for the salvation of the world and for the rule of the Church is clearly stated in the Bible; and that it is imperative for a church body and the pastors and the people to have that trust that the Jesus whom they are worshipping is indeed the Jesus that is portrayed for us in holy Scripture ("Encore: The Anniversary of a Walkout Staged by Faculty and Students at Concordia Seminary in St. Louis – Dr. Karl Barth, 2/20/20," *Issues, Etc.*, accessed Jan. 24, 2023, issuesetc.org/2020/02/20/encore-the-anniversary-of-a-walkout-staged-by-faculty-and-students-at-concordia-seminary-in-st-louis-dr-karl-barth-2-20-20/).

Therefore be it

Resolved, That the Synod mark the 50th anniversary of the Walkout through its publications; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod re-release, via free streaming, any videos and documentaries which recount the tumultuous events of the Walkout; and be it further

Resolved, That all members of LCMS congregations be encouraged to utilize these resources; and be it further

Resolved, That all pastors be encouraged to teach their congregations about the Walkout and address with Scripture the theological errors of our age, as our faithful forefathers have done since the time of Martin Luther; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod recognize the professors, faculty, and staff of Concordia Theological Seminary in Springfield and those at CSL who remained faithful to Scripture and Lutheran Confessions; and be it further

Resolved, That all glory be given to our Lord God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, who saved the LCMS from going the way of the world; and be it finally

Resolved, That the Mid-South District, meeting in convention, submit this as a memorial to the 2023 Synod convention.

Mid-South District

5. Theology and Church Relations

REPORTS

R1–R1.1, R10, R12, R66

OVERTURES

Ov. 5-01

To Recognize Altar and Pulpit Fellowship with the Evangelical Lutheran Mission Diocese of Finland

Preamble

The Evangelical Lutheran Mission Diocese of Finland (ELMDF; in Finnish, *Suomen evankelisluterilainen lähetysliittokunta*) was born from within the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland (ELCF), which is the national church of Finland. Unlike the ELCF, however, the ELMDF is unreservedly committed to maintaining and upholding the orthodox Lutheran faith and practice that had prevailed in Finland since the 16th century Reformation.

Over time, the ELCF experienced decreasing theological fidelity, accepting the results of historical critical views of Holy Scripture, unbiblical practices such as the ordination of women to the ministry, and an unwillingness to adhere fully and faithfully to the Lutheran Confessions. In response, the Luther Foundation was established in 1999 by individuals within the Finnish national church. The purpose of the Luther Foundation was to support confessional Lutheran pastors and congregations in teaching and practice that remained faithful to the Scriptures and Confessions.

In 2003, the Mission Province of Sweden was formed. Its purpose was to support confessional Lutheran pastors and congregations and to restore the possibility of ordination for future pastors who either could not be ordained or would not be properly supervised in the increasingly liberalized and radicalized Nordic national churches. In 2006, the Mission Province was expanded and renamed the Mission Province in Sweden and Finland. Eventually, in 2013, the ELMDF was formed as an independent church body. Formed by congregations under episcopal oversight, the ELMDF describes its purpose as follows: “We want to keep the legacy of the Reformation on display and lead people deeper into the scriptures and the Lutheran tradition” (www.lhp.fi).

Thus, the Mission Diocese confesses the prophetic and apostolic Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the inspired and infallible Word of God. It subscribes to the entire *Book of Concord* as a faithful exposition of the Word of God in all its articles. The ELMDF thereby holds that all doctrine, practice and life must be examined, carried out, and directed on the basis of God’s Word and the Lutheran Confessions.

The aim of the ELMDF is to proclaim the Gospel, to establish new congregations, to deepen the knowledge of the Christian faith, and to revitalize and support the devotional life of its members.

The member congregations of the ELMDF are the setting for its work. Each congregation is individually named and its members are organized according to a congregational constitution. Each congregation gathers for liturgical worship around the Word and the Sacraments, led by an ordained pastor called to serve that congregation. At the same time, the practical life of congregations relies heavily on the work of lay volunteers.

The pastors of the congregations and elected lay delegates together form a Diocesan Assembly. A Diocesan Council, elected by the Diocesan Assembly, then plans and executes the administration of the Diocese and the practical matters of its work.

The ELMDF upholds all the teachings of Scripture without fear or compromise. It willingly addresses controversial topics and allows no concession with unbiblical teachings. It has held fast to the Bible’s understandings of man and woman, marriage, the ordination of only qualified males to the ministry, and other matters. This steadfastness has also led the church to publish writings that defend the Bible’s teachings and encourage faithful conduct and life. The ELMDF’s willingness to promote biblical teachings about human sexuality resulted in charges of hate speech against the ELMDF’s Bishop Juhana Pohjola and Dr. Päivi Räsänen, the author of an ELMDF pamphlet on sexuality. Although the charges were initially dropped, threats of legal prosecution remain. Nevertheless, the ELMDF remains faithful to God’s Word.

The Augsburg Confession (AC), Article VII, defines the Church as the assembly of all believers among whom the Gospel is purely preached and the Holy Sacraments are administered according to the Gospel. By this measure, the ELMDF is a church that stands firm in the right teaching and administration of the means of grace.

Representatives of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) and ELMDF began formal correspondence and discussions concerning the possibility of fellowship between our two church bodies in 2017. In 2018, the ELMDF was accepted into the International Lutheran Council as a full member. At that same time, the ELMDF formally requested a recognition of fellowship with the LCMS.

As required by LCMS Bylaw 3.9.5.2.2, the LCMS Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR) engaged in careful and thorough consideration of pertinent theological documents, reports on face-to-face discussions between LCMS and ELMDF representatives, correspondence regarding specific theological and ecclesial issues, and a face-to-face meeting with then-Bishop Risto Soramies in a February 2020 meeting of the entire commission. As a result, the CTCR unanimously adopted a motion recommending the recognition of altar and pulpit fellowship with the ELMDF on Feb. 21, 2020. Having received that recommendation and after consulting with the LCMS Praesidium, President Matthew C. Harrison wrote to Bishop Soramies on Oct. 5, 2020, declaring the “recognition of altar and pulpit fellowship between our two churches.”

The ELMDF is a vibrant part of the Nordic and world-wide community of confessional Lutherans. The ELMDF is in altar and pulpit fellowship with other biblical and confessional Lutheran churches such as the Lutheran Church—Canada (LCC), the German Independent Evangelical Lutheran Church (SELK), and the Evangelical Lutheran Church of England (ELCE). All three of these church bodies are also in altar and pulpit fellowship with the LCMS.

WHEREAS, The ELMDF is a confessional Lutheran church consisting of over 40 congregations in Finland; and

WHEREAS, The ELMDF emerged from the ELCF due to doctrinal disagreements and over ethical questions addressed clearly in Scripture such as the ordination of women, same-sex marriage, and the ordination of practicing homosexuals; and

WHEREAS, Pastors of the ELMDF have made public confessions of faith not only in churches, but also before “kings” (governing authorities, see Psalm 119:46 and AC Preface), making a defense

for their position on the Holy Scriptures and the *Book of Concord*; and

WHEREAS, Many of these confessors of the faith were defrocked because of their faithful witness to Christ and His Word; and

WHEREAS, The ELMDF bears witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ in a country where about 2 percent of the population attends church on a weekly basis; and

WHEREAS, The ELMDF 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 Holy Scripture; and

WHEREAS, The ELMDF is in altar and pulpit fellowship with several partner churches of the LCMS in Europe and Canada; and

WHEREAS, The ELMDF has requested altar and pulpit fellowship with the LCMS; and

WHEREAS, Bylaw 3.9.5.2.2 (c) 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 the endorsement of the subsequent Synod convention;

and

WHEREAS, The CTCR has recommended the recognition of fellowship with the ELMDF as a faithful Lutheran church body, after having carefully and thoroughly considered this matter by means of extensive correspondence, meetings with ELMDF representatives, and the examination of pertinent documents that describe the doctrine and practice of the ELMDF; and

WHEREAS, President Matthew C. Harrison, by virtue of the authority vested in him according to Bylaw 3.9.5.2.2 (c), wrote to then-Bishop Risto Soramies on Oct. 5, 2020, stating: "I am able to declare recognition of altar and pulpit fellowship between our two churches. Praise God!"; therefore be it

Resolved, That we acknowledge with gratitude the unity of confession that has been given to our church bodies under the guidance of the Holy Spirit; and be it further

Resolved, That this convention formally endorse the recognition of altar and pulpit fellowship between the ELMDF and the LCMS; and be it further

Resolved, That we give thanks to God for the faithful and courageous Lutheran witness the ELMDF provides within its own country, to the Nordic world, and beyond; and be it further

Resolved, That we encourage and walk with the ELMDF 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 church bodies; 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 Recognize Altar and Pulpit Fellowship with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in South Sudan and Sudan

Preamble

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in South Sudan and Sudan (ELCSS/S) was established as an independent church body in 1993 in Juba, Sudan, under the leadership of a layman, Andrew Mbugo Elisa. Mr. Elisa had encountered *Luther's Small Catechism* and the *Book of Concord* through the efforts of the Lutheran Heritage Foundation (LHF). In 1999 Mr. Elisa was ordained as the church body's first pastor and later became its first bishop in 2006. Despite severe political instability, civil war, and economic turmoil, the ELCSS/S grew rapidly in the years after 1999 as it planted churches throughout South Sudan and Sudan. That same year a working agreement between the new church and The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) was signed. LCMS assistance was instrumental in the planting of churches in war-torn areas of South Sudan, especially in the Nuba Mountains. A seminary for training pastors and other church workers was established in 2000. The seminary, Concordia Lutheran Institute for Holy Ministry (CLIHM), was established in Khartoum together with the headquarters for the ELCSS/S, which had relocated from Juba because of political turmoil. Various visiting LCMS professors and pastors have assisted in the preparation of the ELCSS/S church workers since the beginning of CLIHM.

After a promising first decade of history, the ELCSS/S suffered a serious blow in 2008, when Bishop Elisa was stricken with a number of health problems, including brain cancer. The Lord called him home on Dec. 31, 2008. An interim bishop was appointed in 2010, and in 2011 the church elected Rev. Wilson Noah Rule as bishop. Unfortunately, in subsequent years there was considerable internal controversy concerning the leadership and governance of the ELCSS/S.

Throughout the subsequent years, however, ELCSS/S and the LCMS continued to work together in educational and other ministry endeavors. Cooperation between the two churches and various Synod entities (such as LHF, LCMS mission personnel, and LCMS districts) stimulated numerous conversations about a formal recognition of fellowship between our church bodies. As early as 1999, Bishop Elisa wrote to ask the LCMS to consider fellowship. Bishop Elisa renewed that same request in 2005, and in 2013 the request was again extended by Bishop Rule. The Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR) discussed this request in 2013 and requested further information from the ELCSS/S. A meeting between LCMS officials and ELCSS/S representatives took place in April of 2015, followed by consultation between CTCR committee members and Dr. Robert Rahn of LHF.

In 2016 Rev. Peter Anibati Abia was elected bishop. Bishop Abia renewed the ELCSS/S request for fellowship with the LCMS on Oct. 25, 2018. A visit by Bishop Abia to the US for meetings with LCMS personnel was proposed. Because of COVID-19 restrictions, however, the meeting was delayed until April 2021 when Bishop Abia met on the campus of Concordia Theological Seminary with the executive director of the CTCR, Dr. Joel Lehenbauer, and the chairman of the CTCR's church relations committee, Dr. Naomichi Masaki. The meeting included discussion of the ELCSS/S's constitution, faith statements, congregational practices, educational

and mission endeavors and ecumenical relationships. Bishop Abia then met face to face with the CTCR and LCMS President Matthew Harrison in September 2021 for formal discussions regarding church fellowship.

At its December 2021 meeting, the CTCR unanimously adopted a motion recommending the recognition of altar and pulpit fellowship with the ELCSS/S. That recommendation was sent to President Harrison for his consideration and for consultation with the Praesidium. In a letter dated Aug. 28, 2022, President Harrison wrote: “I am very pleased to inform you ... that by virtue of the authority vested in the President of the Synod, I am in a position to declare recognition of altar and pulpit fellowship between our two churches. Praise God!” The President then invited Bishop Abia to participate in a celebration of fellowship during a joint Divine Service held by LCMS partner churches in Kisumu, Kenya. The joyful event was held on September 18, 2022, during the Divine Service with participation by President Harrison, Bishop Abia, and Rev. Joseph Ochola Omolo, Archbishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Kenya.

WHEREAS, The Evangelical Lutheran Church in South Sudan and Sudan (ELCSS/S) was established in 1993 as a confessional Lutheran Church with significant assistance from the LHF, a recognized service organization; and

WHEREAS, Despite the challenges of civil war and great turmoil, the Holy Spirit enabled the ELCSS/S to evangelize effectively in South Sudan and Sudan, beginning some 150 congregations with over 150,000 members, establishing a seminary and training school, ordaining 60 pastors, and preparing over 100 evangelists and other church workers—all in less than a decade under the leadership of the Rev. Andrew Mbugo Elisa; and

WHEREAS, Despite the untimely death of Bishop Elisa, internal dissension, and other challenges, the ELCSS/S weathered another decade of difficulties and emerged with a continuing firm commitment to the theology and practice of scriptural and confessional Lutheranism; and

WHEREAS, Throughout the history of the ELCSS/S, the LCMS in its various entities has continued to support, enable, and encourage the ELCSS/S to be and remain committed to theology and practice that is faithful to the Word of God and the Lutheran Confessions; and

WHEREAS, The ELCSS/S accepts all the canonical books of the sacred Scriptures of the Old and of the New Testaments as the inerrant, revealed Word of God; and

WHEREAS, The ELCSS/S accepts 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

WHEREAS, On October 25, 2018, Bishop Peter Anibati Abia, on behalf of the ELCSS/S, renewed a long-standing request for the LCMS to recognize fellowship between our churches; and

WHEREAS, Bylaw 3.9.5.2.2 (c) 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 [CTCR], such recognition may be declared by the President of the Synod subject to the endorsement of the subsequent Synod convention”; and

WHEREAS, The CTCR has examined the pertinent documents of the ELCSS/S and found them to be faithful to Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions; and

WHEREAS, President Matthew C. Harrison declared the recognition of altar and pulpit fellowship between our two church bodies in a letter to Bishop Abia on Aug. 28, 2022; and

WHEREAS, The fellowship between our church bodies was publicly announced and celebrated in a joint service held on Sept. 18, 2022, in Kisumu, Kenya; 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 that, despite violence, civil war, significant cultural and ecclesial challenges, God, by His grace, has equipped and prepared the ELCSS/S to give a faithful, confessional Lutheran witness in South Sudan and Sudan; and be it further

Resolved, That we give thanks to God that doctrinal discussions between official representatives of the LCMS and the ELCSS/S have resulted in recognition of complete concord and agreement; and be it further

Resolved, That this convention endorse the President of the Synod’s declaration of altar and pulpit fellowship between the LCMS and the ELCSS/S; and be it further

Resolved, That we encourage and walk with the ELCSS/S as they proclaim the saving Gospel of Jesus Christ in East Africa; and be it further

Resolved, That we pray for God’s blessings in the coming years on our agreement in the confession of the Gospel that we enjoy as partner churches, and for the blessing of the Lord upon the members and leaders of the ELCSS/S; 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 the Lutheran Church of Uganda

Preamble

Work to establish a Lutheran mission in Uganda began in early 1993 in Jinja town. This work was initiated by five local Ugandans, who—dissatisfied with divisions and infighting in local Bugosa dioceses of the Anglican Church—were yearning for a church that truly proclaimed the Word of God and that could worship and work together in peace.

In early 1993, these five lay Christians (three men, two women) visited Kenya and urged the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya (ELCK) to initiate Lutheran mission work in Uganda. The ELCK, then under the leadership of Rev. Francis Nyamwalo, was not able to fulfil the request due to logistical challenges. Soon thereafter, contact was made with the Rev. Dr. Paul Kofi Fynn, then-president of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Ghana (ELCG), a longtime partner church of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS). In July 1993 President Fynn sent Rev. Isaac Gyampadu to Uganda to assess the possibility of beginning mission work there. Rev. Gyampadu returned with a positive report, which was followed by a visit of Bishop Fynn to Uganda in February 1994.

In September 1994, the ELCG sent two missionaries, Rev. Gyampadu and Evangelist John Donkoh (bishop of the ELCG since 2018), to establish the Lutheran mission in Uganda. They organized the first training session on Lutheran doctrine and teaching, which was attended by 200 individuals from 30 Bible study groups that had already been organized by the lay pioneers of these mission efforts. The two missionaries presided over the first Lutheran worship service on Oct. 30, 1994, in Jinja town.

In November 1994, President Fynn invited a delegation of leaders from the LCMS to visit Uganda. This delegation included Rev. Allan Buckman, Rev. Robert Roegner, and Rev. Bryant Clancy. This visit officially marked the beginning of LCMS mission efforts in Uganda.

On April 27, 1995, the Lutheran Church Mission in Uganda (LCMU) was officially established and registered with the government of Uganda. A nine-member board of directors was formed, and additional missionaries from both the ELCG and the LCMS were sent in subsequent years. As a result, by God's grace, the LCMU experienced significant numerical growth.

In 2011, despite (and perhaps partly because of) the steady and significant growth in this young mission church, the LCMU experienced serious internal strife and division over leadership, organizational, and financial issues. Although matters of doctrine were not involved, the strife was serious and nearly divided the church. Strong and persistent efforts to restore order and harmony were led by Bishop Fynn of the ELCG, Dr. David Tswaedi (then-Bishop of the Lutheran Church in Southern Africa, an LCMS partner church), Dr. Michael Rodewald of LCMS World Mission, and local LCMU church elders.

At the conclusion of a series of meetings in the fall of 2011 that included all factions of the LCMU, there was full agreement that a new constitution was needed that would more clearly address the issues that had contributed to the internal tensions and divisions. This agreement led to the convening of the 4th LCMU Delegates Conference on Oct. 21–23, 2011, which was attended by 330 delegates representing all LCMU congregations. At this conference, a new constitution was approved with the goal of reorganizing the LCMU as a national synod under the leadership of a presiding bishop. At the Delegates Conference in November 2015, the LCMU officially transitioned from being a mission field under the auspices of the ELCG to a self-governing church body named the Lutheran Church of Uganda (LCU).

The LCU accepts without reservation the following:

- justification is by God's Grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone;
- the sacred Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the written Word of God and the only rule and norm of faith and practice; and
- all the symbolical books (confessional documents) of the Lutheran Church as a true and unadulterated statement and exposition of the Word of God.

Despite the many challenges it has faced as a young and growing church, God has richly blessed the Lutheran Church of Uganda. The LCU has planted congregations in all four regions of the country, with a still-growing membership of over 50,000. The LCU has over 150 congregations organized under seven deaneries (regions or districts), served by around fifty pastors. Congregations meet mainly in rented halls, classrooms, members' homes, or under trees

in the open country. There are also, of course, many needs—including a need for translation of theological literature and resources, as there are around 42 spoken languages in Uganda (the LCU currently serves in 10 language areas), but most of the materials used by the LCU are in English.

In 2010 the LCU established a theological seminary to train men as pastors and to equip both laymen and laywomen in various vocations of church work. In addition, there are nine Mission Training Centers operating in the seven deaneries of the LCU that seek to equip lay people for work in evangelism, mission, and human care. The LCU is engaged in a wide variety of human care efforts, including agricultural projects, provision of clean water and sanitation, health care initiatives, educational efforts, AIDS care and support, and provision of food to the hungry.

In September 2016, Bishop Charles Bameka of the LCU, writing on behalf of the entire church, requested altar and pulpit fellowship with the LCMS, stating that while “we are a small, emerging confessional Lutheran church body at the formative stage, without extensive structures or organizations,” we are “committed to the full authority of the Scriptures as the infallible Word of God and subscribe without reservation to the *Book of Concord*.” Bishop Bameka noted that during its entire existence the LCU has been served by missionaries from both the LCMS and the ELCG, and covets “support, encouragement and theological guidance from the LCMS, convinced it will help the Lutheran Church of Uganda in the proclamation of the Gospel and the administration of the Sacraments among the people of Uganda, as we together 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.” Bishop Bameka also indicated in his request that “we fully understand that Altar and Pulpit Fellowship is a relationship that has as its basis agreement ‘in Doctrine and all its Articles.’”

Various informal discussions took place over the years between LCU leaders and LCMS officials, including reports to the Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR) about the theology, practice, and polity of the LCU and its organizational challenges and status. Finally, in October 2022, Bishop Bameka and several other key leaders of the LCU met face to face with the CTCR and LCMS President Matthew Harrison for formal discussions regarding church fellowship.

Following these discussions, and at this same meeting (October 2022), the CTCR unanimously adopted a motion recommending the recognition of altar and pulpit fellowship with the LCU in keeping with Bylaw 3.9.5.2.2 (b), which states:

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 (CTCR).

WHEREAS, The Lutheran Church of Uganda (growing out of the Lutheran Church Mission in Uganda, formed in 1995) was established in 2015 as a confessional Lutheran church with significant assistance and direct support from the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Ghana and the LCMS; and

WHEREAS, Despite various internal and organizational challenges, the Holy Spirit enabled the LCU to evangelize effectively in Uganda, planting congregations in all four regions of the country with a still-growing membership of over 50,000 in over 150 congregations, establishing a seminary and nine mission

training centers, ordaining more than 50 pastors, and preparing numerous laity for church work in various vocations; and

WHEREAS, Throughout the history of the LCU, the ELCG (a partner church of the LCMS) and the LCMS itself have provided direct assistance and support that has helped enable the LCU to be and remain committed to theology and practice that is fully faithful to the Word of God and the Lutheran Confessions; and

WHEREAS, The LCU accepts all the canonical books of the sacred Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the inerrant, revealed Word of God; and

WHEREAS, The LCU accepts 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

WHEREAS, On Sept. 21, 2016, Bishop Charles Bameka, on behalf of the LCU, formally requested altar and pulpit fellowship with the LCMS; and

WHEREAS, 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, In face-to-face discussions with Bishop Bameka and other key leaders of the LCU, the CTCR has examined the teachings and practices of the LCU and found them to be faithful to Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions, and has proposed the recognition of fellowship between the LCU and the LCMS; therefore be it

Resolved, That we acknowledge with gratitude the unity of confession that has been given to our church bodies under the guidance of the Holy Spirit; and be it further

Resolved, That we give thanks that despite various challenges, God, by His grace, has equipped and prepared the LCU to give a faithful, confessional Lutheran witness in Uganda; and be it further

Resolved, That we give thanks to God that doctrinal discussions between official representatives of the LCMS and the LCU have resulted in recognition of complete concord and agreement; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod formally recognize the existence of altar and pulpit fellowship between the LCU and the LCMS; and be it further

Resolved, That we encourage and walk with the LCU as it continues to proclaim the saving Gospel of Jesus Christ in Uganda; and be it further

Resolved, That we pray for God’s blessings in the coming years on our agreement in the confession of the Gospel that we enjoy as partner churches, and for the blessing of the Lord upon the members and leaders of the LCU; and be it finally

Resolved, That in celebration and thanksgiving for 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 Recognize the Ceylon Evangelical Lutheran Church in Sri Lanka as a Self-Governing Partner Church

WHEREAS, The Ceylon Evangelical Lutheran Church in Sri Lanka (CELC) traces its origin to the efforts of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) missionaries; and

WHEREAS, The CELC was formerly known as the Lanka Lutheran Church, which enjoyed altar and pulpit fellowship with the LCMS; and

WHEREAS, The CELC has committed itself to be faithful to the inerrant Scriptures and subscribes without reservation to the writings of the *Book of Concord*; and

WHEREAS, The CELC seeks in every way to be and remain a scripturally faithful, confessional Lutheran church body; and

WHEREAS, The CELC is established as an independent Lutheran church in Sri Lanka and has shared its constitution and other governing documents with the LCMS leadership; and

WHEREAS, The CELC, at its convening convention in September 2022, recognized altar and pulpit fellowship with the LCMS; and

WHEREAS, The CELC governing church council delivered a letter to President Matthew Harrison dated Feb. 8, 2023, formally requesting the LCMS recognize altar and pulpit fellowship with the CELC; and

WHEREAS, Appropriate protocol documents guiding interactions between the LCMS and the CELC have been developed and are currently being updated; and

WHEREAS, In the current year 2023, the CELC has applied for full membership in the International Lutheran Council; and

WHEREAS, Bylaw 3.9.5.2.2 (d) states that “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 [C]ommission [on Theology and Church Relations]”; and

WHEREAS, In compliance with Bylaw 3.9.5.2.2 (d), the Board for International Mission (BIM) has requested and received the approval of the Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR) to propose to the 2023 Synod convention that the CELC in Sri Lanka be recognized as a self-governing partner church; therefore be it

Resolved, That this overture be submitted to the 2023 Synod convention from the BIM, subject to appropriate edits and amendments not changing its essential meaning herein provided by collaborating representatives from the BIM and the CTCR; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod give thanks to God for the efforts of its missionaries and Sri Lankan national pastors of the CELC, that God, by His grace, has equipped and prepared the members of the CELC to give a faithful confessional Lutheran witness in Sri Lanka; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod acknowledge with gratitude that His saints have been blessed by the growth of this “daughter church” of the LCMS and its establishment as a self-governing Lutheran church body; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod 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 pray for God's blessings in the coming years on this agreement in the confession of the Gospel, which we enjoy as partner churches, and for the power and blessing of the Lord upon the members and leaders of the CELC; and be it finally

Resolved, That in celebration and thanksgiving of this partnership in the Gospel, the 2023 Synod convention assembly signify its approval by rising and singing the doxology.

Board for International Mission

Ov. 5-05

To Recognize that the Synod is Not in Altar and Pulpit Fellowship with the Japan Lutheran Church

Preamble

The Japan Lutheran Church (JLC) grew out of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) mission work that began in 1948. The JLC was organized as an autonomous church body in 1968 and became an LCMS partner church in 1971. Over the years, our two church bodies have recognized and given thanks to God for the gift of altar and pulpit fellowship. In recent years, however, questions and tensions about the differing positions of our two church bodies on the ordination of women to the pastoral office have made it necessary for the LCMS to ask whether the scriptural basis for altar and pulpit fellowship—complete agreement “in the doctrine and all its articles” (Formula of Concord Solid Declaration X 31)—continues to exist between our two churches.

In 2008, LCMS President Gerald Kieschnick became aware of a proposal introduced at the JLC's May 2008 convention to consider altering the JLC's bylaws to permit the ordination of women to the pastoral office. He immediately extended an offer for the leaders of our two churches to meet and discuss this issue, cautioning that “a decision to ordain women would have serious implications for a relationship that our two churches have enjoyed for so many years.” Official representatives of the JLC and the LCMS met face-to-face four times between February 2009 and August 2010 for formal discussions of this and related issues on the basis of the teachings of Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions. Topics included the authority of Scripture, scriptural hermeneutics, the service of women in the Church, the Office of the Holy Ministry, and the nature and implications of church fellowship.

Early on in these discussions, the LCMS representatives learned—much to their surprise and dismay—that from the very beginning of the JLC's history there was a lack of clarity about its position on the ordination of women. In 1966, even before it became a partner church of the LCMS, the JLC had declared altar and pulpit fellowship with the Japan Evangelical Lutheran Church (JELC), which would start to ordain women in 1971. Also in 1966, the JLC and the JELC agreed to train pastors together at a joint seminary in Tokyo. In 1970 some pastors and congregations of the JLC called on it to publicly protest the JELC's position on this issue. The JLC eventually resolved at its 1974 convention not to protest the JELC's position by accepting President Kosaku Nao's theological opinion that Scripture does not prohibit women to preach, and that the ordination of women must be treated as an issue of “adiaphoron,” that is, a practice not clearly commanded or forbidden by Scripture. Sadly, and for reasons that are still not entirely clear, the LCMS was not fully aware of nor sufficiently attentive to the position taken by the JLC on this issue at its 1974 convention. (This was, of course, a turbulent time for the LCMS also, internally and theologically.) Due

to this lack of awareness and/or attentiveness to developments within the JLC, the LCMS did not engage in fraternal dialog with the JLC on this issue in these early years, as it surely should have. In retrospect, this is deeply regrettable and is a failure for which the LCMS itself must take a large measure of responsibility. At the same time, from its inception until its 2021 convention, the JLC continued to ordain only men, as its constitution and bylaws included the word “male” as a necessary qualification for called and ordained pastors.

During the years of 1974–2002, there were some JLC pastors who continued to advocate for the ordination of women. For example, at the Hokkaido District convention in October 2001, Rev. Tatsuomi Yoshida (current JLC President) presented a paper which took the position that Scripture allows female pastors. At the conventions of 2002, 2005, and 2008, the attempt was made to move toward the ordination of women, but the motions were tabled each time. This was the immediate context that prompted the LCMS under President Kieschnick to hold face-to-face meetings with the JLC leadership as described above. However, one important fact is to be noted. At the national convention of 2002, the JLC did establish an office of deacon—as an ordained office—open to both male and female. Hence, the JLC had de facto opened the door for women's ordination at that time. As a result, in 2006, the first female was ordained as a deacon in the JLC.

As the formal discussions that took place in 2009 and 2010 drew to a close, the LCMS representatives were hopeful for a positive outcome—one in which the leadership of the JLC and the LCMS as a whole would be led to affirm unequivocally the position of Scripture on the issue of the ordination of women to the pastoral office: namely, that this position and practice is not an adiaphoron. Very late in the process, however, it became clear that the leadership of the JLC was still inclined toward recommending a change in the JLC's official position which would result in the ordination of women as pastors.

In 2010, newly-elected LCMS President Matthew Harrison, even before he was formally installed into office, wrote to JLC President Yukata Kumei and the members of the JLC expressing his deep “sadness” at the news that the JLC was still considering changing its position on this issue and acknowledging the past failures of the LCMS to bear witness as fully and faithfully as it should have to the position of the Scriptures on this issue. Then, in June 2011, the major earthquake and tsunami that devastated Japan in March of the same year brought President Harrison and his team to Japan to bring a love gift of the LCMS to the JLC.

This visit opened the door for the LCMS Office of Church Relations to hold a series of conversations with the JLC leadership, starting in April 2013 and continuing through June 2019. Although another attempt was made to propose the ordination of women at the JLC's national convention in 2011, no such motion was made at the 2014 or 2017 conventions. This was not an indication of a change in their position, however. Over time, it became clear that the JLC's official interpretation of the result of the official face-to-face meetings in 2009–2010 had been that as long as no women were placed into the office of “pastor,” they were keeping their promise to the LCMS not to ordain women into the pastoral office. Their apparent understanding was that the LCMS would not object to female clergy in the JLC as long as the nomenclature of “pastor” was not applied. (As noted above, they first ordained a female deacon in 2006.)

Throughout the time between 2010 and 2021, the JLC continued to pursue the goal of allowing women to serve in the pastoral office proper. They also maintained the practice of open communion and did not question their altar and pulpit fellowship with the JELC.

The Office of Church Relations was fully aware of the JLC's position and practice in these matters. Recognizing how difficult it would be for the JLC to change its official position on this issue, the Office of Church Relations focused its attempt during 2014–2019 on assisting the JLC leadership in obtaining further resources for understanding the problem theologically. As in many Lutheran Churches around the world, a lack of sound and substantive theological teaching and understanding in the JLC was a major challenge. Efforts were made to obtain opportunities for the teachings of the Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions on this and other issues to be presented and heard.

No less than four meetings took place in Japan from 2017–2019 between LCMS and JLC leaders in an effort to continue theological discussions (August 2017, January 2018, October 2018, and June 2019). During these meetings, plans were contemplated and was proposed to hold a series of discussions on foundational theological issues such as the authority and interpretation of Scripture, Christology and justification, questions related to the doctrines of church and ministry, the Lutheran understanding of church fellowship (including fellowship at the Lord's Table), scriptural approaches to missions and evangelism, and faithful worship and liturgical practices. The list above reflects the fact that the meetings and discussions that took place between 2009 and 2019 revealed other differences in doctrine and practice between the LCMS and the JLC, such as the JLC practice of open communion, differing understandings and practices of church fellowship, and differing understandings of proper principles for interpreting Holy Scripture that had implications for the understanding of the authority of Scripture. Although many of these issues had been discussed previously, it was hoped that careful and fraternal examination and discussion of Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions on foundational and intersectional issues such as these might lead to increasing consensus on the issue of women's service in the church.

Unfortunately, plans for these discussions did not fully materialize, and little or no further progress was made in this regard following the last effort of the Office of Church Relations in June 2019. On June 4, 2021, President Harrison received a letter from newly-elected JLC President Tatsuomi Yoshida informing that at its April 2021 national convention the JLC had officially changed its position on the ordination of women by amending its bylaws to remove the word "male" from the section on the qualifications for called and ordained pastors. By contradicting the clear teaching of Scripture that women may not be called and ordained into the pastoral office, the JLC's 2021 convention thus endorsed false doctrine. Calling and ordaining women into the pastoral office is not an adiaphoron, a matter on which the Scriptures are silent. Rather, it is a doctrinal matter which, where clear disagreement exists, is divisive of fellowship.

In a letter dated July 9, 2021, President Harrison responded with a "heavy heart," indicating that "the JLC's changed confession of faith . . . has broken the God-given unity of the faith once celebrated by our church bodies." "I pray for your repentance and your return to fellowship in Christ in the truth of His Word," wrote President Harrison. Should this not occur, stated President Harrison, "I will inform the members of the Synod and the Synod's partner churches

of . . . the need to place this matter before the Synod in convention." Sadly, subsequent correspondence from President Yoshida, as well as a face-to-face meeting between President Yoshida and the LCMS Director of Church Relations—Assistant to the President at an International Lutheran Council (ILC) meeting in Kisumu, Kenya on Sept. 16, 2022, have made it clear that the JLC has no intention of changing its current position on this issue or amending its current practice of allowing women to be ordained as pastors and to carry out the duties of the pastoral office. Sadly, this assessment is confirmed by the fact that the JLC ordained a second woman into the office of deacon in 2021, as well as by official records of the JLC's April 29, 2021, convention which indicate that there was overwhelming support among convention delegates for approving the ordination of women pastors.

WHEREAS, Holy Scripture clearly teaches that women are not to be called and ordained into the pastoral office; and

WHEREAS, The JLC officially approves of and practices the calling and ordaining of women into the pastoral office; and

WHEREAS, The LCMS recognizes with deep sadness and regret that differences in doctrine and practice exist between the LCMS and the JLC, not only on the issue of the ordination of women to the pastoral office but also on other issues identified in the foregoing preamble (e.g., differing hermeneutical principles and approaches that have ramifications for scriptural authority; the scriptural understanding of church fellowship; the doctrine and practice of close[d] communion); and

WHEREAS, Ten years of formal and informal doctrinal discussions between the LCMS and the JLC have neither resolved the existing doctrinal differences nor offered any basis for assuming that they will be resolved in the foreseeable future; and

WHEREAS, The LCMS understands altar and pulpit fellowship to be a gift of God that exists by His grace on the basis of complete agreement in doctrine and practice; therefore be it

Resolved, That the LCMS with deep sorrow and regret declare its recognition that it is not in altar and pulpit fellowship with the JLC; and be it further

Resolved, That it acknowledges and deeply regrets its own shortcomings and failures in not giving adequate attention to these theological concerns, especially early on in its relationship with the JLC; and be it finally

Resolved, That the LCMS herewith commit itself open and eager to pursuing further doctrinal discussions with the JLC should the JLC at any time be open to such discussions, in the hope that by God's grace our church bodies might once again attain complete agreement in doctrine and practice and once again enjoy the gift of God-given and God-pleasing altar and pulpit fellowship.

Commission on Theology and Church Relations

Ov. 5-06

To Address Scriptural Errors in Fellowship with the Japan Lutheran Church

WHEREAS, The Japan Lutheran Church (JLC) grew out of Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) mission work in Japan beginning in 1948. It was organized as an autonomous church body in 1968 and became an LCMS partner church in 1971; and

WHEREAS, In April 2021, the JLC held its convention online. During that meeting, the church body made two decisions contrary to Scripture:

1. The JLC amended its bylaws to remove the word “male” from the section on requirements of called pastors.
2. The JLC elected as its vice-president an “ordained deaconess” who now publicly describes herself as a “pastor,” is currently given this same title by the JLC, and regularly and openly carries out the distinctive functions of the pastoral office;

and

WHEREAS, These decisions have destroyed the scriptural basis for the longstanding relationship of altar and pulpit fellowship between the LCMS and the JLC; and

WHEREAS, In July 2021, LCMS President Rev. Dr. Matthew C. Harrison wrote to the leadership of the JLC to explain the import of these decisions and to seek the JLC’s repentance and return to the true and clear teaching of Scripture on the Office of the Holy Ministry: “The LCMS has, throughout its history, consistently held and ‘declare[d] clearly and unequivocally... that the Scriptures teach that only men may hold the pastoral office’ (1998 Res. 3-25A)”;

WHEREAS, This is a matter of sacred truth and we have a conscience-bound commitment as a confessional orthodox Lutheran church body to confess this truth and to remain faithful to it; therefore be it

Resolved, That the 2022 Central Illinois District pray and urge the JLC to repent and return to the biblical and confessional Lutheran teaching regarding the Office of the Public Ministry; and be it further

Resolved, That the Central Illinois District memorialize the 2023 Synod convention to revoke/dissolve partnership with the JLC, which was adopted in 1971, if it still remains in these errors at the time of the 2023 Synod convention.

Central Illinois District

Ov. 5-07

To Study Triangular Fellowship

WHEREAS, Altar and pulpit fellowship, as understood in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, “allows the pastors of one church to preach and celebrate Holy Communion in the church of another. Similarly, when altar and pulpit fellowship exists, the laity of one church may receive Holy Communion from the other church’s pastors. Churches in altar and pulpit fellowship share all spiritual things including a joint responsibility in maintaining a common confession of faith” (LCMS CTRC Study Materials, *The Lutheran Understanding of Church Fellowship* [adopted 2000], 4); and

WHEREAS, Confusion has arisen because the Synod has declared altar and pulpit fellowship with various partner church bodies that in turn share altar and pulpit fellowship with other church bodies with which the Synod is not in altar and pulpit fellowship (“triangular fellowship”); and

WHEREAS, Although 2019 Resolution 5-07 directed the office of the President of the Synod to report to the 2022 (now, 2023) Synod convention with recommendations on addressing the relationship between partner churches and the Lutheran World Federation as one

example of being unequally yoked, that resolution did not address the “triangular fellowship” problem; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Northern Illinois District memorialize the 2023 Synod convention to have the President of the Synod and his Synod representatives research the parameters of triangular fellowship and report its findings to the 2026 Synod convention.

Northern Illinois District

Ov. 5-08

To Clarify and Simplify Bylaws regarding Routes to Altar and Pulpit Fellowship

Preamble

The Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR) has reviewed Bylaw 3.9.5.2.2 and proposed consolidation and clarification of the language dealing with its role in recognition of altar and pulpit fellowship. Presently routes to fellowship are presented in four cases (b–e), which are stated in terms of certain presumptions (e.g., that all fellowship requests originate from potential partners and not in the other direction), redundancies (e.g., in each of [b–e], there exists a relatively uniform statement that the convention must approve; [e] seems, furthermore, to be redundant with [b–d]), and potential unclarity. CTCR submitted its proposal to the Commission on Handbook, which consulted with the Commission on Constitutional Matters (Op. 22-3001, Minutes of Nov. 4–5, 2022) and now presents the proposal for adoption. It understands the change to be *non-substantive*, in that it should allow the same scope of actions under new bylaw language, but *substantial* enough a change of language regarding a critical function of the Synod that it should be presented for the convention’s consideration and for its more prominent historical record.

By way of explanation, existing paragraphs (b–d) are subsumed under a new summary heading as (b)(1–3) and (e) is deleted; situations formerly falling under (e) will be handled under the new (b)(1–3) as appropriate.

Therefore be it

Resolved, That Bylaw 3.9.5.2.2 be amended as follows:

~~PRESENT~~/PROPOSED WORDING

Commission on Theology and Church Relations

...

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) It shall address itself to potential fellowship and/or partner church relations as follows:

~~(b1) When a church body applies for formal~~ Formal recognition of altar and pulpit fellowship ~~with between the Synod and another church body, such recognition~~ shall be proposed at a convention of the Synod only after the approval of the commission.

~~(e2) When a Formal recognition of altar and pulpit fellowship between the Synod and 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 may be declared by the Synod President only after the approval of the commission and, after consultation with the Praesidium and approval by the commission, such. Such recognition may be declared by the President of the Synod shall be subject to the endorsement of the subsequent Synod convention.~~

~~(d3) When a Formal recognition of 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 after 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 Handbook

Ov. 5-09

To Reaffirm and Confess Doctrine of Closed Communion and to Encourage Its Practice

WHEREAS, Oneness at the altar presupposes oneness in faith and doctrine (Acts 2:42); and

WHEREAS, In the Holy Supper of our Lord, Jesus gives the communicant His own precious body and blood, which were given and shed for the forgiveness of sin, but those who fail to discern the body and blood bring judgement on themselves (1 Cor. 11:27–29); and

WHEREAS, The doctrine and practice of closed Communion flow out of the concern for unity of faith, a desire to be faithful to Scripture, and a desire to faithfully care for souls; and

WHEREAS, Closed Communion, properly practiced, requires that the pastors and congregations of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) commune only those individuals who belong to congregations which are now in altar and pulpit fellowship with us; and

WHEREAS, All members of the LCMS subscribe and accept without reservation the authority of Holy Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions contained in the Book of Concord; therefore be it

Resolved, That this convention recognize the scriptural necessity of adhering publicly to both the professed doctrine and practice of closed Communion as adopted in 2007 Resolution 3-09; and be it further

Resolved, That all pastors are bound to follow this scriptural practice.

Minnesota North District

Ov. 5-10

To Be a Faithful Confessional Church Body with Respect to Communion Practice

WHEREAS, At the 2019 Synod convention in Tampa Bay, Fla., in Resolution 4-11A, “To Encourage the Study of the Doctrine of Close(d) Communion and Faithful Practice in All Congregations,”

The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) restated in the *whereases* the biblical, confessional practice of closed Communion as its position (*Proceedings*, 145); and

WHEREAS, Former Concordia Theological Seminary president and current Concordia University System president Dr. Dean Wenthe in his article, “More Than Words,” has since warned—in relation to the death of Uzzah (2 Sam. 6:1–11)—about irreverent eating of the Sacrament when communicants fail to “recognize the Lord’s body” (Dean O. Wenthe, et al., *One of the Holy Trinity Suffered for Us: Essays in Honor of William C. Weinrich*, 2021 Luther Academy, 11):

“... The Lord’s anger burned against Uzzah because of his irreverent act; therefore God struck him down and he died there beside the ark of God.” The account of Uzzah’s death is remarkable for its similarity to St. Paul’s admonition concerning the Lord’s Supper: “Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord. Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself. That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died” (1 Cor. 11:27–30);

and

WHEREAS, We have in the book, *Closed Communion? Admission to the Lord’s Supper in Biblical Lutheran Perspective*, a collection of articles that shed invaluable light on the long history of the church’s practice of closed Communion throughout the ages and of Lutheranism in particular, and the reasons for it, which collection shows the seriousness with which the church approached the matter of a closed table until the erosion of such practice began over half century ago, so that with respect to Dr. Wenthe’s point in the previous *whereas*, we hear Dr. Martin Luther say, “Not only do they who receive it unworthily dishonor the sacrament, but also those who carelessly give it to the unworthy” (p. 54); and we read C.F.W. Walther’s warning which has no less relevance today, whether applied to deceivers or those being deceived (p. 45):

One should not rely on the fine-sounding words of the Calvinists because, especially in reference to the doctrine of Communion, they use their words to disguise their beliefs and conceal their errors. With such people, through questions like: “Is the body of Christ in Communion?” “Is He truly present?” “Is He essentially present?”—the fox, as Luther said, has not yet appeared. They will respond to all of them with “yes,” but they will always mean only a spiritual body of Christ. Therefore, one must go further and ask whether also Judas and all the godless receive the true body of Christ orally. They then will deny and will recoil from it with the greatest horror. And in this way they prove that they make the presence of the body of Christ in the Holy Sacrament dependent on faith and deny the presence of the true body of Christ.

Furthermore, Luther points out the necessity of instruction in the truth (pp. 57–58):

It is very well true that where preachers administer mere bread and wine as the Sacrament there is no more concern about to whom it is administered; or what they understand or believe; or how they perceive it ... But we intend to educate Christians and to leave some behind us; for in the Sacrament we administer the body and blood of Christ. We cannot and will not give such a Sacrament to anyone who has not been previously examined as

to what he has learned from the Catechism and whether he is willing to abandon the sins which he has done to the contrary. (*Warnungsschrift an die zu Frankfurt a. M., sich vor Zwinglischer Lehre und Lehren zu Huten. Luther's Works*, St. Louis Ed., 17:2018.)

(Matthew C. Harrison, John T. Pless, *Closed Communion? Admission to the Lord's Supper in Biblical Lutheran Perspective* [St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2017]); and

WHEREAS, The danger is real, the practice of open Communion unloving; for danger extends both to faithful LCMS congregational members and to those Christians visiting from outside our Synod fellowship when the practice of closed Communion is not observed and those uninstructed and unexamined are welcomed to the Lord's altar (Carl Fickenscher II, "Church Fellowship and Telling the Good News about Jesus," *Closed Communion*, 2001, 253; Ernie Lassman, "1 Corinthians 11:29—'Discerning the Body' and its Implications for Close(d) Communion," *Logia*, 1994, 333–39); and

WHEREAS, It is our goal as those who "walk together" not only "that all pastors and members of the LCMS recognize the Scriptural and practical necessity of adhering publicly to both a professed and functional closed Communion practice" (2019 *Proceedings*, 145; emphasis added), but that all pastors and officers of Synod indeed do so publicly adhere; and

WHEREAS, Our Lord has given our Synod a fourth year between conventions, that any and all members of Synod as pastors, and especially as district presidents who shall "cause the resolutions of Synod to be implemented" (Bylaw 4.4.2 [a]) and Circuit Visitors all of whom are expected to be "conversant with and supportive of" the Synod's resolutions (Bylaw 5.2.3 [e]), "might study God's Word and the Lutheran Confessions ... with an eye to teaching and upholding our confession and practice regarding the administration of the Lord's Supper" (2019 *Proceedings*, 145); and

WHEREAS, The lackluster practice of open Communion these past 50+ years within the Synod, which practice necessarily teaches a pastor's congregants that there is neither danger nor serious difference in the teachings of Reformed, Baptist, Roman Catholic, Methodist, Greek Orthodox, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, and other church bodies on the matter of our Lord Jesus' last will and testament in His institution of the Last Supper, or in other matters of doctrine and practice, has turned our Synod into a lukewarm religious body and, no doubt, has contributed to the losses within our Synod; and

WHEREAS, The practice of open Communion is a sin against Jesus Christ and "the new Covenant in His blood," which sin surely compares to, if not exceeds, sins against the Lord's covenant with Israel in the Old Testament, one of which being that of Achan, regarding banned goods at Jericho, as Adolph Harstad describes in his commentary:

Achan's act removed a condition of the sacred contract and sent covenant blessings and Israelite blood spilling to the ground. His radical disobedience was like kicking a leg out from under a banquet table and destroying the feast for all... The sin of the one man Achan poisons the whole nation ... (Adolph Harstad, *Joshua*, [St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2004], 304).

How many LCMS pastors today open the table to uninstructed and unexamined participants? More than one. In some circuits, in some districts, well over half.

Then Joshua ripped to pieces his clothes and fell on His face to the ground before the ark of the Lord. Then the Lord said to Joshua: "Get yourself up! Why this, you falling on your face? Israel sinned. Yes, *they* have transgressed my covenant which I commanded them ..." (Joshua 7:6, 10–11; Harstad translation, 308, emphasis added).

Only one out of all the host of Israel's fighting men sinned, and yet the Lord holds all of them accountable. "The plural pronoun 'they' again shows that the Lord holds all Israel guilty. He is not satisfied that almost all the Israelites have honored the covenant conditions." Jesus has entrusted the new covenant in His blood to His Church, and has made those He has sent to be "stewards of the mysteries of God." By God's grace both the Supper's right practice, instruction regarding its blessings, and defense against error were a major part of the Lutheran Reformation and continue to be a lasting treasure uniquely safe-guarded in the public confession of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, in which confession the LCMS joins and is a part (if before God her practice will allow it).

Harstad writes, "... Achan had committed the one sin that is both a transgression of the covenant and a sacrilege." In what category was that sin? "It denotes a violation of moral and spiritual values that is outrageously offensive and disgraceful" (Harstad, 313–14). And how can we judge the sin of open Communion, in which pastors not only allow uninstructed Christians to partake of the Lord's body to their judgment (Gr. *krima*), but in many cases invite the uninstructed and unexamined to come; and

WHEREAS, It is time—having given years and years for study, *Koinonia*, consideration, and reconsideration of our Synod's closed Communion position in the light of the Holy Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions; therefore be it

Resolved, That in the fear of the Lord, who by His shed blood poured out for us in the Holy Supper forgives our sins, all LCMS pastors (re)commit to a careful, principled administration of the Sacrament of the Altar in love for the instructed and for the uninstructed, and, because all share in the sin of even one, with repentant hearts amend their ways and walk uprightly, knowing that "all things are naked and laid bare to the eyes of him to whom we must give account" (Heb. 4:13; verse quoted by Harstad, 316); and be it further

Resolved, That those exercising ecclesiastical authority among us oversee the pastors under their supervision that their practice be in keeping with our Synod's oft stated position of closed Communion and that they refrain from communing any from outside our fellowship until and unless they are instructed and examined and renounce their former error and separate themselves from the erring church body of which they are a part, with the prayer that no pastors or leaders harden themselves against this godly practice; and be it further

Resolved, That for the sake of unity and in keeping with Synod Bylaw 5.2.3 (e) all circuit visitors demonstrate by their conformity to the synodwide resolutions on closed Communion that they are "conversant with and supportive of" these resolutions to the glory of Christ's name and the good of His Church; and be it finally

Resolved, That the Synod President with the Council of Presidents and both of Synod's seminary faculties begin an immediate re-evaluation of the specific language of earlier Communion resolutions regarding "emergency" situations and "extra-ordinary" circumstances (esp. 1967 Res. 2-19, "To Take a Position with Reference to Communing Lutherans of Other

Synods,” [Proceedings, 93] and 1986 Res. 3-08, “To Maintain Practice of Close Communion” [Proceedings, 143]), as to its validity: providing clarity as to legitimate examples of each, and of such examples that shall not be considered so, and that such re-evaluation be published for consideration by Synod’s members within the year.

Trinity
Tryon, NC

Ov. 5-11

To Reject Practice of Internet Communion

WHEREAS, The Sacrament of the Altar is the true body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, under the bread and wine, instituted by Christ himself, for us Christians to eat and to drink (Small Catechism VI); and

WHEREAS, The Holy Evangelists Matthew, Mark, Luke, and St. Paul write:

Our Lord Jesus Christ, on the night when He was betrayed, took bread, and when He had given thanks, He broke it and gave it to His disciples and said: ‘Take, eat; this is my body, which is given for you. This do in remembrance of Me.’ In the same way also He took the cup, after supper, and when He had given thanks, He gave it to them, saying: ‘Drink of it, all of you; this cup is the new testament in My blood, which is shed for you for the forgiveness of sins. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.’ (Matthew 26:26–28; Mark 14:22–24; Luke 22:19–20; 1 Corinthians 11:23–25)” (*Lutheran Service Book*, Divine Service, Setting One, 162);

and

WHEREAS, During the COVID-19 lockdowns beginning in March 2020, some LCMS pastors in a desire to faithfully commune their members began a practice which has come to be known as “internet Communion”; and

WHEREAS, The practice of “internet Communion” introduces a spatial gap that severs the consecration of the elements from the reception of the elements and therefore introduces doubt where there should be clarity and confidence in the sacrament (Luke 22:19; 1 Cor. 11:26; Augsburg Confession XIII); and

WHEREAS, The Lutheran Confessions teach, on the basis of God’s Word, that valid Communion involves the proper consecration, distribution, and reception of the elements, and that nothing has the character of a Sacrament apart from its appointed use, such “use” being defined by the Formula of Concord as “the entire external, visible action of the Lord’s Supper instituted by Christ” (Formula of Concord Solid Declaration VII:86); and

WHEREAS, The Council of Presidents in its unanimously adopted statement of September 11, 2021, “To Encourage Advocating In-Person Communion,” rightly affirmed that “No theological justification for the novel practice of online or virtual Communion has existed within the Synod or in the Lutheran tradition nor has been advanced in the circles advocating for it on the basis of the principally relevant texts (*sedes doctrinae*) of Holy Scripture or of the Lutheran Confessions”; and

WHEREAS, The Commission on Theology and Church Relations has properly confessed, on the basis of God’s Word, the true doctrine and practice of the Lord’s Supper and has rejected the practice of “internet Communion” in the documents titled

“Communion and Covid-19” and “One little Word Can Fell Him: Addendum to Communion and Covid-19”; therefore be it

Resolved, That the LCMS Minnesota South District encourage all pastors and congregations to reject the practice of “Internet Communion”; and be it further

Resolved, That we commend the desires of faithful pastors to care for their flocks in a time of pandemic, granting charity and latitude to our brothers in the office due to the emergency nature of the situation confronting us all; and be it further

Resolved, That the Minnesota South District memorialize the 2023 Convention to further study the practice of “internet Communion” on the basis of God’s Word and the Lutheran Confessions; and be it finally

Resolved, That the Minnesota South District encourage the faithful practice of in-person Communion services in our public worship services and in such cases of pastoral care where Communion is desired.

Minnesota South District

Ov. 5-12

To Reject Practice of So-Called “Internet Communion”

WHEREAS, The Sacrament of the Altar is “the true body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, under the bread and wine, instituted by Christ Himself for us Christians to eat and to drink” (Small Catechism [SC] IV 1–2); and

WHEREAS, The Holy Evangelists Matthew, Mark, Luke and St. Paul write:

Our Lord Jesus Christ, on the night when He was betrayed, took bread, and when He had given thanks, He broke it and gave it to the disciples and said: “Take, eat; this is My body, which is given for you. This do in remembrance of Me.” In the same way also He took the cup after supper, and when He had given thanks, He gave it to them, saying: “Drink of it, all of you; this cup is the New Testament in My blood, which is shed for you for the forgiveness of sins. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me” (Matt. 26:26–28; Mark 14:22–24; Luke 22:19–20; 1 Cor. 11:23–25). (*Lutheran Service Book* Divine Service, Setting One, 162)

and

WHEREAS, During the COVID-19 lockdowns beginning in March 2020, some pastors and congregations of the Synod chose to introduce an innovation which they labeled “internet Communion”; and

WHEREAS, The Synod holds to the biblical practice of closed Communion (1 Cor. 11:28–30) for the benefit of all those who receive Christ’s true body and blood in this Sacrament, and “internet Communion” renders the pastor incapable of spiritual oversight and knowing who might be following along or participating in this unbiblical practice from a remote location (1 Cor. 4:1–2; Augsburg Confession [AC] XXIV 36); and

WHEREAS, Doubt should not be introduced where there should be clarity and confidence in the Sacrament (Luke 22:19; 1 Cor. 11:26; AC XIII); and

WHEREAS, The practice of so-called “internet Communion” disregards the necessity of the body of Christ gathering together physically (Acts 2:42; 1 Cor. 11:33; Heb. 10:23–25); and

WHEREAS, The Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR) initially issued an opinion titled “Communion and COVID-19” and then later released “One little word can fell him: Addendum to Communion and COVID-19”; and

WHEREAS, The opinions of the CTCR, on the basis of God’s Word, properly confess the true doctrine and practice of the Lord’s Supper, and reject the practice of so-called “internet Communion”; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Central Illinois District (CID), on the basis of God’s Word, reject and condemn the irresponsible and unfaithful practice of so-called “internet Communion” as contrary to the Word of God and the Lutheran Confessions; and be it further

Resolved, That the CID memorialize the 2023 Synod convention to reject and condemn the practice of so-called “internet Communion” as contrary to the Word of God and the Lutheran Confessions.

Central Illinois District

Ov. 5-13

To Reject Practice of So-Called “Internet Communion”

WHEREAS, The Sacrament of the Altar is the true body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, under the bread and wine, instituted by Christ Himself for us Christians to eat and to drink (catechism.cph.org/en/sacrament-of-the-altar.html); and

WHEREAS, The holy evangelists Matthew, Mark, Luke, and St. Paul the apostle write:

Our Lord Jesus Christ, on the night when He was betrayed, took bread, and when He had given thanks, He broke it and gave it to the disciples and said: “Take, eat; this is My body, which is given for you. This do in remembrance of Me.” In the same way also He took the cup after supper, and when He had given thanks, He gave it to them, saying: “Drink of it, all of you; this cup is the new testament in My blood, which is shed for you for the forgiveness of sins. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me” (*Lutheran Service Book*, 162; 179; 197; 209; 217; see also Matt. 26:26–28; Mark 14:22–24; Luke 22:19–20; 1 Cor. 11:23–25);

and

WHEREAS, During the COVID-19 lockdowns beginning in March 2020, some pastors and congregations of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) chose to implement an innovation which they labeled “internet Communion”; and

WHEREAS, The LCMS holds to the biblical practice of close(d) communion (1 Cor. 11:28–30) for the benefit of all those who receive Christ’s true body and blood in this sacrament; and

WHEREAS, “internet Communion” renders the pastor incapable of knowing who might be following along from a remote location and thereby participating in this unbiblical practice (1 Cor. 4:1–2; Augsburg Confession [AC] XXIV 36); and

WHEREAS, These considerations all point to the introduction of doubt where there should be clarity and confidence in the sacrament (Luke 22:19; 1 Cor. 11:26; AC XIII); and

WHEREAS, The practice of so-called “internet Communion” disregards the necessity of the body of Christ from gathering together physically (Acts 2:42; 1 Cor. 11:33; Heb. 10:25); and

WHEREAS, The Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR) of the LCMS initially issued an opinion titled *Communion and COVID-19* (LCMS CTCR, 2020) and then later released *One Little Word Can Fell Him: Addendum to Communion and COVID-19* (LCMS CTCR, 2020); and

WHEREAS, The opinions of the CTCR, on the basis of God’s Word, properly confess the true doctrine and practice of the Lord’s Supper, and reject the practice of so-called “internet Communion”; therefore be it

Resolved, That Christ Lutheran Church, Sioux Falls, South Dakota, on the basis of God’s Word, reject and condemn the irresponsible and unfaithful practice of so-called “internet Communion” as contrary to the Word of God and the Lutheran Confessions; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod in convention also reject and condemn the practice of so-called “internet Communion” as contrary to the Word of God and the Lutheran Confessions.

Christ

Sioux Falls, SD

Ov. 5-14

To Reject Practice of “Online or Virtual Communion”

WHEREAS, During the COVID-19 pandemic, some congregations of our Synod started a novel practice—“online or virtual Communion,” which is unknown to the Scriptures and heretofore not been practiced in the Synod; and

WHEREAS, The Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR) and the systematic theology departments of both seminaries have issued opinions that unequivocally and unanimously argued against the practice of “online or virtual Communion,” and the Council of Presidents has passed a motion for all members of Synod to “refrain from the practice of online Communion”; and

WHEREAS, The CTCR affirmed its 2006 opinion on DVD consecration and applied its rationale to “online or virtual Communion,” putting forward the arguments (among others) that this practice:

- severs the consecration of the Sacrament through the Words of Institution from the distribution and reception of the Sacrament;
- potentially and unnecessarily sows doubt in the minds of communicants as to whether the elements received are in fact the Sacrament of Christ’s body and blood;
- vitiates the instrumental role of pastoral care in the administration of the Sacrament through the lack of pastoral oversight, preparation of communicants, and the admission to the table; and
- detracts from the corporate assembly of God’s people around the Lord’s Supper as an expression of the common confession of Christ and unity in the faith;

and

WHEREAS, The Lutheran Confessions (Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration [FC SD] VII) indicate that the proper use of the Sacrament includes a unified consecration, distribution, and reception, none of which are to be severed from the other, yet the practice of “online or virtual Communion” would interject a spatial,

temporal, and technological gap between the consecration and the distribution and reception; and

WHEREAS, The Sacrament of the Altar serves to strengthen faith against all doubts (Augsburg Confession [AC] XIII) and is “given for a daily pasture and sustenance, that faith may refresh and strengthen itself so as not to fall back in such battle, but become ever stronger and stronger” (Large Catechism V 24), while it is incumbent on all faithful ministers of the Gospel to remove all obstacles that create doubt regarding what Christ offers in this Sacrament or detracts from it (AC XXIV); and

WHEREAS, The pastoral office is responsible for oversight of the administration of the Sacrament in accordance with the keys conferred upon the pastor by virtue of his call (AC XIV; C.F.W. Walther’s *Theses on the Ministry* V and VII); and

WHEREAS, No theological justification for the novel practice of “online or virtual Communion” has existed within the Synod or the Lutheran tradition nor has been advanced in the circles advocating for it on the basis of the principally relevant texts (*sedes doctrinae*) of Holy Scripture or the Lutheran Confessions; and

WHEREAS, The Sacrament of the Altar has been established by our Lord according to His words of institution, commanding literally, “This keep on doing” (Luke 22:19; 1 Cor. 11:24–25) which indicates that this use of the Sacrament should be kept according to His institution and that “nothing is a sacrament without the appointed use” as set forth by those same words of institution (FC SD VII 73); and

WHEREAS, The uniformity in practice has, from the foundation of the Synod, been considered desirable (1847 Constitution Articles I 3; II 4; IV 10; V 14) and remains an endeavor toward which congregations are encouraged to strive (Const. Art. II 7); therefore be it

Resolved, That the Indiana District reject the practice of “online or virtual Communion” as it is contrary to the Word of God and the Lutheran Confessions; and be it further

Resolved, That the Indiana District president, on behalf of the district, admonish congregations practicing “online or virtual Communion” to cease this divisive practice; and be it finally

Resolved, That the Indiana District memorialize the 2023 Synod convention to reject the practice of “online or virtual Communion.”

Indiana District

Ov. 5-15

To Reject Practice of Online or Virtual Communion

WHEREAS, In the wake of the incipient pandemic, congregations throughout the Synod sought to provide spiritual care to their congregations when public health measures prohibited gathering for corporate worship services; and

WHEREAS, Those attempts included among some the practice of online or virtual Communion, which had heretofore not been practiced in the Synod or endorsed by seminary faculties or the Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR); and

WHEREAS, The CTCR and the systematic theology departments of both seminaries issued opinions that unequivocally and unanimously argued against the practice of online or virtual Communion; and

WHEREAS, The CTCR affirmed its 2006 opinion on DVD consecration and applied its rationale to online or virtual Communion, putting forward the arguments—among others—that this practice:

- severs the consecration of the Sacrament through the words of institution from the distribution and reception of the Sacrament;
- potentially and unnecessarily sows doubt in the minds of communicants as to whether the elements received are in fact the sacrament of Christ’s body and blood;
- vitiates the instrumental role of pastoral care in the administration of the Sacrament through the lack of pastoral oversight, preparation of communicants, and admission to the table; and
- detracts from the corporate assembly of God’s people around the Lord’s Supper as an expression of their common confession of Christ and unity in the faith;

and

WHEREAS, The Lutheran Confessions (Formula of Concord [FC] SD VII) indicate that the proper use of the Sacrament includes a unified consecration, distribution, and reception, none of which are to be severed from the other, yet the practice of online or virtual Communion would interject a spatial, temporal, and technological gap between the consecration and the distribution and reception; and

WHEREAS, The Sacrament of the Altar serves to strengthen faith against all doubts (Augsburg Confession [AC] XIII) and is “given for a daily pasture and sustenance, that faith may refresh and strengthen itself (Psalm 23:1–3) so as not to fall back in such a battle, but become ever stronger and stronger” (Large Catechism V 24), while it is incumbent upon the faithful ministers of the Gospel to remove all obstacles that create doubt regarding what Christ offers in the Sacrament or detracts from it (AC XXIV), yet the practice of online or virtual Communion may result in uncertainty regarding the validity of a Sacrament thus celebrated (as even the anonymous tract “Communion in Homes in Times of Crisis” admits when it concedes that uncertainty may cause some people to refrain from participating in an online Communion service); and

WHEREAS, The pastoral office is responsible for oversight of the administration of the Sacrament in accordance with the keys conferred upon the pastor by virtue of his call (AC XIV; Walther’s *Theses on the Ministry* V and VII); and

WHEREAS, No theological justification for the novel practice of online or virtual Communion has existed within the Synod or in the Lutheran tradition nor has been advanced in the circles advocating for it on the basis of the principally relevant texts (*sedes doctrinae*) of Holy Scripture or of the Lutheran Confessions; and

WHEREAS, The Sacrament of the Altar has been established by our Lord according to His words of institution, commanding literally “This keep on doing” (Luke 22:19; 1 Cor. 11:24–25), which indicates that this use of the Sacrament should be kept according to His institution, and that “nothing is a sacrament without the appointed use” as set forth by those same words of institution (FC VII 73) and these texts (and all related) require serious study by the church; and

WHEREAS, The uniformity in practice has, from the foundation of the Synod, been considered desirable (1847 Constitution Article

I 3; II 4; IV 5; V 14) and remains an endeavor toward which congregations are encouraged to strive (Const. Art. II 7); and

WHEREAS, Such practice (virtual or online Communion) has not been discussed by Synod as a whole, much less considered and commended by it on a scriptural and confessional basis; therefore be it

Resolved, That we commend the desires of faithful pastors to care for their flocks in a time of pandemic, having granted charity and latitude due to the emergency nature of the situation experienced by all; and be it further

Resolved, That the South Wisconsin District, on the basis of God's Word, reject the irresponsible and unfaithful practice of online and virtual Communion as contrary to the Word of God and the Lutheran Confessions; and be it finally

Resolved, That the South Wisconsin District memorialize the 2023 Synod convention to reject the practice of online or virtual Communion as contrary to the Word of God and the Lutheran Confessions and accept the CTCR opinions *Communion and COVID-19* (adopted March 2020) and *One Little Word Can Fell Him: Addendum to Communion and COVID-19* (adopted June 2020).

South Wisconsin District

Ov. 5-16

To Reject and Condemn Practice of Virtual (Online) Communion

WHEREAS, The churches of the Lutheran Confession have diligently and respectfully followed the practice of Communion in the midst of a gathered local congregation served by local pastors who are "servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God," (1 Cor. 4:1) as was handed down by Jesus to St. Paul and the first apostles and to us; and

WHEREAS, These local pastors are to "be found trustworthy" (1 Cor. 4:2 ESVUK) and have vowed "to administer the holy sacraments in accordance with their divine institution," (Supplement to the Diploma of Vocation); and

WHEREAS, Our Lutheran Confession teaches specifically regarding Holy Communion (Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration VII 83–85):

But this "blessing" or the recitation of the Words of Institution of Christ by itself does not make a valid sacrament if the entire action of the Supper, as Christ administered it, is not observed (as, for example, when the consecrated bread is not distributed, received, and eaten but is instead locked up [in the tabernacle], made into a sacrifice, or carried around in a procession). On the contrary, Christ's command, "Do this," must be observed without division or confusion. For it includes the entire action or administration of this sacrament: that in a Christian assembly bread and wine are taken, consecrated, distributed, received, eaten, and drunk, and that thereby the Lord's death is proclaimed, as St. Paul presents the entire action of the breaking of the bread or its distribution and reception in 1 Corinthians 10:16. In order to preserve this true Christian teaching on the Holy Supper and to avoid and eliminate many kinds of idolatrous abuses and perversions of this testament, this useful rule and guide is taken from the Words of Institution: nothing has the character of a sacrament apart from the use [*usus*] instituted by Christ or the divinely instituted action [*actio*]. (That is, when

Christ's institution is not observed as he established it, there is no sacrament.) This rule dare not be rejected in any way, but it can and should be followed and preserved in the church of God with great benefit. (Kolb & Wengert, 607–608);

and

WHEREAS, It is not possible to provide in-person pastoral care or complete the "entire action or administration" of the sacraments "in a Christian assembly" when members of the congregation participate remotely using the internet or other electronic means; and

WHEREAS, The Sacraments were instituted by Christ to destroy doubt and bring the certainty of His forgiveness; and

WHEREAS, "Virtual" or "online" Communion, as it has been variously called, is a rejection of proper pastoral care, negates the ability to practice the immediate pastoral oversight of confession of sins and faith, breaks the "useful rule and guide" established by our Lutheran Confession, and creates uncertainty, doubt, and a division of the local gathered body of believers and a division in practice between congregations; and

WHEREAS, The Council of Presidents unanimously adopted the resolution: "To Encourage Advocating In-Person Communion," (The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, "To Encourage Advocating In-Person Communion," files.lcms.org/file/preview/6CAF272D-692A-4653-9005-A5C931CD045B, Sept. 11, 2021) wherein the final resolved encourages congregations and pastors "to refrain from the practice of online Communion"; therefore be it

Resolved, That the pastors of the Montana District provide a careful biblical and catechetical instruction to their congregations regarding Holy Communion, giving attention to the duties of a pastor and that of the congregation in this matter; and be it further

Resolved, That the congregations of the district be encouraged to clearly and unequivocally reject and condemn the practice of virtual (online) Communion by teaching members of the specific dangers; and be it further

Resolved, That the president of the district (the ecclesiastical supervisor), seek information from all Montana District congregations about this practice and begin specific discussions to dissuade any congregation of this district that is considering, teaching, or practicing virtual (online) Communion; and be it finally

Resolved, That the district memorialize the Synod to broaden its scope to include every district and adopt this at its 2023 convention.

Montana District

Ov. 5-17

To Refrain from Practice of Online Communion

WHEREAS, The Lord Jesus, with words and actions spoken and carried out by him in the direct and physical presence of His disciples, instituted Holy Communion as a communal meal through which His body and blood are distributed under the bread and wine for the forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation (Matt 26:26–28); and

WHEREAS, The conditions brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020 led many congregations of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) to suspend in-person worship gatherings for protracted periods, hindering them from the celebration of Holy Communion; and

WHEREAS, Some congregations considered turning to online Communion as a way to continue celebrating Holy Communion in the absence of in-person worship gatherings; and

WHEREAS, In speaking of Christian worship, Holy Scripture does not endorse a spiritual or virtual fellowship, but rather a physical, communal gathering as the apostle Paul describes when he writes to the church in Corinth, “So then, my brothers, when you come together to eat, wait for one another—if anyone is hungry, let him eat at home—so that when you come together it will not be for your judgment” (1 Cor. 11:33–34a); and

WHEREAS, The Epistle to the Hebrews states, “And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting 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. 10:24–25); and

WHEREAS, The Augsburg Confession describes the administration of the Lord’s Supper in the context of a physically gathered assembly (Augsburg Confession [AC] VII 1; XXIV 36–39); and

WHEREAS, The Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR) responded by unanimously endorsing the opinion “Communion and Covid-19” (CC19), which warned against the practice of online Communion, in part by referencing an earlier 2006 CTCR opinion on DVD consecration, which reads, “Whenever the actual words and actions of the celebrant in consecrating the elements are intentionally separated (by time, distance, or technological means) from the distribution and reception, no assurance can be given that our Lord’s instructions are being heeded and that the body and blood of Christ are actually being given and received for the forgiveness of sins and the strengthening of faith” (LCMS CTCR, *Communion and Covid-19* [adopted 2020], 2); and

WHEREAS, Some LCMS pastors and congregations nevertheless persisted in publicly arguing for and practicing online Communion, prompting a further response from the CTCR in an addendum to CC19 entitled, “One little word can fell him,” which affirmed and expanded upon the original position against online Communion; and

WHEREAS, The CTCR’s acknowledgment in the addendum to CC19 states that “It is indeed true that the CTCR opinion in this matter is not binding” (LCMS CTCR, “One little word can fell him” [2020], 12) leaves open the possibility that pastors and congregations of the LCMS may continue to practice online Communion despite the admonition to cease due to the harm it may cause; and

WHEREAS, The practice of online Communion has, at the very least, the potential to sow discord among the brethren and doubt concerning whether such observance of Holy Communion is pleasing to God and in accordance with His Word; therefore be it

Resolved, That the CTCR be commended for its sound, scriptural guidance on the issue of online Communion; and be it further

Resolved, That the Iowa East District memorialize the Synod to instruct our pastors and congregations on the basis of Holy Scripture’s exhortation to gather in person to celebrate the Lord’s Supper and on the basis of the examples of the Augsburg Confession Articles VII and XXIV, to refrain from the practice of online Communion, ensuring that those pastors and congregations who continue to practice online Communion after due fraternal

admonition be subject to appropriate ecclesiastical counsel and instruction; and be it finally

Resolved, That those who are hindered for a time from bodily participation in Holy Communion be encouraged to content themselves with the exercise of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. “As great as the hardship is when we cannot receive Christ’s body and blood, the hardship ought not be ‘resolved’ in ways that promise an uncertain ‘sacrament’ without the absolute assurance that Christ intends. It is better humbly and repentantly to ask the Lord for the regular administration of the Sacrament of the Altar to be restored to us, together with an end to the ‘deadly pestilence’ that is killing thousands of souls who are precious to God, their Creator (see Ps. 91; Jonah 4:11)” (CC19, 3–4).

Iowa East District

Ov. 5-18

To Reject Internet Communion as Contrary to Word of God

WHEREAS, During the COVID-19 pandemic, congregations of our Synod started a novel practice: “online” or “virtual” Communion, which is unknown to the Scriptures and had heretofore not been practiced in the Synod; and

WHEREAS, The Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR) and the systematic theology departments of both seminaries issued opinions that unequivocally and unanimously argued against the practice of online or virtual Communion, and the Council of Presidents has passed a motion for all members of Synod to “refrain from the practice of online Communion”; and

WHEREAS, the CTCR affirmed its 2006 opinion on DVD consecration and applied its rationale to online or virtual Communion, putting forward the arguments—among others—that this practice:

- severs the consecration of the Sacrament through the Words of Institution from the distribution and reception of the Sacrament;
- potentially and unnecessarily sows doubt in the minds of communicants as to whether the elements received are in fact the Sacrament of Christ’s body and blood;
- vitiates the instrumental role of pastoral care in the administration of the Sacrament through the lack of pastoral oversight, preparation of communicants, and admission to the table;
- detracts from the corporate assembly of God’s people around the Lord’s Supper as an expression of the common confession of Christ and unity in the faith;

and

WHEREAS, The Lutheran Confessions (Formula of Concord [FC] Solid Declaration [SD] VII) indicate that the proper use of the Sacrament includes a unified consecration, distribution, and reception, none of which are to be severed from the other, yet the practice of online or virtual Communion would interject a spatial, temporal, and technological gap between the consecration and the distribution and reception; and

WHEREAS, The Sacrament of the Altar serves to strengthen faith against all doubts (Augsburg Confession [AC] XIII) and is “given for a daily pasture and sustenance, that faith may refresh and strengthen itself so as not to fall back in such a battle, but become

ever stronger and stronger” (Large Catechism V 24), while it is incumbent on all faithful ministers of the Gospel to remove all obstacles that create doubt regarding what Christ offers in this sacrament or detracts from it (AC XXIV); and

WHEREAS, The pastoral office is responsible for oversight of the administration of the Sacrament in accordance with the keys conferred upon the pastor by virtue of his call (AC XIV; Walther’s *Church and Ministry*, Ministry Theses V and VII); and

WHEREAS, No theological justification for the novel practice of online or virtual Communion has existed within the Synod or the Lutheran tradition nor has been advanced in the circles advocating for it on the basis of the principally relevant texts (*sedes doctrinae*) of Holy Scripture or the Lutheran Confessions; and

WHEREAS, The Sacrament of the Altar has been established by our Lord according to his Words of Institution, commanding literally “This keep on doing” (Luke 22:19, 1 Cor. 11:24-25) which indicates that this use of the Sacrament should be kept according to his institution and that “nothing is a Sacrament without the appointed use” as set forth by those same Words of Institution (FC SD VII 73); and

WHEREAS, The uniformity in practice from the foundation of the Synod has long been considered desirable (1847 Constitution Article I 3; II 4; IV 5; V 14) and remains an endeavor toward which congregations are encouraged to strive (Const. Art. II 7); therefore be it

Resolved, That the Southern Illinois District reject the practice of online or virtual Communion as it is contrary to the Word of God and the Lutheran Confessions; and be it further

Resolved, That the district urge congregations practicing online or virtual Communion to cease this divisive practice; and be it finally

Resolved, That the district submit this resolution as an overture to the 2023 Synod convention.

Southern Illinois District

Ov. 5-19

To Reject “Online” or “Virtual” Communion as Divisive of Church Fellowship

WHEREAS, During the COVID-19 pandemic, some congregations of our Synod started a novel practice of “online” or “virtual” Communion, which is unknown to the Scriptures and had heretofore not been practiced in the Synod; and

WHEREAS, The Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR) and the systematic theology departments of both seminaries issued opinions in opposition to the practice of “online” or “virtual” Communion, and the Council of Presidents passed a motion for all members of the Synod to “refrain from the practice of online Communion”; and

WHEREAS, The CTCR affirmed its 2006, unanimously adopted opinion on DVD consecration and applied its rationale to online or virtual Communion, putting forward the arguments—among others—that this practice:

- severs the consecration of the Sacrament through the Words of Institution from the distribution and reception of the Sacrament;

- potentially and unnecessarily sows doubt in the minds of communicants as to whether the elements received are in fact the Sacrament of Christ’s Body and Blood;
- vitiates the instrumental role of pastoral care in the administration of the Sacrament through the lack of pastoral oversight, preparation of communicants, and admission to the table; and
- detracts from the corporate assembly of God’s people around the Lord’s Supper as an expression of the common confession of Christ and unity in the faith;

and

WHEREAS, The Lutheran Confessions (Formula of Concord [FC], Solid Declaration 7) indicate that the proper use of the Sacrament includes a unified consecration, distribution, and reception, none of which are to be severed from the other, yet the practice of “online” or “virtual” Communion would interpose a spatial, temporal, and technological breach between the consecration and the distribution and reception; and

WHEREAS, The Sacrament of the Altar serves to strengthen faith against all doubts (Augsburg Confession [AC] XIII) and is “given as a daily pasture and sustenance, that faith may refresh and strengthen itself so that it will not fall back in such a battle, but become ever stronger and stronger” (Large Catechism V 24), while it is incumbent on all faithful ministers of the Gospel to remove all obstacles that create doubt or detract from what Christ offers in this Sacrament (AC XXIV); and

WHEREAS, God’s Word clearly teaches that it belongs to the essential nature of the Church that it is a physical gathering, an assembly of believers (Matt. 18:20; 1 Cor 11:17–18, 33; Heb. 10:25; AC VII; VIII); and

WHEREAS, In accordance with the keys conferred upon the pastor by virtue of his call (1 Cor. 4:1; 1 Peter 5:1–4; AC XIV; Walther’s *Theses on the Ministry* V; VII), the pastoral office is responsible for oversight of the administration of the Sacrament; and

WHEREAS, No theological rationale, (i.e., application of the principally relevant texts [*sedes doctrinae*] of Holy Scripture or the Lutheran Confessions) for the novel practice of “online” or “virtual” Communion has existed within the Lutheran tradition or the Synod; and

WHEREAS, The Sacrament of the Altar has been established by our Lord according to His words of institution, commanding literally “This keep on doing” (Luke 22:19; 1 Cor. 11:24–25) which indicates that this use of the Sacrament should be kept according to his institution and that “there is no sacrament apart from the instituted use” (FC SD VII 73, ed. Tappert) as set forth by those same words of institution; and

WHEREAS, In order to “maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Eph. 4:3) uniformity in practice has long been considered desirable from the foundation of the Synod (1847 Constitution Articles I 3; II 4; IV 5; V 14) and remains an endeavor toward which congregations are encouraged to strive (2019 Const. Art. III 7); and

WHEREAS, Because congregations that persistently practice “online” or “virtual” Communion sever church fellowship; therefore be it

Resolved, That we reject and condemn the practice of “online” or “virtual” Communion as it is contrary to the Word of God and the Lutheran Confessions; and be it further

Resolved, That we urge congregations and pastors, as members of the Synod, who are practicing “online” or “virtual” Communion to cease this fellowship divisive practice, and that pastors who previously practiced “online” or “virtual” Communion publicly repent of this practice.

Pastors’ Conference
Wyoming District

Ov. 5-20

To Create True Synod-Wide Dialogue and Study with Respect to Celebration of Lord’s Supper in Homes during Online Worship

Preamble

In the Preamble to the Constitution of the Synod, two reasons are given “for the forming of a Synodical Union: (1) the example of the apostolic church (Acts 15:1–31)” and “(2) our Lord’s will that the diversities of the gifts should be for the common profit (1 Cor. 12:4–31).” Clearly, the framers of the Synod Constitution were convinced that unhindered, open discussion of controverted matters, leading to God-pleasing consensus, is an important basis for the existence of our church body. Further, they recognized that the Holy Spirit gives gifts to his people in diverse ways. Those diverse gifts are good for the church! Yet, such differences in giftedness may themselves lead to differences in perspectives in issues facing the church, necessitating the process recounted in Acts 15:1–31.

An analysis of the relatively recent history of the Synod shows at least three examples of the Synod engaging processes of discussion and consensus-building around controverted matters that proved wholesome to our life together in the Synod. In 1991, The Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR) produced a document entitled “Inter-Christian Relationships: An Instrument for Study,” which sought widespread discussion of the concepts contained therein and provided forms for feedback to CTCR as it continued to consider the topic. In 2009, prior to the 2010 Synod convention where significant structural changes would be considered, the task force responsible to report to the convention held regional conferences where the concepts could be introduced, questions asked, the merit of the proposals discussed, and feedback given to the task force prior to proposals being set before a Synod convention. In the early years of the past decade, the Koinonia Project strove to gather pastors around theological issues for the purpose of discussion and agreement. In each case, members of the Synod were given ability to discuss matters of importance and potential controversy in an unfettered, non-threatening environment where no final decisions were being made. In many cases, this environment fostered greater understanding among participants and often greater consensus among them.

The reason for processes like these does not escape congregational leaders, ordained or lay. When, for instance, a church desires to embark on a building program, surveys are completed, forums are held, plans are floated and discussed, all in an attempt to build widespread consensus around the program before a vote is cast to begin the project. This sort of collaborative, collegial process is necessary to elicit broad-based support for the project from the congregation. No leader wants a project like this, or a vote of any significance for that matter, to be adopted by a slim majority. Strong super-majorities are required to prevent unnecessary division that could seriously impede the congregation’s mission.

So, it is with the Synod. Resolutions dealing with controverted issues that are not agreed to by large super majorities of members of the Synod are divisive. They prevent us from *walking together*—the very definition of a Synod. Whichever side loses the vote may well be convinced that they have not been heard and that the resolution is being foisted upon them, potentially filling the constituents of that perspective with resentment and resistance. This resolution puts forward a process whereby members of the Synod can be involved in “much debate” (Acts 15:7 NIV) of controverted matters. This discussion is designed to occur prior to those issues coming to a national convention, where historically relatively few individuals have the opportunity to debate the issue for relatively short, and sometimes non-existent, periods of time. Its objective is to help the Synod walk together in greater consensus and unity.

WHEREAS, On April 21, 2005, the Texas District president made the CTCR aware of a congregation’s use of a DVD to provide the words of consecration in a celebration of the Lord’s Supper and asked the following specific questions: (1) did they violate any doctrine concerning the Sacrament of the Altar?, (2) further concerns would be, should this practice be encouraged?, (3) would it not erode the safeguarding of the Sacrament?, and (4) a further question would be is the consecration of the elements by DVD valid?; and

WHEREAS, The CTCR offered an opinion on Feb. 18, 2006, that did not specifically answer questions (1) and (4), but did however discourage the practice on the basis that the questions themselves were asked, to wit: this request itself illustrates, the practice described above has raised and, if perpetuated, would surely continue to raise questions and doubts about whether Christ’s Supper was being celebrated in complete faithfulness to His own instructions and example. This practice, therefore, certainly cannot be condoned or encouraged; and

WHEREAS, The CTCR on March 20, 2020, in a document titled “Communion and Covid-19,” offered opinion and guidance to certain Communion practices being considered and/or implemented by congregations in response to the inability to worship together in a single place, the ability to worship together online, and their desire to celebrate the Sacrament; and

WHEREAS, In “Communion and Covid-19,” the CTCR drew upon their Feb. 18, 2006, opinion; and

WHEREAS, Neither of the above documents addressed online Communion in its current technological context and with procedures designed accordingly; and

WHEREAS, In response to the CTCR’s “Communion and Covid-19,” a document began circulation among pastors and congregations of the Synod titled “Communion in Homes During Times of Crisis: Scriptural and Confessional Principles” that was offered in the spirit of fraternal discussion and edification; and

WHEREAS, During Holy Week of 2020, the CTCR responded to “Communion in Homes During Times of Crisis: Scriptural and Confessional Principles” with an addendum to “Communion and Covid-19” titled “One little word can fell him”; and

WHEREAS, In “One little word can fell him,” the CTCR similarly seeks fraternal discussion and edification, and in that same spirit offered ten reasons to support their earlier conclusions that “Lutheran churches should refrain from online Communion services as described therein.”; and

WHEREAS, These documents offer divergent views while seeking to faithfully draw upon Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions; and

WHEREAS, The Synod has historically recognized the need for collegial debate, collaborative decision-making, and consensus building, enshrining “[t]he example of the apostolic church (Acts 15:1–31)” in the Preamble of its Constitution and by adopting a process whereby those principles may be observed with respect to the adoption of doctrinal statements in Bylaw 1.6.2 (b); and

WHEREAS, The Synod in Bylaw 1.6.2 speaks about “seeking to clarify its witness or to settle doctrinal controversy, so that all who seek to participate in the relationships that exist within and through the Synod may benefit and may act to benefit others,” and thereby offers the possibilities of doctrinal resolutions and doctrinal statements; and

WHEREAS, Bylaw 1.6.2 (b)(2), with respect to doctrinal statements, calls for a process that allows for “study and suggestions” for as much as a year on such controverted matters; and

WHEREAS, The witness of Scripture and the early Christian Church was that “after there had been much debate” (Acts 15:7 ESV) on the controverted matter regarding the circumcision of Gentile converts a decision was made; and

WHEREAS, Resolutions voted on at Synod conventions, including doctrinal resolutions, do not inherently allow for debate or discussion that is described in Acts 15:7 as πολλῆς—much, multitudinous, plenteous, numerous, a great amount—but instead are sometimes voted on with little or no debate, even on both significant and controverted matters; and

WHEREAS, The Synod in Bylaw 3.10.1.4 indicates that “The Council of Presidents shall carry out such assignments as the Synod in convention may give to the council from time to time.”; therefore be it

Resolved, That a process be established of not less than a year that allows for much fraternal discussion and edification with respect to celebration of the Lord’s Supper at home in times of crisis; and be it further

Resolved, That congregations be encouraged to refrain from the practice of the Lord’s Supper in the home during online worship until fraternal dialogue is complete and unity is reached; and be it further

Resolved, That this process would involve discussion face-to-face, preferably in-person or, if necessary through electronic means, between leaders that reflect the divergent and diverse positions presented by the documents “Communion in Homes During Times of Crisis: Scriptural and Confessional Principles” and “One little word can fell him,” with said leaders defined and determined by a 2/3 vote of the Council of Presidents (COP); and be it further

Resolved, That these leaders produce a joint document which clearly states points of agreement as well as any unresolved matters along with the Scriptural and confessional rationale for each position, presented in a manner that allows for appropriate theological reflection and study; and be it further

Resolved, That such a document would provide specific answers to the questions: (1) does a particular practice violate any doctrine concerning the Sacrament of the Altar?, and (2) is the consecration of the elements in the practices discussed valid?; and be it further

Resolved, That this joint document be disseminated throughout the Synod to the congregations, pastors, church workers, and people of the Synod for reflection and study; and be it further

Resolved, That the congregations, pastors, church workers, and people of the Synod have fraternal discussion using this document through a process agreed upon by a 2/3 vote of the COP; and be it further

Resolved, That after such processes any doctrinal resolution, doctrinal statement, Constitutional or Bylaw revision, or any action that relates directly or indirectly to the controverted matter should be considered by the Synod in convention, provided that such proposed action is in accordance with the process established by the COP; and be it finally

Resolved, That the Texas District in convention memorialize the Synod in convention with this resolution.

Texas District

Ov. 5-21

To Rescind 2019 Resolution 5-09A

WHEREAS, A *natural day* is determined by the sun, and the sun was not created until day four in the Genesis 1 account (Gen. 1:14–19); and

WHEREAS, The concept of *natural day* is a human way of determining time and humans were not created until day six, the end of the process, according to the Genesis 1 account (Gen. 1:26–31); and

WHEREAS, God’s time is not the same as human time (2 Peter 3:8); and

WHEREAS, The Bible never uses the phrase *natural day*. As President Harrison said during the discussion of Resolution 5-09A at the 2019 Synod convention, “we try to say only what the Bible says, and otherwise to keep our mouths shut,” (*Proceedings*, 155); therefore be it

Resolved, That we rescind 2019 Res. 5-09A; and be it further

Resolved, That we reaffirm that we “believe in one God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth and of all things visible and invisible” (Nicene Creed); and be it finally

Resolved, That since we believe that God is the Creator of all that we therefore recognize that scientific research is a study of God’s handiwork, noting that modern science began among Christianity and religions that believed in one Creator God; the Christian Church has not been anti-science.

St. John
Country Club Hills, IL

Ov. 5-22

To Clearly Declare the Work of Our Creator

WHEREAS, Scripture is the infallible and inerrant Word of God; and

WHEREAS, Scripture teaches earthly (e.g. “historical”) things as well as spiritual things; and

WHEREAS, The events described in Genesis 1–3 (and more) are plainly written historical narrative; and

WHEREAS, The chrono-genealogies of Genesis leave little room for doubt of their time span, regardless of whether there are gaps in the listed generations; and

WHEREAS, Scripture contains plentiful other historical guideposts to place its events into a relatively well-defined time framework; therefore be it

Resolved, That The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod publicly confess and teach that creation occurred in the relatively recent past, thousands of years ago rather than millions or billions of years ago.

St. Matthew
Hawthorn Woods, IL

Ov. 5-23

To Affirm and Bind Ourselves to Biblical Doctrine of Young Age of Earth

Preamble

Luther on the Genesis 5 genealogy:

This is the greatest glory of the primitive world, that it had so many good, wise, and holy men at the same time. We must not think that these are ordinary names of plain people; but, next to Christ and John the Baptist, they were the most outstanding heroes this world has ever produced. And on the Last Day we shall behold and admire their grandeur. Likewise, we shall also see their deeds. For then it will be made manifest what Adam, Seth, Methuselah, and the others did; what they endured from the old serpent; how they comforted and maintained themselves by means of the hope of the Seed against the outrages of the world or of the Cainites; how they experienced various kinds of treachery; how much envy, hatred, and contempt they endured on account of the glory of the blessed Seed who would be born from their descendants. No one must think that they lived without the severest afflictions and endless crosses. These facts will be made manifest on the Last Day. (Martin Luther, *Luther's Works, Vol. 1: Lectures on Genesis: Chapters 1–5*, ed. Jaroslav Jan Pelikan, Hilton C. Oswald, and Helmut T. Lehmann [CPH, 1999], 334–5)

WHEREAS, We are tempted to submit ourselves and the sacred Scriptures to the human and fallen authorities of secular science and reason; and

WHEREAS, Darwinian theories of evolution, which exclude the possibility of divine creation from nothing and teach billions of years of death contrary to Scripture's history of redemption, require immense spans of time to account for the biological state of our world; and

WHEREAS, Contemporary cosmological and geological arguments for the immense age of the universe, which also exclude the possibility of divine creation and intervention, have been widely accepted in universities, schools, and in popular society as the truth; and

WHEREAS, "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. 3:16–17); and

WHEREAS, "We confess our adherence to the prophetic and apostolic writings of the Old and New Testaments, as to the pure, clear fountain of Israel, which alone is the one true guiding principle, according to which all teachers and teaching are to be judged and evaluated" (Formula of Concord [FC], Solid Declaration [SD], Summary Content, Rule, and Norm 3 [Kolb & Wengert]); and

WHEREAS, The writings of Moses, including the book of Genesis, are both theologically and historically authoritative for Christ and his apostles (Matt. 19:4; 22:31; Luke 16:31; 24:44; John 5:46–47; Acts 11:43; etc.); and

WHEREAS, Our Synod's publicly stated position on the age of the earth is 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

WHEREAS, The genealogical evidence provided by Genesis 5 and 11, which dates the earth's age near 6,000 years, excludes the lengths of time necessary to wholly or partially accept cosmological, geological, archeological, and biological theories which posit millions and billions of years of this earth's existence; and

WHEREAS, "For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men" (1 Cor. 1:25); therefore be it

Resolved, That we memorialize the Synod in convention to confess:

- that the inspired and inerrant Scriptures relate the authoritative historical accounts of man's creation and redemption; and
- the straightforward reading of the genealogies in Genesis 5 and 11 can and should be used to limit our public teaching about the age of the earth to less than ten thousand years instead of millions or billions of years;

and be it further

Resolved, That pastors, teachers, professors, and Synod officials be memorialized to speak openly and without shame about our church's unanimous confession of the Scripture's authority against the deemed to be erroneous doctrines and secular authorities which assert a history contrary to God's Word and develop resources for the education of the laity on this issue.

Christ, Juniata, NE; St. Andrew, West Fargo, ND;
St. John—Antrim, St. James, MN; St. John—South Branch,
St. James, MN; Trinity, Campbell, NE; Trinity, Ottumwa, IA;
Zion, Wilton, IA; Circuit 3 (Rice Lake), North Wisconsin District;
Circuit 8 (Mount Pleasant), Iowa East District
The Christ, Juniata, NE, submission did not contain the preamble consisting of the Luther quotation.

Ov. 5-24

**To Affirm and Bind Ourselves
to Biblical Doctrine of Young Age of Earth**

WHEREAS, We are tempted to submit ourselves and the sacred Scriptures to the human and fallen authorities of secular science and reason; and

WHEREAS, Darwinian theories of evolution, which exclude the possibility of divine creation from nothing and teach billions of years of death contrary to Scripture's history of redemption, require immense spans of time to account for the biological state of our world; and

WHEREAS, Contemporary cosmological and geological arguments for the immense age of the universe, which also exclude the possibility of divine creation and intervention, have been widely accepted in universities, schools, and in popular society as the truth; and

WHEREAS, "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. 3:16–17); and

WHEREAS, "We confess our adherence to the prophetic and apostolic writings of the Old and New Testaments, as to the pure, clear fountain of Israel, which alone is the one true guiding principle, according to which all teachers and teaching are to be judged and evaluated" (Formula of Concord [FC] Solid Declaration [SD] Summary Content, Rule, and Norm 3 [Kolb & Wengert]); and

WHEREAS, The writings of Moses, including the book of Genesis, are both theologically and historically authoritative for Christ and his apostles, (Matt. 19:4; 22:31; Luke 16:31; 24:44; John 5:46–47; Acts 11:43; etc.); and

WHEREAS, Our Synod's publicly stated position on the age of the earth is 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

WHEREAS, The genealogical evidence provided by Genesis 5 and 11, which dates the earth's age near 6,000 years, excludes the lengths of time necessary to wholly or partially accept cosmological, geological, archaeological, and biological theories which posit millions and billions of years of this earth's existence; and

WHEREAS, "For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men" (1 Cor. 1:25); therefore be it

Resolved, That Mt. Zion Lutheran Church, Denver, Colo., memorialize the Synod in convention to confess:

- that the inspired and inerrant Scriptures relate the authoritative historical accounts of man's creation and redemption; and
- the straightforward reading of the genealogies in Genesis 5 and 11 can and should be used to limit our public teaching about the age of the earth to less than ten thousand years instead of millions or billions of years;

and be it further

Resolved, That pastors, teachers, professors, and Synod officials be memorialized to speak openly, without shame, and boldly about our church's unanimous confession of the Scripture's authority against the deemed-to-be-erroneous doctrines and secular authorities which assert a history contrary to God's Word and develop resources for the education of the laity on this issue.

Mt. Zion
Denver, CO

Ov. 5-25

**To Affirm and Bind Ourselves
to Biblical Doctrine of Young Age of Earth**

Preamble

Luther on the Genesis 5 genealogy:

This is the greatest glory of the primitive world, that it had so many good, wise, and holy men at the same time. We must not think that these are ordinary names of plain people; but, next to Christ and John the Baptist, they were the most outstanding heroes this world has ever produced. And on the Last Day we shall behold and admire their grandeur. Likewise, we shall also see their deeds. For then it will be made manifest what Adam, Seth, Methuselah, and the others did; what they endured from the old serpent; how they comforted and maintained themselves by means of the hope of the Seed against the outrages of the world or of the Cainites; how they experienced various kinds of treachery; how much envy, hatred, and contempt they endured on account of the glory of the blessed Seed who would be born from their descendants. No one must think that they lived without the severest afflictions and endless crosses. These facts will be made manifest on the Last Day. (Martin Luther, *Luther's Works, Vol. 1: Lectures on Genesis: Chapters 1-5*, ed. Jaroslav Jan Pelikan, Hilton C. Oswald, and Helmut T. Lehmann, vol. 1 [Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1999], 334–5)

WHEREAS, We are tempted to submit ourselves and the Sacred Scriptures to the human and fallen authorities of secular science and reason; and

WHEREAS, Darwinian theories of evolution, which exclude the possibility of divine creation from nothing and teach billions of years of death contrary to Scripture's history of redemption, require immense spans of time to account for the biological state of our world; and

WHEREAS, Contemporary cosmological and geological arguments for the immense age of the universe, which also exclude the possibility of divine creation and intervention, have been widely accepted in universities, schools, and in popular society as the truth; and

WHEREAS, “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. 3:16–17); and

WHEREAS, “We confess our adherence to the prophetic and apostolic writings of the Old and New Testaments, as to the pure, clear fountain of Israel, which alone is the one true guiding principle, according to which all teachers and teaching are to be judged and evaluated” (Formula of Concord [FC] Solid Declaration [SD], Summary Content, Rule, and Norm 3 [Kolb & Wengert]); and

WHEREAS, The writings of Moses, including the book of Genesis, are both theologically and historically authoritative for Christ and his apostles (Matt. 19:4; 22:31, Luke 16:31; 24:44; John 5:46–47; Acts 10:43; etc.); and

WHEREAS, Our Synod’s publicly stated position on the age of the earth is 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 22, 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.

WHEREAS, The genealogical evidence provided by Genesis 5 and 11, which dates the earth’s age near 6,000 years, excludes the lengths of time necessary to wholly or partially accept cosmological, geological, archeological, and biological theories which posit millions and billions of years of this earth’s existence; and

WHEREAS, “For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men” (1 Cor. 1:25); therefore be it

Resolved, That the members of Risen Christ Lutheran Church, Arvada, Colorado request the Synod in convention to confess:

- that the inspired and inerrant Scriptures relate the authoritative historical accounts of man’s creation and redemption; and
- that the straightforward reading of the genealogies in Genesis 5 and 11 can and should be used to limit our public teaching about the age of the earth to less than ten thousand years instead of millions or billions of years;

and be it further

Resolved, That pastors, teachers, professors, and Synod officials be strongly encouraged to speak openly and without shame about our church’s unanimous confession of the Scripture’s authority against the deemed to be erroneous doctrines and secular authorities which assert a history contrary to God’s Word and develop resources for the education of the laity on this issue.

Risen Christ
Arvada, CO

Ov. 5-26

To Affirm Young Earth as Biblical Doctrine

WHEREAS, The Scripture of the Old and New Testaments, which is the inerrant Word of God, is the only rule and norm of faith and life (Psalm 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); and

WHEREAS, Darwinian evolution presupposes death before and apart from sin which contradicts the clear teaching of Scripture that death came as a result of Adam’s sin (Rom. 5:12; 1 Cor. 15:21); and

WHEREAS, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) at the 2019 convention adopted Resolution 5-09A that stated, “God created the world in six natural days” which affirms that the earth was created merely a few days before Adam; and

WHEREAS, Jesus says that “from the beginning of creation, ‘God made them male and female’” (Mark 10:6); and

WHEREAS, While Israelite genealogies may not necessarily provide complete information from generation to generation, the chrono-genealogies of Genesis 5 and 11, which show the Messianic line of descent from Adam to Noah, and then to Abraham, do show a clear and complete line of descent which does not allow for any gaps; and

WHEREAS, In Genesis 5 and 11 the inspired, inerrant Word also gives us the number of years that elapsed between the events listed therein; and

WHEREAS, Evolutionists would like you to believe that the Bible doesn’t give enough information about the age of the earth so one really cannot base his conclusions about the age of the earth on Scripture, but should look to science to answer such questions; and

WHEREAS, If Scripture gets it wrong on earthly things, how can we trust it on spiritual things? As Jesus told Nicodemus, “If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you heavenly things” (John 3:12); and

WHEREAS, While evolutionary theories exclude God from the creation and require billions of years, these theories are emphatically refuted by a universe and earth that are less than ten thousand years old; therefore be it

Resolved, That the LCMS in convention reaffirm that Genesis 5 and 11 accurately show the complete Messianic line of descent from Adam to Noah, and then to Abraham, giving us the time between the events listed; and be it further

Resolved, That adding the years given establishes the age of the earth as less than ten thousand years old rather than in terms of millions or billions of years.

St. Peter
Lodi, CA

Ov. 5-27

To Confirm Synodical Position Concerning Special Creation, Young Earth, and Global Flood

WHEREAS, It has been over 90 years since the Synod has formally stated its position concerning special creation, a young Earth, and a global flood; and

WHEREAS, The Society of Creation has, in our view, correctly stated the truth in its *Biblical Subscription* which is as follows:

In accordance with LCMS convention resolution 2004 Res. 2-08A, Luther's Small Catechism with Explanation, Question 97 [CPH, 1986, p. 106], and A Brief Statement (Adopted 1932, St. Louis: CPH), all members subscribe to the following statement of their position on creation:

First, that God created by His power, as described in Genesis 1 and 2, motivated by His love and grace, rather than using evolution as the vehicle of creation.

Second, that God created mankind in His image, giving them the ability to respond to Him in worship and service. As a result mankind has authority to subdue the earth, which is neither a license to destroy or pollute nor a prohibition against any changing of the landscape. This authority has been affected by the fall into sin (Genesis 3).

Third, that each member of the Trinity was involved in creation, as indicated in Gen. 1:1-3.

Fourth, that creation took place in six twenty-four-hour days with a day reckoned in accordance with today's time.

Fifth, that Adam and Eve were real, historical human beings and that the fall into sin was a real, historical event.

Sixth, that creation occurred in the relatively recent past, thousands of years ago rather than millions or billions of years ago (Society of Creation, www.societyofcreation.org/about/).

therefore be it

Resolved, That the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR) be tasked with updating the position of the LCMS concerning special creation, young Earth, and a global flood; and be it further

Resolved, That the CTCR not be afraid to contradict the consensus of secular scientism during the updating of its position statement; and be it finally

Resolved, That the CTCR and Synod publicize and educate the member districts, congregations, and individual members as to the content, significance, and impact of the updated position statement.

Mt. Olive
Yakima, WA

Ov. 5-28

To Address Use of Technology in Life of the Church and Ministry of Congregations

WHEREAS, Situations arise in which it is difficult for congregations to gather; and

WHEREAS, The use of technology in various formats (*i.e.*, livestreaming worship, recorded worship, online Bible studies, etc.) has been a great help in keeping congregations united through the hearing of God's Word and also has served the Church with communicating important information; and

WHEREAS, The use of technology also has its negative aspects, such as inadvertently encouraging members not to gather as is commanded by Scripture (Acts 2:42; Heb. 10:25), creating confusion with Communion and congregational voting practices, etc.; therefore be it

Resolved, That Mid-South District in convention ask the Synod to prepare and make available resources that address the use of technology with its pros and cons in the life of the Church at large and within the framework of the congregations of the Synod; and be it further

Resolved, That the Mid-South District in convention ask the Synod to direct the Commission on Theology and Church Relations to study and provide a document pertaining to the use of technology in the church and congregations; and be it finally

Resolved, That the Mid-South District in convention submit this memorial to the next convention of the Synod.

Mid-South District

Ov. 5-29

To Form Theology of Virtual Worship Task Force

WHEREAS, The pandemic of 2020 has caused many of our congregations to offer a myriad of different types of "virtual" worship services via internet platforms to continue proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ; and

WHEREAS, In many places pastors and church leaders have tried to make every element of the in-person worship experience available through these "virtual" means to those parishioners experiencing these worship services at home; and

WHEREAS, These efforts have led to confusion and even conflict over what is proper and beneficial and what should not be practiced "virtually", particularly in regard to Confession and Absolution and the Sacrament of the Altar; and

WHEREAS, These technologies and platforms for "virtual" worship did not exist and were not practiced until recent times and thus have not been specifically addressed by the historical Lutheran church in terms of best practices; and

WHEREAS, The congregations of the Synod are to seek to walk together in doctrine and practice; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Synod create a task force to identify those areas of worship where questions of proper practice during "virtual" worship have arisen and remain in question; and be it further

Resolved, That the task force analyze the areas of question over and against Holy Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions drawn from that Word of God; and be it finally

Resolved, That the task force present recommendations as to what practices are acceptable, what practices should be avoided, and what practices are free to use or not use in a document to be adopted by the Synod in convention.

Southern District

Ov. 5-30

To Commend Luther's Large Catechism with Annotations and Contemporary Applications

WHEREAS, 2013 Resolution 3-13A, "To Update the Synod's Catechetical Materials," asked the Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR), in collaboration with the office of the President and Concordia Publishing House (CPH), to produce a catechetical compendium that would be "more comprehensive and apologetic in scope"; and

WHEREAS, 2016 Res. 5-12, "To Commend and Encourage Use of Luther's Catechisms," requested that the CTCR, in collaboration

with the office of the President and both seminary faculties, “explore the creation of an annotated and expanded edition of the Large Catechism for widespread use and study in the Church; and

WHEREAS, The CTCR completed this assignment and in January 2023 published through CPH a volume of over 700 pages that included 70 contributors and extensive introductions and annotations to the text of the Large Catechism, accompanied by over 70 essays dedicated to addressing contemporary questions related to the Large Catechism; and

WHEREAS, The volume not only underwent review by the CTCR, but was certified by the doctrinal review process, while the President of Synod helped oversee the project and included his endorsement by way of an introduction praising the volume; and

WHEREAS, Upon release, the volume received intense critique and opposition on the basis of social media attacks and online commentary, leading the President of Synod and CPH to agree to pause sales of the volume; and

WHEREAS, Many contributors to this volume were harassed privately and publicly for their participation in this project; and

WHEREAS, The CTCR was publicly criticized for falsely promoting wokeness, Critical Race Theory, the ordination of women, among others; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Synod in convention express its thanks for the publication of this work by the CTCR and CPH; and be it further

Resolved, That the harsh and baseless attacks against this volume, the CTCR, and CPH be condemned as contrary to Paul’s command that “all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you” (Eph. 4:31); and be it further

Resolved, That the pastors and congregations of the Synod use this resource for study and discussion, communicating to the CTCR and CPH what it finds most helpful; and be it finally

Resolved, That members of the Synod express any suggestions for improvement to the CTCR and to the office of the President, and that those suggestions be taken into consideration.

Emmanuel, Fort Wayne, IN; Prince of Peace, Anaheim, CA;
Circuit 9 (Decatur), Indiana District

Ov. 5-31

To Commend Luther’s Large Catechism with Annotations and Contemporary Applications

WHEREAS, 2013 Resolution 3-13A asked the Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR), in collaboration with the Office of the President and Concordia Publishing House (CPH), to produce a catechetical compendium that would be “more comprehensive and apologetic in scope”; and

WHEREAS, 2016 Res. 5-12 requested that the CTCR, in collaboration with the Office of the President and both seminary faculties, “explore the creation of an annotated and expanded edition of the Large Catechism for widespread use and study in the church”; and

WHEREAS, The CTCR completed this assignment, and in January 2023, published through CPH a volume of over 700 pages that included 70 contributors and extensive introductions and annotations to the text of the Large Catechism, accompanied by over 70 essays dedicated to addressing contemporary questions related to the Large Catechism; and

WHEREAS, The volume not only underwent review by the CTCR, but was certified by the doctrinal review process, while the President of Synod helped oversee the project and included his endorsement by way of an introduction praising the volume; and

WHEREAS, Upon release, the volume received intense criticism and opposition on the basis of social media attacks and online commentary; and

WHEREAS, Many contributors to this volume were vitriolically harassed privately and publicly for their participation in this project; and

WHEREAS, The CTCR was accused of promoting false teaching; therefore be it

Resolved, That that the Synod in convention express its thanks for the publication of this work by the CTCR and CPH; and be it further

Resolved, That the harsh and baseless attacks against this volume, the CTCR, and CPH be condemned as contrary to Paul’s command that “all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you” (Eph. 4:31); and be it further

Resolved, That the pastors, commissioned ministers, teachers, students, congregations, and schools of Synod be encouraged to use this resource for study and discussion, communicating to the CTCR and CPH what they find most helpful; and be it finally

Resolved, That members of Synod express any suggestions for improvement to the CTCR and to the office of the President in a spirit of Christian brotherhood and love with the aim of concord of theology and witness, and that such suggestions be taken into consideration.

Circuit 2 (St. Paul Metro)
Minnesota South District

Ov. 5-32

To Cease and Desist Publication of Luther’s Large Catechism with Annotations and Contemporary Applications

WHEREAS, Our Lord Jesus says, “Watch and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees” (Matt. 16:6) and St. Paul says, “A little leaven leavens the whole lump” (Gal. 5:9); and

WHEREAS, St. Paul warns us, “Watch out for those who cause divisions and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine that you have been taught; avoid them” (Rom. 16:17) and encourages men in the Office of the Ministry to “hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also rebuke those who contradict it” (Titus 1:9); and

WHEREAS, It is fully in accordance with our Lutheran Symbols to demand an unconditional subscription by the teachers of our Church of those Symbols, because the Symbols themselves declare, “We have mentioned only those things we thought it was necessary to talk about so that it would be understood that in doctrine and ceremonies we have received nothing contrary to Scripture or the Church universal. It is clear that we have been very careful to make sure no new ungodly doctrine creeps into our churches” (Augsburg Confession Conclusion 5); and

WHEREAS, C.F.W. Walther, the founder of our Synod, taught, “It is furthermore fully in accord with the practice of our Church to demand an unequivocal subscription from its public teachers” (Walther, “Why Should Our Pastors, Teachers, and Professors Subscribe Unconditionally to the Symbolical Writings of Our Church”; essay delivered at the Western District Convention in 1858. Taken from *Concordia Theological Monthly* April 1947; Vol. 28, No. 4); and

WHEREAS, The teachers of the Church have great impact on the harmony among our congregations and on the eternal welfare of their hearers, as our Symbols also attest: “schisms in matters of faith have also happened in our time,” and “such matters also concern the laity and the salvation of their souls” (Formula of Concord [FC] Solid Declaration [SD] Summary Content, Rule, and Norm [SC] 4–5); and

WHEREAS, The recent publication of *Luther’s Large Catechism: With Annotations and Contemporary Applications* itself states that it “seeks to teach the baptized” by being a resource “for the whole church,” serving as a “catechetical compendium for adults,” “that seeks to be both comprehensive and apologetic” (Rev. John T. Pless and Rev. Larry M. Vogel, *Luther’s Large Catechism: With Annotations and Contemporary Applications* [St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2023], 23); and

WHEREAS, *Luther’s Large Catechism: With Annotations and Contemporary Applications* contains essays written by those who would teach the Church, yet have not unconditionally subscribed to the Lutheran Symbols; and

WHEREAS, Some of those teachers have made public confessions that blatantly contradict our Confession and who, by remaining in fellowship with their heterodox churches, maintain only a conditional subscription to our Lutheran Symbols; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Synod in convention call upon the Church to immediately cease and desist publication, sales, and distribution of *Luther’s Large Catechism: With Annotations and Contemporary Applications*.

Circuit 14 (Indianapolis South)
Indiana District

Ov. 5-33

To Encourage Christian Collegiality in Theological Discussion, Including Discussion Related to *Large Catechism* Volume

WHEREAS, Concordia Theological Seminary (CTSFW) and Concordia Seminary (CSL), as institutions of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS), are called to teach the Word of God in its truth and purity, and the Lutheran Confessions as accurate expositions of the Word of God, and to do so in a way that accords with the Constitution, Bylaws, and doctrinal statements of the Synod; and

WHEREAS, CSL and CTSFW form pastors and deaconesses to minister to the church in conformity with that doctrine, which includes exhibiting the fruit of the spirit in a gracious way that avoids unnecessary dissension; and

WHEREAS, Members of both seminary faculties have faithfully served on the Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR) throughout its history; and

WHEREAS, 2016 Resolution 5-12, which commissioned *Luther’s Large Catechism with Annotations and Contemporary Applications*, asked both seminaries to collaborate with the CTCR and the office of the President on this volume; and

WHEREAS, Some members of both seminary faculties contributed introductions, annotations, and contemporary application essays to *Luther’s Large Catechism with Annotations and Contemporary Applications*; and

WHEREAS, Controversy over this volume has evoked many regrettable expressions of anger and dissension, particularly online, which are not befitting the charity enjoined upon us by the Scriptures for theological discussion, debate, and churchmanship (John 13:35); therefore be it

Resolved, That the Synod in convention thank the LCMS laity and rostered church workers who contributed to this volume for their faithful service and commitment to the Scriptures, the Lutheran Confessions, and the doctrinal position of the Synod; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod in convention express its thanks and ongoing support for the LCMS entities responsible for producing this volume, including the CTCR, Concordia Publishing House, and the Office of the President; and be it further

Resolved, That all members of the Synod be reminded to use, when necessary, the established procedure for voicing a challenge to the doctrinal review certification of a publication by the Synod that is outlined in Bylaw 3.9.3.2.2; and be it finally

Resolved, That all members of the Synod commit themselves to Christian collegiality in theological dialogue and debate in order that such interactions within our beloved Synod be characterized by charity, clarity, a serious attempt at understanding, and a fraternal spirit befitting the Church of Christ (Eph 4:3–6).

Faculty, Concordia Seminary;
Faculty, Concordia Theological Seminary

Ov. 5-34

To Instruct CPH to Have *Portals of Prayer* and Other Devotionals Written by Men

Preamble

In recent years Concordia Publishing House (CPH) has published *Portals of Prayer* and other devotions for congregational and home use, which are written by women. This overture seeks to bring CPH back to a biblical practice of only men carrying out the pastoral work of teaching.

WHEREAS, Holy Scripture forbids women from publicly preaching or teaching, exercising authority over a man or otherwise exercising the duties of the pastoral office (1 Tim. 2:11–12; 3:2; 1 Cor. 14:33b–35); and

WHEREAS, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) has in faithfulness to Holy Scripture forbidden women from ordination into the pastoral office; and

WHEREAS, Devotionals for congregational and home use such as *Portals of Prayer* are meant to teach men and women in the Church; and

WHEREAS, Writing devotionals and leading people in devotions has always been the task of a *Seelsorger* (one who cares for souls, pastor) and head of the household; and

WHEREAS, CPH in former days exclusively had men write *Portals of Prayer* and other devotionals for the Synod; and

WHEREAS, CPH has in recent years changed that practice and employed women to write *Portals of Prayer* and other devotionals for use in congregations and homes; and

WHEREAS, This change in practice was done without any explanation or defense from Holy Scripture, nor was the change even acknowledged; and

WHEREAS, This change to having women write devotions for congregational and home use violates St. Paul's prohibition in Holy Scripture in 1 Tim. 2:11–12 and 1 Cor. 14:33b–35; and

WHEREAS, The LCMS has thousands of ordained and well-trained pastors and male theologians who are capable of writing devotions for every need; therefore be it

Resolved, That CPH cease to have women write devotions for *Portals of Prayer* and other devotions, except for those specifically intended for women and children; and be it further

Resolved, That CPH enlist the help of the district presidents of the Synod by giving them the specifications for needed devotions for *Portals of Prayer* and other devotionals; and be it further

Resolved, That the district presidents of the Synod work with the circuit visitors of their district in assigning the writing of *Portals of Prayer* devotions and other devotions for congregational and home use to pastors and male theologians (i.e., male, theologically-trained church workers) in their circuits; and be it finally

Resolved, That the pastors of our Synod be admonished to recognize the writing of devotions as an important task of the *Seelsorger* and these devotionals as a critical part of their people's devotional lives, so that they eagerly devote themselves to writing quality devotions faithful to Holy Scripture, employing Law and Gospel, and applicable to the lives of their people and assist CPH in providing these devotionals to the people.

Trinity, Ottumwa, IA;

Circuit 8 (Mount Pleasant), Iowa East District

Ov. 5-35

To Foster Community in Truth, Love, and Careful Conversation in Synod and Beyond, Especially with Respect to Race/Ethnicity, Economics, and Sex and Gender

WHEREAS, God calls us to take every thought captive to Christ (2 Cor 10:5) and to seek all the truth (John 16:13) and the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:27); and

WHEREAS, God calls us to harmony, including harmony in a common "practical" mind about how we should live (1 Cor. 1:10; Phil. 2:2; Rom. 12:16; 15:5), which should lead us to seek consensus—but with room for an appropriate range of practices that all embody biblical doctrine in different ways (Rom. 14:1f.); and

WHEREAS, The pervasive reality of error in human judgment plus God's commands not to confuse His doctrine with human tradition (Matt. 15:19; Mark 7:1–13), not to surrender our freedom to human "philosophizing" (Gal. 2:1–5; 5:1–15; Col. 2:8; cf. Smalcald Articles XV), and not to "bite and devour each other" (Gal. 5:15 NIV) all raise strong cautions about charging in too quickly with divisive and possibly mistaken "labels" and/or judgments of "false doctrine"; and

WHEREAS, God also calls for us to participate in His love and care for all people, even in instances where they are our enemies and/or enemies of His own law and truth (Matt. 5:44–48; Rom. 5:8; John 15:9–12); and

WHEREAS, Community is further built and sustained by such love, which also transforms truth-seeking through gentleness, respect, and mutual grace and burden-bearing (2 Tim. 2:25; Gal. 6:1; 1 Peter 3:15); and

WHEREAS, In contrast, we often do just the opposite as both Church and World—and so thrust ourselves toward ever greater polarization, fracture, disobedience, and enmity; and

WHEREAS, This is exacerbated by *centering* the exchange of extreme and hostile views, especially on social media and the internet, instead of fraternal, reasoned conversation, person to person (Eph. 4:16); and

WHEREAS, Church and World especially continue to divide over the appropriate response to LGBTQ+; male headship; ethnic and racial identities; "diversity, equity, and inclusion"; poverty and economics; and the nature and relation of justice, love, reconciliation, and individual v. communal responsibility; and

WHEREAS, A collective search for all the truth on these matters might benefit from *considering* a starting list of claims like the following—which, note, yet do not constitute the agreed or settled position even of the submitters:

1. Taking every thought captive to Christ (2 Cor. 10:5) should leave no room for the Church to conform to any worldly ideology, whether "Left," "Right," or any other.
2. Seeking and speaking all truth (John 16:13) and the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:27) should rule out "one-sidedly" attending only to partial truths, responding only to what is false in a position without acknowledging what is true, and/or responding only to "bad" versions of ideas or actions when there is a true, biblical version—which should be strongly advocated and pursued.
3. Discernment of the whole truth requires knowledge not only of God's Word but also complex historical realities with subtle differences that call for different combinations of the Word (1 Corinthians 8–10)—and thus also careful thinking and distinctions, rather than "broadside" that paint with too wide a brush.
4. Discernment of the truth thus would include recognizing the differences between identities or actions arising more directly from the Fall (e.g., LGBTQ, Romans 1) and those arising more directly from the nature and history God Himself has given us (e.g., "ethnic" identities, Acts 17:26)—see further below.
5. The biblical norm of male and female, created for each other in marriage (Genesis 1; Romans 1), halts any celebratory "inclusion" of LGBTQ+ "identity," "diversity," or actions. Yet the Bible also describes sex and gender confusion as a real effect of the Fall and God's curse (Rom. 1:24–27); this suggests that at least some same-sex attraction (SSA) and gender dysphoria (GD) is not simply self-chosen. Likewise, the Bible shows that God does not simply "remove" the "law of sin in our members" even from the saints (Romans 7), which suggests that SSA and GD may not always be eliminable. Thus, along with the "no" of the prohibitions, love calls also for the "yes" of

long-term support to those who experience SSA or GD but wish to remain celibate and otherwise honor God's design and live in His Church. The call to love, and to love even enemies, also makes caring for families in crisis over these issues, as well as even for unrepentant LGBTQ+, a further obligation and priority.

6. Scripture enjoins a specific form of male headship and sketches components of "masculine" and "feminine" identities as part of our creatureliness (Ephesians 5, etc.). Yet after the fall, human beings continue to develop—and be wounded by—forms of "patriarchy," "masculinity," and "femininity" corrupted by sin. Love and commitment to the whole truth thus also demands addressing the wounds, in part by identifying the corruptions and the concepts and practices necessary to continually counter them in a fallen world.
7. God created one humanity with a common nature (Genesis 1), and He gives a common identity and unity in Christ and Church (Ephesians 2). Yet God Himself also forms the "one man" itself into a diversity of "nations" (*ethnē*) with distinct cultures and identities (Acts 17:26)—dynamics which appear in "racial" communities as well. Further, God preserves such identities in the Church Militant (Acts 2) and Triumphant (Revelation 7)—receiving and raising us as the real, historical, embodied people we are (Rom. 1:16; 2:9–11; 1 Corinthians 15). Thus, on the one hand, our identity and unity in Christ, Church, and human nature should displace and transform all others as the most foundational. Yet we should also recognize the reality of our diverse ethnic and racial identities and join God in promoting the good and addressing the evil done on their account.
8. These claims press toward a biblical form of building community by an "inclusion" (embrace) of "diversity" that also builds on our commonalities as human beings and as Church. This cannot mean forcing a community or church body to match some "ideal" demographic (only God can thus simply "re-design" the world). Yet it does call for a real effort to build relationships and address barriers and sins we have imposed. It also means refusing to emphasize commonalities in a way that excludes differences or treats (also) highlighting difference as the enemy of unity. Yet vice versa, it likewise means refusing to embrace diversity and particular identities in ways that deny our foundational identity and commonalities in Christ, Church, and human nature.
9. God commands us to love and do justice to all (Matt. 5:44–48; 22:35–40; Micah 6:8). Across Scripture, justice is linked to righteousness as the "right-ordering" of "inner" heart, mind, and judgments and "outward" words, actions, relationships, and world toward the specific "peace" [*shalom*] and good God has willed for each and for all (Ex. 9:27; Isaiah 11:4; 28:17; 30:18; 45:19; Jer. 10:24; Psalm 9:4–8; 85:12–13; 98:9; Isaiah 1:27–28; 10:1–4; 33:5–6; Gen. 18:19; Prov. 12:5; Psalm 18:20–24; 37:30; Deut. 16:18; 1 Kings 3:28; 10:9; Jer. 22:15–16; 1 Samuel 1–7; Judges 18:7; Ex. 21:1f.; 24:3f.; Deut. 4:8; Isaiah 32:15–18; 54:13–14; Psalm 85; Jer. 9:24; Hos. 2:19–20; 12:6; Zech. 7:9; Micah 6:8). This love and justice in turn is first given to us in justification and then pursued and participated in as sanctification. Thus, love, justice, and righteousness should be received and pursued by God's people because it is the will of God.
10. At the same time, Scripture also underscores that love, justice, righteousness, and peace are central to the Gospel of Jesus and the gifts and kingdom He brings (Jer. 23:5–6; Isaiah 42:1–4, 6–7; 61:1–2a; Luke 4:16–21; Matt. 12:1–21). Thus, we must preach and participate in this whole Gospel and reign of God in Christ—and accordingly, identify and pursue love, justice, etc. as central to our mission as Christians and as Church.
11. As part of love and justice, Scripture commands that we take all individual responsibility for ourselves that we can (2 Thessalonians 3). But Scripture also attests forces that undermine our individual abilities. These include misfortune, illness, death, and disability (Neh. 5:1–3; Obad. 1:12; James 1:27), as well as the oppressive actions of others (Isaiah 3:5). Yet they also include what are often called "structures," i.e., realities that begin with intentional actions but persist and have effects beyond them, e.g., collective mindsets, practices, and laws (Exodus 1–3; Neh. 5:4–12; Amos 3:10; Luke 16:19f.; Isaiah 10:1). Furthermore, God commands to both individuals and communities the responsibility to counter these forces, including by countervailing structures—for instance, in Israel, a release from debt slavery every seven years (Ex. 21:1), harvesting practices that leave food for the poor and immigrant (Lev. 23:22), a community-wide tithe used to create a "food bank" at the Temple (Deut. 14:28–29), a community-wide refusal to charge the poor interest on loans or sell them food at a profit (Lev. 25:35–37), and more.
12. Thus, a special focus on and action for the least advantaged is essential to true love, justice, and righteousness (cf. Ex. 22:21; Deut. 24:14–22; Proverbs 29; Isaiah 1:16–17; 10:1–4; Jer. 7:5–7; 9:23–24; Job 29:11–17); yet to be just, this focus must not become the "favoritism" that simply ignores the needs of others involved or automatically sides with anyone without considering the specific facts of each case (Lev. 19:25; Ex. 23:3; Acts 10:34).
13. Today, for many, "equity" means a "similar outcome" between all people that we are to engineer by re-imagining, dismantling, and reconstructing the world. In Scripture, such a complete (re)design of reality is God's alone, reserved in its ultimate form to the Last Day. Yet Scripture enjoins its own definition of "equity": treating all people with fairness by giving each their right and due according to the just order God wills for the present (Psalm 9:8; 75:2; Prov. 1:3; 2:9). Thus, "equity" includes everything that belongs to the present justice of God, especially "deciding with equity for the poor" (Isaiah 11:4f.) yet also with "equity to all" (Psalm 67:4; 98:9; 2 Sam. 8:15). This "fairness" (or "equality," *isotes*, 2 Cor. 8:13–15) includes mutual sharing so that need is continually met from abundance and "the one who gathered much did not have too much, and the one who gathered little had no lack"—a norm focused on outcome but not sameness or statistical parity per se.

14. In the midst of sin, justice to God demands obedience to his command to pursue reconciliation with one another and also to love one another even apart from reaching full reconciliation (Matt. 5:24, 44–48). But for reconciliation to happen, other specific elements of justice are required: repenting the wrongdoing and seeking to restore the good(s) of the one wronged (Luke 17:3–4; Luke 19; Ex. 22:1–4; Leviticus 5–6). Scripture also shows that communities have responsibility to pursue such “restorative” justice for their past sins and their consequences (Nehemiah 4–6, Ezra 9–10, Daniel 9)—yet without treating any individual as responsible for the “sins of his fathers” in the way he is for his own sins (unless he continues the fathers’ sins—Ezekiel 18; Matt. 23:34–36). Therefore, love, reconciliation, and justice should not be pitted against one another but pursued with attention to all these biblical distinctions and the distinct history of all communities, biblical and contemporary.
15. Notably, the biblical form of love, justice, and equity thus includes a whole range of elements that worldly ideologies tend to tear apart (and otherwise corrupt). For instance, it affirms commonality (human and ecclesial), along with individual responsibility; but it also affirms ethnic/racial diversity and the focus on forces, structures, and communal responsibility central to many ideas of “social justice.” Once more, we can ally ourselves with no one perspective even as we must acknowledge partial truths in many—and above all, seek their critical reunification according to their true definitions in the whole counsel and will of God.
16. Finally, it is not enough to hear and agree to such truths in principle; we must be “doers of the Word” (James 1:22) who examine our lives in light of them, including our collective lives in the U.S. and our local communities and also in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS), its institutions, and our congregations. Importantly, since justice is ordering according to God’s will, we also must pursue this examination with due regard for the distinctions God wills between the “two realms/regiments” of Church and world/government and the specific purposes He gives to specific orders (family, business, etc.)—even as he directs all of these from Christ to Christ (Col. 1:15–20) and calls us to witness and conform to His will in all things (Prov. 3:5–6; Rom. 12:2; Luke 9:26).

therefore be it

Resolved, That Synod in convention exhort its members, leaders, and entities to pursue all the truth and the whole counsel of God; cease all hasty “labeling” and charges of false doctrine in favor of careful discussion; and love one another by seeking consensus in truth but also by caring for all people in our common brokenness; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod President and the CTCR form a task force that will lead and promote dialogue between all corners of Synod on race/ethnicity, economics, and sex and gender, including through their own in-person gatherings. The goal of the task force is not to resolve every question, but to foster better conversation and to identify baseline, balanced biblical commitments and practical actions that should unite us *and* points where greater uncertainty leaves more room for further inquiry and mutual forbearance. It will first want to address the key biblical definitions, claims, and

commands but then also specific issues in the U.S. and LCMS contexts in light of these. To facilitate real dialogue and the gathering of all the truth, the task force should seek representation of both theological and practical wisdom from a diversity of perspectives and ministry areas. For instance, it might invite representatives from: the Brothers of St. John the Steadfast; the board of KFUE; the Commission for Doctrinal Review; both LCMS seminaries; the Hispanic Institute of Theology; the Black Clergy Caucus; Lutherans for Racial Justice; Lutheran World Relief and Human Care; the Concordia universities; the Lutheran Women’s Missionary League and Lutheran Hour; the Concordia Deaconess Conference; and/or LCMS Youth Ministry. The task force might also benefit from a psychologist and social worker who work with LGBTQ+ persons and their families with biblical grace and truth; and be it further

Resolved, That the task force aim at a final report by the next convention but also look for opportunities along the way to gather input and convey key initial findings; and be it further

Resolved, That not only the President, CTCR, and task force but also all members of Synod seek opportunities to foster other, more “local” fraternal and reasoned conversations on these topics; and be it finally

Resolved, That the Synod President and relevant Synod staff work with the CTCR to find any necessary funding or people resources to support the task force, its in-person gatherings, and any promising local gatherings they can.

St. Peter
Mishawaka, IN

Ov. 5-36

To Condemn Heresy of Transgenderism as Violation of Commandments and Creed

WHEREAS, God’s Word teaches that He created mankind either male or female according to the body. To wit: “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’” (Gen. 1:26–28) (see also Gen. 5:2; Matt. 19:4; Mark 10:6; Rev. 12:5; 13); and

WHEREAS, God’s Word teaches that He created mankind either man or woman and these correspond with male or female in Genesis 1:27, Genesis 5:2, Matthew 19:4, Mark 10:6, Revelation 12:5 and 13. To wit: “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 2:23); and

WHEREAS, God’s Word teaches that the distinction and difference between male and female is echoed in every creature in whom is the breath of life. To wit: “And of every living thing of all flesh, you shall bring two of every sort into the ark to keep them alive with you. They shall be male and female.” (Gen. 6:19); also “Take with you seven pairs of all clean animals, the male [husband] and his mate [wife], and a pair of the animals that are not clean, the male [husband] and his mate [wife], and seven pairs of the birds of

the heavens also, male and female, to keep their offspring alive on the face of all the earth ... of clean animals, and of animals that are not clean, and of birds, and of everything that creeps on the ground, two and two, male and female, went into the ark with Noah, as God had commanded Noah ... They went into the ark with Noah, two and two of all flesh in which there was the breath of life” (Gen. 7:2–3, 8–9, 15); and

WHEREAS, God’s Word teaches that the Son has assumed a male body in the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ. To wit: “when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons” (Gal. 4:4–5); and

WHEREAS, God’s Word teaches that He has sanctified both male and female by Baptism into His Son. To wit: “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” (Gal. 3:28); and

WHEREAS, God’s Word teaches that the bodies of both men and women shall be raised on the last day to live eternally in that same body and soul that He created for them. To wit: “after my skin has been thus destroyed, yet in my flesh I shall see God, whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another” (Job 19:26–27); and, “if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his” (Rom. 6:5); therefore be it

Resolved, That the Synod in convention condemn transgenderism as a violation of the Commandments, most especially as a rebellious lie lacking fear, love, and trust in God who creates us male and female, man and woman; which lies to our neighbor about the nature of male and female, manhood and womanhood; and murders by encouraging the harm of the body; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod in convention condemn transgenderism as a denial of the Creed, most especially a denial that the maleness or femaleness of every human body is a good gift of the Creator; a false confession that by our own thoughts, words, pharmaceuticals and surgeries we can or should save ourselves from the body that God gave; and failure to confess that the baptized bodies of both men and women become the temple of the Holy Spirit to be raised whole and undefiled on the Last Day; and be it finally

Resolved, That the Synod in convention exhort all members of the church to regularly pray that all who have accepted the false doctrine of transgenderism would be converted to the truth or restrained from perpetuating this damaging lie, and to this end, task the LCMS Worship ministry “Let Us Pray” project to regularly include petitions for all who are harmed in body and soul by the same.

Pastors’ Conference
Wyoming District

Ov. 5-37

To Condemn Heresy of Feminism as Rejection of Created Order and of Distinction God Has Established Between the Sexes

WHEREAS, God has created mankind in His own image as two sexes, male and female, in order to fill the earth and have dominion over it. To wit: “Then God said, ‘Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of

the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, 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. Then God blessed them, and God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth’” (Gen. 1:26–28 NKJV; see also Gen. 5:2; Matt. 19:4; Mark 10:6; Rev. 12:5, 13); and

WHEREAS, The Lord God made the woman out of the man, establishing an order and distinction between the sexes in both filling the earth and having dominion over it, that is, in the procreation, rearing of children, and all help to each other in managing the household and the world consisting of many households. To wit: “And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh in its place. Then the rib which the Lord God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man. And Adam said: ‘This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.’ Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh” (Gen. 2:21–24 NKJV); and

WHEREAS, Because of this order of creation, God’s Word teaches that a divinely established ordering of authority exists still today in every estate on earth and in heaven. To wit: “For man is not from woman, but woman from man. Nor was man created for the woman, but woman for the man. For this reason the woman ought to have a symbol of authority on her head, because of the angels” (1 Cor. 11:8–10 NKJV) and “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” (1 Tim. 2:12–13 NKJV); “the head of woman is man” (1 Cor. 11:3 NKJV); and “the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is the head of the Church” (Eph. 5:23 NKJV) (see also Eph. 5:24–33; 6:1–4; Col. 3:18–21; Titus 2:4–5; 1 Peter 3:1–7; Lev. 6:18, 29; Num. 13:2; Judges 5:2–31 [The Song of Deborah]; Isaiah 3:11–12); therefore be it

Resolved, That the Synod in convention reject and condemn every denial, rebellion or rejection of the divinely established ordering and distinction between males and females, husbands and wives; and be it further

Resolved, That all the Synod schools, universities, seminaries, auxiliaries, recognized service organizations, corporate entities, rostered workers, and congregations boldly teach husbands and wives, and men and women to submit to the almighty hand of God and to humbly respect and order their own lives within the divinely established orders and distinctions in home, civil government, and church; and be it finally

Resolved, That the Synod condemn feminism and every related philosophical, religious, or political movement that seeks to deny, rebel, or reject the created order and distinction that God has established between the sexes.

Pastors’ Conference
Wyoming District

Ov. 5-38**To Condemn Transgender Ideology in All Forms and Protect Children**

WHEREAS, Scripture declares, “God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them” (Gen. 1:27); and

WHEREAS, Our Lord and Savior proclaims, “Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female” (Matt. 19:4); and

WHEREAS, God “formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life” (Gen. 2:7); and

WHEREAS, God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone,” and made from one of man’s ribs “a helper fit for him,” which he joyfully called “woman” (Gen 2:18, 20–23); and

WHEREAS, God gave the gift of marriage for one man and one woman, whereby “a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh” (Gen. 2:24); and

WHEREAS, David declared to God, “you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well” (Psalm 139:13–14); and

WHEREAS, We confess in the meaning of the First Article of the Apostles’ Creed, “I believe that God has made me and all creatures; that He has given me my body and soul, eyes, ears, and all my members, my reason and all my senses, and still takes care of them”; and

WHEREAS, God “created man and woman differently (as is evident) not for indecency but to be true to each other, to be fruitful, to beget children, and to nurture and bring them up to the glory of God” (Large Catechism I 207 [Kolb & Wengert]); and

WHEREAS, The apostle Paul’s words, “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 3:28), pertain not to the order of creation but of redemption; and

WHEREAS, Transgender ideology draws upon the ancient Gnostic heresy that asserts the true self must liberate itself from the body; promotes the false existentialist and feminist tenet that existence precedes essence; and perverts the word “gender” from a grammatical concept to an innate, self-disclosed feeling about one’s sex or to a performance of roles as defined by society; and

WHEREAS, Children are especially susceptible to the deceit of transgender ideology, whereby they are psychologically, emotionally, and physically abused; and

WHEREAS, Governing authorities “have been instituted by God” (Rom. 13:1) to “punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good” (1 Pet. 2:14); and

WHEREAS, The Gospel of Jesus Christ is proclaimed to all those who are suffering or deceived by false identity, that they might be healed and know an eternal identity in Christian baptism (Gal. 3:27–29); therefore be it

Resolved, That The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) condemn transgender ideology in all forms, including but not limited to the use of false and fanciful pronouns, the lie of “sex assignment” at birth, cross-dressing, the implementing of communal, mixed-sex facilities such as bathrooms and locker rooms, the prescribing and use of puberty blockers, cross-sex

hormones, and other drugs for gender “affirmation”, and gender “reassignment” or “affirmation” surgeries; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod in convention call upon all Synod officials, district presidents, pastors, and congregation members to petition federal, state, and local governing authorities to ban all aforementioned forms of transgender ideology that impact children; and be it finally

Resolved, That all LCMS pastors and congregations continue to proclaim boldly the goodness of God, our Creator and Redeemer, and direct all who have sinned or have been deceived to the forgiveness and abundant life in Jesus Christ (Col. 1:14; John 10:10).

Circuit 10 (Middle Tennessee), Mid-South District;
Circuit 9 (Nashville), Mid-South District

Ov. 5-39**To Reconsider Woman Suffrage in the Church**

WHEREAS, The 1969 convention of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) passed Resolution 2-17, “To Grant Woman Suffrage and Board Membership,” permitting congregations to adopt women’s suffrage and stated that any such suffrage in the congregation must not conflict with the order of creation or infringe on the pastoral office (*Proceedings*, 88); and

WHEREAS, An important principle of our Lutheran Reformation was found in Martin Luther’s own confession at Leipzig in 1519 and at Worms in 1521 that councils can and do err; and

WHEREAS, The Scriptures clearly prohibit women from exercising authority over men as noted in 1 Tim. 2:11–12 and 1 Cor. 14:34–35; and

WHEREAS, The polity of many LCMS congregations grants members of the voters’ assembly authority over weighty matters including the calling of a pastor and the final excommunication of a sinner; and

WHEREAS, Voting is clearly an act of authority over men, in that voting in the congregation determines matters which affect both men and women; and

WHEREAS, Women’s suffrage permits women to vote against men, including one’s own husband, thus overturning the order of creation; and

WHEREAS, Our Synod strongly opposed the practice of women suffrage in the church for the first 122 years of its history on the basis of the Word of God, and many of its pastors and congregations continue to oppose the practice to the current day; and

WHEREAS, Scripture allots to women wonderful opportunities to serve God as wives, mothers, and in various capacities within the church (altar guilds, ladies’ groups, teachers, deaconesses, mercy work, etc.), which do not conflict with the divinely ordained principle that a woman must not exercise authority over a man; and

WHEREAS, The church should not be at all ashamed of God-given distinctions in the area of gender which ought to be increasingly apparent in a society that wishes to ignore and deny differences between the sexes; therefore be it

Resolved, That the congregations of the LCMS be encouraged to study the matter on the basis of the Word of God; and be it further

Resolved, That the congregations of the LCMS be encouraged to reconsider their current practice in light of Holy Scripture; and be it finally

Resolved, That the Commission on Theology and Church Relations reconsider the issue and its previous writings in light of Holy Scripture.

Circuit 18
Pacific Southwest District

Ov. 5-40

To Reconsider Woman Suffrage in the Church

WHEREAS, The 1969 convention of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) passed Resolution 2-17, “To Grant Woman Suffrage and Board Membership,” permitting congregations to adopt women’s suffrage and at the same time stated that any such suffrage in the congregation must not conflict with the order of creation or infringe on the pastoral office (*Proceedings*, 88); and

WHEREAS, An important principle of our Lutheran Reformation was found in Martin Luther’s own confession at Leipzig in 1519 and at Worms in 1521 that councils can and do err; and

WHEREAS, The Scriptures clearly prohibit women from exercising authority over men as noted in 1 Tim. 2:11–12 and 1 Cor. 14:34–35; and

WHEREAS, The polity of many LCMS congregations grants members of the voters’ assembly authority over weighty matters including the calling of a pastor and the final excommunication of a sinner; and

WHEREAS, Voting is clearly an act of authority over men, in that voting in the congregation determines matters which affect both men and women; and

WHEREAS, A voters’ assembly which gives equal authority to both men and women overturns the order of creation and undermines the God-given distinction between men and women revealed in the Scriptures; and

WHEREAS, Our Synod strongly opposed the practice of women’s suffrage in the church for the first 122 years of its history on the basis of the Word of God, and many of its pastors and congregations continue to oppose the practice to the current day; and

WHEREAS, Scripture offers to women praiseworthy vocations to serve God as wives, mothers, and in various capacities within the church (altar guilds, ladies’ groups, mercy work, and as teachers or deaconesses, etc.), which do not conflict with the divinely ordained principle that a woman must not exercise authority over a man; and

WHEREAS, The church should not be at all ashamed of God-given distinctions in the area of gender despite the pressure to align our teaching and practice—in part or in full—with the culture; and

WHEREAS, The Biblical principles which speak to suffrage in the church are in no way invalidated by the fact that men, at times, fail to humbly and faithfully carry out the charge to sacrificial headship in the family, church, and state; therefore be it

Resolved, That the pastors and congregations of the LCMS be encouraged to study the matter on the basis of the Word of God; and be it further

Resolved, That the congregations of the LCMS together with their pastors be encouraged to reconsider the practice of women’s suffrage in light of Holy Scripture.

Immanuel, Mayville, WI; Trinity, Clinton, MA;
Circuit 26 (Racine), South Wisconsin District;
Circuit 8 (Horicon), South Wisconsin District

Ov. 5-41

To Reconsider Woman Suffrage in the Church

WHEREAS, The 1969 convention of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) narrowly passed a resolution permitting congregations to adopt women suffrage and stated that any such suffrage in the congregation must not conflict with the order of creation or infringe on the pastoral office; and

WHEREAS, An important principle of our Lutheran Reformation was found in Martin Luther’s own confession at Leipzig in 1519 that councils can and do err; and

WHEREAS, The Scriptures clearly prohibit women from exercising authority over men as noted in 1 Timothy 2:11–12 and 1 Corinthians 14:34–35; and

WHEREAS, In the polity of many LCMS congregations, members of the voters assembly are granted authority not only over trivial matters but over weighty matters (the calling of a pastor, the final excommunication of a sinner, etc.); and such voting is clearly an act of authority over men; and

WHEREAS, Our Synod strongly opposed the practice of women suffrage in the church for the first 122 years of its history on the basis of the Word of God, and many of its pastors and congregations continue to oppose the practice to the current day; and

WHEREAS, Scripture allots to women wonderful opportunities to serve God as wives, mothers, and in various capacities within the church (teachers, deaconesses, mercy work, etc.), which do not conflict with the divinely ordained principle that a woman must not exercise authority over a man; and

WHEREAS, The Church should not be at all ashamed of God-given distinctions in the area of gender which ought to be increasingly apparent in a society that wishes to ignore and deny all differences between the sexes; and

WHEREAS, Many of the congregations of our Synod chose to adopt women suffrage hastily in order to align their practice with the culture, and without any study of the Scriptural basis for their action or the theological implications involved; therefore be it

Resolved, That the congregations of the LCMS be encouraged to study the matter on the basis of the Word of God; and be it further

Resolved, That the congregations of the LCMS be encouraged to reconsider their current practice in light of the Holy Scripture.

St. Paul
Brookfield, IL

Ov. 5-42

To Address Use of Aborted Babies in Creating Vaccines and Other Medications

WHEREAS, Abortion is a sin against God’s Law (*Luther’s Small Catechism with Explanation*, Fifth Commandment); and

WHEREAS, There are some vaccines and medications that are developed utilizing human fetal tissue from aborted children and human fetal cell lines from past abortions; and

WHEREAS, We do not want to unknowingly be partakers in any evil nor provide any sort of support or justification for evil committed in the past (Matt. 23:29–32); and

WHEREAS, We want to be informed about vaccine development and testing in relation to abortion so that we may make decisions

about vaccination and medication in good conscience; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Nebraska District urge its members and parishioners to read Synod President Rev. Dr. Matthew Harrison's "LCMS COVID Vaccine Pastoral Letter" dated January 21, 2021 (files.lcms.org/dl/f1F618D12-7061-4157-9321-A0B870A37B34, accessed Mar. 19, 2023); and be it further

Resolved, That the district urge its members and parishioners to read the September 24, 2021 document: "The LCMS and COVID-19 Vaccines: Facts and Considerations" (lcms.org/doc/covid19-vaccines-fact-sheet, accessed Mar. 19, 2023); and be it finally

Resolved, That the district in convention petition the Synod in its 2023 convention to direct the Commission on Theology and Church Relations to address specifically the topic of vaccines and other medications as it relates to the issue of abortion.

Nebraska District

Ov. 5-43

To Encourage Synod to Clarify Our Stance on Fetal Tissues and Their Use Related to Pharmaceutical Products

WHEREAS, God's Word condemns murder (Ex. 20:13; Matt. 19:18; Rom. 13:9); and

WHEREAS, God pledges a reckoning for the shedding of innocent blood (Gen. 9:5-6); and

WHEREAS, God's children are called away from self-seeking (Rom. 2:8), but rather to seek good for our neighbor (1 Cor. 10:23-24); and

WHEREAS, The recent controversy surrounding vaccines for the COVID-19 virus have brought into the spotlight the ethical question of the relationship of fetal tissue to the production of some vaccines; and

WHEREAS, Abortion violates God's call to protect life; and

WHEREAS, Aborted tissue has been harnessed in the field of pharmaceutical experimentation; and

WHEREAS, These tissues, and the cell lines derived from these tissues, are used to test certain pharmaceuticals, as well as to design, produce, and/or manufacture them, resulting in different levels of contact and use of such tissues with those products; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Missouri District memorialize The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) in convention to direct the Commission on Theology and Church Relations and the two seminaries of our Synod to clarify any theological significance between the different types of fetal tissues used and if they are used directly or are derived cell lines; and be it further

Resolved, That the above entities clarify what is biblically and ethically acceptable regarding the pharmaceutical products that in various manners are related to fetal tissues and how to differentiate for the sake of conscience; and be it finally

Resolved, That the LCMS congregations and pastors be encouraged to then apply the resulting guidance in our teachings and lives.

Missouri District

Ov. 5-44

To Advocate for Religious Exemption and Against Vaccine Mandates with Use of Vaccines Decided as Matter of Individual Conscience

WHEREAS, In the beginning, "God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them" (Gen. 1:27), and He reaffirmed this special status after the flood, "Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, for God made man in his own image" (Gen. 9:6); and

WHEREAS, The human conscience has always been the battleground over control of the destiny of the human race, starting in the Garden of Eden with God instructing the man not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil while the serpent suggested to the woman that they would be like God if only they would eat of the tree in the midst of the garden—which they did (Gen. 2 and 3); later King Nebuchadnezzar demanded that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego bow down and worship a golden image to which they objected and, thankfully, God protected them from the fiery furnace (Daniel 3); when the council in Jerusalem demanded that the apostles stop teaching in the name of Jesus, Peter replied, "We must obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29); and finally Paul writes in Romans 14:23, "But whoever has doubts is condemned if he eats, because the eating is not from faith. For whatever does not proceed from faith is sin"; and

WHEREAS, The Declaration of Independence states, "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights," such as freedom of religion and freedom of speech, enshrined in the Bill of Rights; and

WHEREAS, The Nuremberg Code stipulates that "voluntary consent of the human subject is absolutely essential" and protects the right of the individual to control his own body; and

WHEREAS, Vaccines are often developed using tissue from aborted fetal cell lines; and

WHEREAS, Vaccine makers are given liability protection from The National Childhood Vaccine Injury Act of 1986 (42 U.S.C. §§ 300aa-1 to 300aa-34) from any injuries that might be caused by their vaccines to insure a stable market supply of vaccines; and

WHEREAS, Vaccine mandates don't always offer religious exemption nor do they compensate the individual receiving the vaccine against those manufacturing, administering, and mandating the vaccine for injuries the jabbed incur; and

WHEREAS, Many Lutheran pastors have been asked about our Synod's position on the mandates and for help with religious exemption from mandates; and

WHEREAS, When there is potential for harm, there has to be an opportunity for an individual to make a choice; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Synod encourage those considering vaccines to proceed only after receiving informed consent regarding use of tissue from aborted fetal cell lines in the development of the vaccine as well as consideration of possible injury from the vaccine; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod go on record as advocating for religious exemption from vaccine mandates with use of vaccines decided as a matter of individual conscience.

Circuit 3 (Rice Lake)
North Wisconsin District

Ov. 5-45**To Reconsider Allowing “Brain Death” Criteria for Determination of Death at End of Life**

WHEREAS, In 1981, the Synod in convention adopted Resolution 8-05, encouraging organ donation at time of death as an act of Christian love, but without binding consciences on the issue; and

WHEREAS, Scripture teaches that the time of death occurs when a person stops breathing (Gen. 25:8, 35:29; Mark 15:37; Luke 23:46 and others), meaning when the heart and lungs stop; and

WHEREAS, Scripture is clear that God is the One who determines time of death (Gen. 6:3; Job 1:21; Eccl. 3:2; James 4:13–15 and others) and that when it pleases Him to call one out of this vale of tears, even medical intervention will not prevent this (Matt. 6:27); and

WHEREAS, With the advent of organ transplantation in the 1960s, it became evident that vital organs removed while the heart is still beating performed better in transplant than did those removed after the heart had stopped, due to damage to the latter from lack of oxygen (David Rodríguez-Arias, “The Dead Donor Rule as Policy Indoctrination”, *Hastings Center Report*, 48, no. 54 [December 2018]: s40–s41. [Onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/hast.952](https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/hast.952)); and

WHEREAS, To avoid the charge of murder on the part of the transplant team, the concept of “brain death” was developed, namely, individuals being in a coma without apparent central nervous system activity and deemed unlikely to survive, being considered dead, even with a still-beating heart (*ibid.*); and

WHEREAS, The 1981 Uniform Declaration of Death Act, enacted in 39 American states and jurisdictions, includes “brain death” as a criterion for determination of death, and others rely on, “accepted medical standards,” which essentially do the same; furthermore, legislation in the Canadian province of Manitoba defines death according to “brain death” criteria and in the rest of Canada the determination is left to physicians who essentially do the same; and

WHEREAS, Individuals meeting the criteria for “brain death” often in fact do have residual brain function which is not measured by the criteria for “brain death,” and “brain dead” individuals often survive long after the determination has been made, even at times without mechanical support; and

WHEREAS, The function of other organs and tissues in the body is not dependent on the function of the brain, an example being wound healing, which continues even after the determination of “brain death”; furthermore, even babies in the womb at the time of determination of maternal “brain death” may be carried to term; and

WHEREAS, The guidance on determination of “brain death” is based on opinion and not evidence, and studies have shown that not all medical centers apply “brain death” criteria in a uniform manner; and

WHEREAS, Secular bioethicists are becoming increasingly critical of the concept of “brain death,” yet are merely calling for alternative ethical frameworks within which to remove vital organs from donors with still-beating hearts; and

WHEREAS, Techniques are emerging, which allow for the donation of vital organs following the stoppage of the heart, which optimize performance in the transplant recipient; and

WHEREAS, The concept of “brain death” as a sole determinant of death is non-Scriptural, and use of “brain death” as a criterion to remove vital organs amounts to *de facto* euthanasia; therefore be it

Resolved, That the English District encourage members of her congregations, as they complete Durable Power of Attorney for Health Care paperwork, especially those who desire to donate organs, to consider specifying in writing that they wish their medical team to use the Scripture-based criterion of cardiopulmonary failure to determine that their earthly lives have ended; and be it further

Resolved, That the District call on the Synod to similarly encourage congregation members synodwide; and be it further

Resolved, That the District and the Synod encourage pastors to review this issue with parishioners in the course of end-of-life planning discussions; and be it further

Resolved, That District and Synod pastors remind those who regret having allowed loved ones to be declared dead solely on the basis of “brain death” criteria or having otherwise participated in the process (for example, health care workers) that there is forgiveness in Jesus’ blood shed at Calvary, and offer the opportunity for individual Confession and Absolution; and be it finally

Resolved, That the District call on the Synod to establish a task force consisting of members of the Synod Commission on Theology and Church Relations, seminary professors, a district president, rostered pastors of congregations, bioethicists, health care professionals, and laity (with invitations to participate extended to a representative from Lutherans for Life, as well as LCMS Life Ministry), to review the issue of determination of death at greater length, and report back to the 2026 Synod Convention to include the addition of specific recommendations on this to the general encouragement in the 1981 Res. 8-05 to consider organ donation at time of death.

English District

Ov. 5-46**To Commission Biblical Study of Lending within the Church**

WHEREAS, The “other Great Commandment,” to “Love our Neighbor,” is clearly reflected in the Mosaic Covenant when it commands the people of Israel concerning usurious practices of extracting gain from the needs of the most poor saying, “If you lend money to any of my people with you who is poor, you shall not be like a moneylender to him, and you shall not exact interest from him” (Ex. 22:25); and

WHEREAS, We further hear this Great Commandment reflected in the Mosaic Covenant when it speaks to how the people of Israel are to regard the needs of their brothers saying, “If your brother becomes poor and cannot maintain himself with you, you shall support him as though he were a stranger and a sojourner, and he shall live with you. Take no interest from him or profit, but fear your God, that your brother may live beside you. You shall not lend him your money at interest, nor give him your food for profit. I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt to give you the land of Canaan, and to be your God” (Lev. 25:35–38); and

WHEREAS, The Mosaic Covenant also taught the people of Israel to love one another saying “You shall not charge interest on loans

to your brother, interest on money, interest on food, interest on anything that is lent for interest. You may charge a foreigner interest, but you may not charge your brother interest, that the Lord your God may bless you in all that you undertake in the land that you are entering to take possession of it" (Deut. 23:19–20); and

WHEREAS, The King and prophet David spoke of the moral law that calls our hearts to repentance when he writes is Psalm 15, "O Lord, who shall sojourn in your tent? Who shall dwell on your holy hill? ... who does not put out his money at interest and does not take a bribe against the innocent. He who does these things shall never be moved"; and

WHEREAS, The King and prophet Solomon spoke of the vain usurious gain saying, "Whoever multiplies his wealth by interest and profit gathers it for him who is generous to the poor" (Prov. 28:8); and

WHEREAS, The prophet Ezekiel describes the righteous Israelite saying, "If a man is righteous and does what is just and right ... does not lend at interest or take any profit, withholds his hand from injustice, executes true justice between man and man, walks in my statutes, and keeps my rules by acting faithfully—he is righteous; he shall surely live, declares the Lord God" (Ezek. 18:5, 8–9); and

WHEREAS, The prophet Ezekiel describes the sin of the leaders of Israel saying, "In you they take bribes to shed blood; you take interest and profit and make gain of your neighbors by extortion; but me, you have forgotten, declares the Lord God" (Ezek. 22:12); and

WHEREAS, Our Lord Jesus Christ revealed the full scope of the moral law by prohibiting the taking of any gain not only from the poor, or our brothers, but even to our enemies when he taught in the sermon on the plain saying, "And if you lend to those from whom you expect to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, to get back the same amount. But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return, and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, for he is kind to the ungrateful and the evil" (Luke 6:34–35); and

WHEREAS, The practice of taking gain by interest was not considered a mere element of the Mosaic Covenant but a practice of Christian love is clearly taught by many of the church when we hear them speak thus:

His money he will not give on usury, and will not take interest ... this is a righteous man. He shall surely live, saith the Lord. These words contain a description of the conduct of Christians, a notable exhortation to the blessed life, which is the reward of a life of goodness—everlasting life. (Clement of Alexandria)

If anyone takes usury, he commits robbery and no longer has life. (Ambrose of Milan)

I would not have you be lenders of money on usury; and I would not have you be such for this reason, because God would not have you. Whence does it appear that God would not have it so? It is said in another place, "He that puts not out his money to usury." And how detestable, odious, and execrable a thing it is, I believe that even usurers themselves know. (St. Augustine)

If thou hast lent thy money on usury to man, that is, if thou hast given the loan of thy money to one, from whom thou dost expect to receive something more than thou hast given, not in money only, but anything, whether it be wheat, or wine, or oil, or whatever else you please, if you expect to receive more than you

have given, you are a usurer, and in this particular are not deserving of praise, but of censure (St. Augustine)

I would not have you become usurers, because it is repugnant to the law of God. (St. Augustine)

Even as a little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough, even so usury, when it comes into any man's house, draws all his substance, and changes it into debt. (St. John Chrysostom)

Lending money at interest is a mortal sin. And it is not a sin because it is prohibited, but rather prohibited because it is as such a sin. (Sir Thomas Aquinas)

Some think there is no usury but in money. This the holy Scriptures foresaw, and therefore takes away the increase or gains in any manner of thing, and requires that you receive no more than you gave. (St. Jerome)

Forasmuch as many enrolled among the Clergy, following covetousness and lust of gain, have forgotten the divine Scripture, which says, He has not given his money upon usury, and in lending money ask the hundredth of the sum [as monthly interest], the holy and great Synod thinks it just that if after this decree anyone be found to receive usury, whether he accomplish it by secret transaction or otherwise, as by demanding the whole and one half, or by using any other contrivance whatever for filthy lucre's sake, he shall be deposed from the clergy and his name stricken from the list. (17th Cannon of the Council of Nicaea)

He who lends expecting to get back something more or something better than he has loaned, is clearly a damned usurer. (Martin Luther)

According to God's Word, usury is a mortal sin that excludes one from the kingdom of God when it is knowingly committed. (C.F.W. Walther)

and

WHEREAS, Moses instructs repayment in Exodus stating, "If a man steals an ox or a sheep, and kills it or sells it, he shall repay five oxen for an ox, and four sheep for a sheep" (Ex. 22:1); and

WHEREAS, Jesus utilizes the parable of the talents that commends the servants who use the vast sums of money, which was entrusted to them by the master, to trade with and increase the money by 100 percent and condemns the failure of the servant who did not at least put the money in the bank where it would earn interest; and

WHEREAS, Paul instructs the Romans to "owe no one anything, except to love each other" (Rom. 13:8); and

WHEREAS, Paul writes to the Thessalonians: "For you yourselves know how you ought to imitate us, because we were not idle when we were with you, nor did we eat anyone's bread without paying for it, but with toil and labor we worked night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you" (2 Thess. 3:7–8); and

WHEREAS, Jesus asserts that the laborer deserves his wages; and

WHEREAS, The economic system today is significantly different from the systems present in the Scriptures; and

WHEREAS, The value of currency changes over time so that repayment of debts with interest can actually result in loss for the loaning party as inflation changes the value of individual currencies of nations; and

WHEREAS, The management of loans requires labor; and

WHEREAS, Our own Synod never completed its conversation of the practice of usury that was brought to the forefront of the 1869

convention where C.F.W. Walther presented and the convention accepted several sentences that would guide our conversation of usury when we said, “Neither customary habit—sanctioned by a hundred years of usage—nor financial advantages or disadvantages, nor exclamations or authorities of humans, whether of Luther, Chemnitz, Andreae, or Gerhard, but rather Holy Scripture shall be the benchmark according to which we measure this doctrine”; therefore be it

Resolved, That the 68th Regular Convention of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod direct the Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR) to study the biblical teachings on the practice of taking interest on loans and its impact on the Body of Christ; and be it further

Resolved, That the CTCR report its findings before the 69th Regular Convention of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

Circuits 1 and 2 (Northeast Georgia and Atlanta North)
Florida-Georgia District

Ov. 5-47

To Recognize the Organization 1517 as Heterodox Tract and Mission Society

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) ...” (Constitution Article III 1); and

WHEREAS, As a condition of acquiring and holding membership in the Synod, as stated in Const. Art. VI 2 of the Constitution of the Synod, every congregation and minister must agree to:

2. Renunciation of unionism and syncretism of every description, such as:

...

- c. Participating in heterodox tract and missionary activities.

and

WHEREAS, The Scriptural basis for this requirement is expounded in the Brief Statement of the Doctrinal Position of the Missouri Synod:

28. On Church-Fellowship. – Since God ordained that His Word only, without the admixture of human doctrine, be taught and believed in the Christian Church, 1 Pet. 4:11; John 8:31,32; 1 Tim. 6:3,4, all Christians are required by God to discriminate between orthodox and heterodox church-bodies, Matt. 7:15, to have church-fellowship only with orthodox church-bodies, and, in case they have strayed into heterodox church-bodies, to leave them, Rom. 16:17. We repudiate unionism, that is, church-fellowship with the adherents of false doctrine, as disobedience to God’s command, as causing divisions in the Church, Rom. 16:17; 2 John 9, 10, and as involving the constant danger of losing the Word of God entirely, 2 Tim. 2:17–21 (LCMS, *A Brief Statement of the Doctrinal Position of the Missouri Synod* [adopted 1932], Of the Church);

and

WHEREAS, The organization known as “1517” is a tract and mission society: its web site states that it “creates and distributes theological resources and apologetic resources” (tracts) and that its mission is “to declare and defend the Good News that we are forgiven and free on account of Christ alone” (mission society); and

WHEREAS, The organization 1517 holds itself out as “rooted in the legacy of Martin Luther,” yet 1517 is causing theological confusion and sowing the tares of false doctrine among the LCMS, its clergy, and the members of its congregations, by its actions such as:

- promoting the work of Rev. Dr. Steven Paulson, an ordained clergyman on the clergy roster of the apostate Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and head of Luther House of Study of Sioux Falls Seminary (a “nondenominational” seminary), as 1517’s Senior Scholar in Residence;
- promoting non-Lutheran and non-LCMS authors, teachers, conference speakers, and podcasters as teachers of the faith;
- lifting up men who are not qualified to be teachers in the LCMS and have been removed from the roster of the LCMS as teachers of the faith; and
- producing works containing heterodox theology yet holding the same out as “Lutheran” resources;

and

WHEREAS, By its statements and actions, the organization 1517 is a heterodox tract and mission society; and

WHEREAS, “One who practices church fellowship with those who in their doctrine depart from God’s Word becomes guilty of their sin. 2 John 11 states explicitly: ‘He that biddeth him [who does not bring the doctrine of Christ] Godspeed is partaker of his evil deeds’” (Francis Pieper, D.D., *Christian Dogmatics*, Vol. I [St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1950], 569); therefore be it

Resolved, That the organization 1517 be recognized as a heterodox tract and mission society; and be it further

Resolved, That the Wyoming District Pastoral Conference memorialize the Synod in convention to instruct the respective individual members, members of congregations, agencies, Synodwide corporate entities, and recognized service organizations of the LCMS who are associated with 1517 be admonished by their respective ecclesiastical supervisors or pastors as to the requirements for membership in the Synod with regard to heterodox tract and mission societies, in a fraternal manner, to correct such error and promote the unity of the true faith.

Saint Paul, Chesterton, IN; Pastors’ Conference, Wyoming District

Ov. 5-48

To Distinguish Terms for Pastoral Office from Those for Auxiliary or Helping Offices

WHEREAS, The Lutheran Confessions simply and clearly confess that God has established the Office of the Public Ministry for the preaching of the Gospel and the administration of the Sacraments, through which the Holy Spirit works to create faith when and where He wills (Matt. 28:18–20; Mark 16:15–16; Luke 2:44–49; John 20:21–23; Augsburg Confession [AC] V; AC XIV); and

WHEREAS, The Lutheran Confessions also simply and clearly confess that God, through the Church calls qualified men into this unique and distinct Office of the Public Ministry, so that His Word will be preached and the Sacraments will be administered to the end that the Holy Spirit will call, gather, enlighten, and sanctify the whole Christian Church on earth and keep it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith (1 Cor. 4:1; 1 Peter 2:7; Matt. 18:18–20; AC V; AC XIV; Small Catechism [SC] II, Third Article); and

WHEREAS, The members of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, by God’s grace, have by their unequivocal and unconditional subscription to the Lutheran Confessions publicly confessed this understanding of the Church and the ministry throughout the Synod’s history; and

WHEREAS, C.F.W. Walther, in Thesis I of “Church and Ministry” confessed, “The holy ministry or pastoral office is an office distinct [The German word translated as “distinct” is *unterschiedene*, which can be translated distinguished, different from, distinctive, and unique] from the priesthood of all believers” (C.F.W. Walther, *Church and Ministry [Kirche und Amt]* [St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1987], 161); and

WHEREAS, The New Testament also includes many functions and titles for the Office of the Public Ministry, including apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers, among others (Eph. 4:10; Titus 1:5–9; 1 Tim. 3:1–7; 1 Peter 5:1–4), and sets aside other functions and titles for those who assist the Office of the Public Ministry in carrying out its tasks, including deacons (Acts 6:1–5; 1 Tim. 3:8–13); and

WHEREAS, The 2016 convention urged Synod to uphold the biblical and confessional qualifications for the pastoral office (2016 Resolution 6-02A) and to remove any confusion of the pastoral office with other forms of helping or auxiliary offices in the church, such as deacons (2016 Res. 13-02A); and

WHEREAS, 2016 Res. 13-02A brought an end to the licensing of laymen for Word and Sacrament ministry, yet also commended the work of educated lay evangelists to assist in bringing the Gospel to an increasingly secular, unbelieving world; and

WHEREAS, Ongoing training programs in several districts for lay assistants, making use of various titles such as evangelist, pastoral assistants, pastoral ministry assistants, and deacons, include instruction and training for functions unique to and reserved for men called into the Office of the Public Ministry. For example, a course offered by the Mission Training Center of the Pacific Southwest District entitled “Homiletics” includes the description: “In this course the deacon applicant will concentrate on the basic preparation and delivery of a sermon”; and

WHEREAS, Although well intentioned, these lay training programs have created confusion because of the use of terms historically associated with the Office of the Public Ministry; and

WHEREAS, In attempting to comply with timelines and expectations set by 2016 Res. 13-02A for ending the licensure of lay deacons for Word and Sacrament ministry, confusion has arisen over the use of the terms of *deacon* and *evangelist* in relation to those who occupy the Office of the Public Ministry; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Synod commend the publications of the Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR) which define the theology, nomenclature, and responsibilities of the office of the ministry, especially *The Ministry in Its Relation to the Christian Church* (1973), *The Ministry: Offices, Procedure, and Nomenclature* (1981) [Such as: “Thus, we may speak of various “ministries” in and of the church, but we must be careful to distinguish them properly. An office is not defined solely by what one who holds it does (function) but by the duties, responsibility, and accountability assigned to it. The pastoral office is unique in that all the functions of the church’s ministry belong to it.” *The Ministry: Office, Procedure, and Nomenclature* (1981)]; and be it further

Resolved, That the CTCR be directed to produce a report that defines and distinguishes the New Testament terms used for the Office of the Public Ministry and its auxiliary offices, including special discussion of the offices of *deacon* and *evangelist*, in preparation for the 2026 convention; and be it finally

Resolved, That the Council of Presidents take this report under consideration as it seeks to formalize the functions and requirements of these auxiliary and helping offices in their respective districts in keeping with 2016 Res. 13-02A.

Board of Directors
Iowa East District

Ov. 5-49

To Affirm Use of “Deliver Us from the *Evil One*”

WHEREAS, “All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness” (2 Tim. 3:16); and

WHEREAS, No one should ever add to nor take away from God’s Holy Word (Rev. 22:18–19); and

WHEREAS, St. Paul makes it clear that our struggle is not “against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil” (Eph. 6:12); and

WHEREAS, St. Peter informs us that our enemy is the devil, and that he prowls around like a roaring lion seeking someone to devour (1 Peter 5:8); and

WHEREAS, Our Lord Jesus, in teaching his disciples to pray, said in the prayer that we commonly call The Lord’s Prayer, that we should pray to our Father in heaven to “deliver us from the τοῦ πονηροῦ (*tou ponerou*),” which translated from the Greek text literally means “the evil one,” of course referring to the devil (Matt. 6:13); and

WHEREAS, Jesus in John 17:15 prays to his heavenly Father asking Him to protect his disciples from τοῦ πονηροῦ (*tou ponerou*, the evil one), and St. Paul in 2 Thessalonians 3:3 assures the Christians in Thessalonica that the Lord would protect them from τοῦ πονηροῦ (*tou ponerou*, the evil one); and

WHEREAS, Martin Luther has written in the Large Catechism in the explanation of the Seventh Petition, “but deliver us from evil,” these words: “In the Greek this petition reads, ‘Deliver or keep us from the Evil One, or the Wicked One.’ The petition seems to be speaking of the devil as the sum of all evil in order that the entire substance of our prayer may be directed against our archenemy.” (*Book of Concord*, ed. Tappert, 435); and

WHEREAS, This is also supported by such texts as Genesis 3:1–5, Job 1–2, Matthew 4:1–11, Mark 1:12–13, Luke 4:1–13, Matthew 13:39, Luke 8:12, John 13:2, Acts 10:38, Ephesians 4:27, 2 Timothy 2:26, Hebrews 2:14, James 4:7, 1 John 3:8, Revelation 2:10, Matthew 16:23, and Luke 22:3, all of which show that our fight is not against some vague, metaphysical concept called *evil*, but against a very real and dangerous enemy and entity known as *the evil one*, the devil, Satan, Lucifer, and/or Beelzebub; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Synod in convention affirm that our struggles are not merely against some abstract, nebulous thing called evil, but against a very real entity and enemy known as the devil; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod in convention recognize that the best theological rendering and most accurate and literal English translation of the Seventh Petition of The Lord's Prayer is for our Father in heaven to deliver us from "the evil one"; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod be encouraged, from this day forward, to translate and print in all of its publications/letters/documents/etc. which include a printing of The Lord's Prayer, a translation of the Seventh Petition which literally reflects the words of Jesus as printed in the Greek text of Matthew, thus rendering τοῦ πονηροῦ (*tou ponerou*) as "the evil one"; and be it finally

Resolved, That the Synod in convention encourage all of its pastors to make this linguistic and theological change in the individual congregations and ministries which they serve and to instruct their members as to the legitimacy and the theology of this linguistic change/correction.

Christ
Austin, TX

Ov. 5-50

To Affirm Inspiration and Authority of Mark 16:9–20

Preamble

Our congregation is concerned that modern text critical argumentation is being entertained, even in our church body, to diminish (that is, to despise) this passage as God's Word in our confession.

WHEREAS, The Holy Scriptures of the prophets (Old Testament) and apostles (New Testament) are the foundation of Christ's Church on earth, with Jesus Christ as the chief cornerstone (Eph. 2:20); and

WHEREAS, The Scriptures along with the Lutheran Confessions, which are normed by the Holy Scriptures, are the unalterable rule and norm of all doctrine and practice for and in all her congregations and by which all rostered ministers are pledged before God to conduct their office; and

WHEREAS, Scripture is never a matter of private opinion or interpretation but is given by the Holy Spirit through holy men whom that same Spirit moved, inspired (2 Peter 1:20–21; 2 Tim. 3:16–17), and gave their very words; and

WHEREAS, Mark is a universally accepted Gospel in the New Testament canon of Scriptures and was never included among the so-called *antilegomena*, that is, those books, the inclusion of which some church leaders spoke against when the canon was accepted by the Christian church; and

WHEREAS, Two ancient Greek texts of the Holy Scriptures, rediscovered in the nineteenth century and originating from the fourth century (namely Codex Sinaiticus and Codex Vaticanus), contain texts of the Gospel of Mark with unusual truncations (that is, visually abnormal endings when compared to the appearance of other endings of books in the same codex), excluding the last 12 verses, Mark 16:9–20, as they appear in our Bibles; and

WHEREAS, This truncation is unheard of before the writings of Eusebius of Caesarea (A.D. 339) in the fourth century (and later those of Jerome [A.D. 420], apparently quoting him) and his comment about texts that exclude this section does not preclude his own acknowledgment of that text as authoritative, nor Jerome's omitting it in his Latin translation of the Bible, and since nineteenth century scholarship that began to be critical of the inclusion of these

twelve verses as well as Moses' authorship of the Pentateuch were well countered by the arguments of scholarship supporting the Church's and Bible's claims of its own origins by such scholars as John Burgon (A.D. 1813–1888) and expressed carefully and exhaustively by modern scholars such as Nicholas Lunn (see *The Original Ending of Mark: A New Case for the Authenticity of Mark 16:9–20*; Pickwick Publications, Eugene, Ore., 2014); and

WHEREAS, Contemporaneous churchmen, such as Eusebius and Jerome, being aware of these texts and their omissions, and living much closer to the historical context of their appearance, neither speaking against their inclusion, nor themselves excluding these texts as authoritative from their own use and quotation, were in a much better position to evaluate their authenticity than the musings of modern scholars of Scriptures, let alone unbelieving scholars who have a record of attacking the veracity of the sacred text; and

WHEREAS, The omission of this section from these ancient texts has sparked academic debate as to whether these last 12 verses of Mark were written by the same author identified as Mark or whether these verses were added later, perhaps in the second century, so that the majority of contemporary Biblical scholars and authorities in Christendom reject the authenticity of these verses, and would *de facto* demote these 12 verses to the status of antilegomena; and

WHEREAS, Exclusion of the last 12 verses of Mark renders this Gospel incomplete and prone to erroneous interpretation as compared to the other Gospels, since the resurrection would be thus promised by the Lord (Mark 8:31; 9:31; 10:33–34) without witness of its fulfillment, since Christ's personal promise of the Holy Spirit and commissioning His disciples to preach to the world would be missing, and because lacking both a birth and a resurrection narrative Mark's Gospel as it stands on its own would invite a Gnostic interpretation; and

WHEREAS, Mark 16:16 is the authoritative statement in Scripture on Baptism, chosen by Luther to teach about the efficacy of Baptism in his Large and Small Catechisms, and is a cornerstone of the doctrine of Baptism that is memorized and used to affirm baptismal regeneration in all our congregations; and

WHEREAS, Footnotes flagging words and sections of modern Bibles as missing in ancient versions serve no purpose for laymen, except to undermine their confidence in God's preserving the text of His Word but only invite them to believe the Bible is flawed and inaccurate; and

WHEREAS, Our Synod was warned in the tragic events of the Seminex walkout in 1974, that reason is not to be used to silence or to replace the Word of God by its judgements of the same (majesterial use of reason), but is to be used to draw out from Scriptures what God is saying in it (ministerial use of reason); and

WHEREAS, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) affirmed that all Scriptures are inspired by God and not subject to private interpretation (LCMS CTCR, *The Inspiration of Scripture* [March 1975]), but to the interpretation the Holy Spirit gives in Scriptural context, by which the Holy Spirit gives faith and salvation when and where He will; therefore be it

Resolved, That the LCMS affirm in convention that all of the Gospel according to St. Mark (including Mark 16:9–20), as it appears in over 95 percent of the Scriptures and Biblical versions witnessed in all the history of the Church is not to be demoted to the status of *antilegomenon* but affirmed as inspired and authoritative; and be it further

Resolved, That the LCMS exhort Concordia Publishing House to note in this section of their published Bibles: “Though a few ancient texts omit these verses, they are well attested in the vast majority of ancient New Testament texts and to the present day”; and be it finally

Resolved, That the LCMS commend our seminaries to thoroughly train future pastors in the arguments employed to support inclusion or exclusion of Mark 16:12–20 in the sacred text and to further remind them both of Christ’s promise that Scripture would not be broken (John 10:35) and that His Word would never pass away (Matt. 5:35) as well as the Scriptural admonitions and curses against adding or subtracting from God’s Word (see Deut. 12:32; Rev. 22:18–19).

Emmanuel
Dearborn, MI

6. Pastoral Ministry and Seminaries

REPORTS

**R1, R1.2, R1.2.2–R1.2.3, R2.1, R5.2,
R13–R13.2, R60**

OVERTURES

Ov. 6-01

To Affirm and Strengthen *Set Apart to Serve* in Word and Action

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, Laborers are few and needed in every generation to the present for the millions of people, both domestic and international, who do not yet believe in Jesus Christ and confess Him as Lord and Savior, for new church starts in domestic communities, for the identified need for over 100 new international Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) missionaries within the next several years, and for the need for capable theological educators both here in the U.S. and abroad; and

WHEREAS, The 67th Regular Convention of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod in July 2019 adopted Resolution 6-01 to: ... commend, financially support, and directly participate in this comprehensive, multi-year church worker recruitment initiative with (but not limited to) the following objectives:

- identifying, catechizing, encouraging, and supporting young boys and girls for church worker vocations;
- instilling church worker vocations as sacred and joyful, a “calling from God,” vocations of integrity and fulfillment, grounded in Christ and baptismal salvation;
- developing the “whole person” throughout this formation process: spiritually, in character, confessionally, physically, emotionally, synodically, and intellectually;
- supporting, encouraging, and caring for existing church workers for the welfare of the workers, for the proclamation and witness of the Gospel, and for workers to be healthy advocates of next generation church workers (*Proceedings*, 158);

and

WHEREAS, This initiative is known as *Set Apart to Serve* and encompasses the initial youth phase (infant baptism–12th grade) and a second phase focusing on second career individuals who may be considering professional church work vocations; and

WHEREAS, *Set Apart to Serve* is being developed through the collaboration of key stakeholders, including the two LCMS seminaries (including their *Vocatio* and Christ Academy programs), Concordia university institutions, LCMS Youth Ministry, LCMS School Ministry, LCMS Mission Advancement, LCMS Communications, Concordia Publishing House (CPH), Concordia Plan Services (CPS), The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod Foundation, all 35 LCMS districts and district presidents, 36 pilot program participants, Higher Things, Wittenberg Academy,

Lutheran Church Extension Fund (LCEF), National Lutheran Outdoors Ministry Association (NLOMA), Lutheran Education Association, Association of Lutheran Secondary Schools, and the St. Louis, Mo.-based marketing and communications firm, Standing Partnership, as well as others; and

WHEREAS, *Set Apart to Serve* has received the active attention of beloved LCMS contributors who are firmly committed to and engaged in supporting the *Set Apart to Serve* pilot project, CPH curriculum, the second-career phase, and sustaining a long-term culture of church work formation and recruitment in the Synod; and

WHEREAS, *Set Apart to Serve* is currently in the midst of its pilot program involving a congregation and/or school from all 35 districts and 1 NLOMA camp, testing *Set Apart to Serve* church work recruitment strategies and resources, which will be made freely available synodwide by the end of calendar year 2023; and

WHEREAS, CPH, in partnership with *Set Apart to Serve*, is developing a 4-part church work recruitment curriculum for all ages and which all LCMS schools, missionaries, districts, universities, seminaries, and others will receive this curriculum at no charge through the generosity of LCEF and our Concordia universities; and

WHEREAS, *Set Apart to Serve* is collaborating with the LCMS Office of National Mission, CPS, Concordia universities and seminaries, districts and congregations, Standing Partnership, and other key partners to address church worker wellness, which includes including student debt, compensation and benefits, care and encouragement of church workers, worker appreciation, and spiritual, physical and emotional well-being; therefore be it

Resolved, That LCMS congregation members and families, church workers, congregations, schools and recipients of the ministry of LCMS church workers and institutions be encouraged intentionally to pray for more ordained and commissioned workers in the church, for the continued and increased proclamation of the Gospel of Christ; and be it further

Resolved, That everyone in the LCMS, including key influencers (pastors, parents, teachers, deaconesses, directors of Christian education, youth workers, congregation members, and other church workers) be urged to intentionally encourage youth and adults to consider full-time church work; and be it further

Resolved, That congregations, schools, missionaries, and all recipients of the forthcoming CPH curriculum be strongly encouraged to use *Set Apart to Serve* strategies, resources, and curriculum; and be it finally

Resolved, That all primary agencies of Synod (i.e., boards, commissions, councils and committees, seminaries and universities, districts, CPS, and each synodwide corporate entity) are requested to endorse, advocate, and engage with *Set Apart to Serve* by publicly obvious means and actions as we strive together to accomplish one of the Synod’s crucial official objectives, to “Recruit and train pastors, teachers, and other professional church workers and provide opportunity for their continuing growth” (Constitution Article III 3) in our life together.

Pastoral Formation Committee

Ov. 6-02

To Pray Harvest Prayer (Luke 10:2)

WHEREAS, The Lord has compassion for all who are “harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd” (Matt. 9:36) and he came “to seek and to save the lost” (Luke 19:10); and

WHEREAS, The Lord tells his disciples, “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); and

WHEREAS, When we pray God’s Word it forms our thinking and conforms our will to His; and

WHEREAS, The Synod’s colleges and seminaries stand to benefit from the answer to this prayer, perhaps with an increased enrollment of church worker students; and

WHEREAS, Our churches will thrive with an increase of trained workers and ministers who are “full of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 6:3 [NKJV]) and “zealous for good works” (Titus 2:14); and

WHEREAS, Our Synod will benefit from the establishment of new Gospel outposts and congregations; and

WHEREAS, The harvest we pray for is constitutive of the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church; therefore be it

Resolved, That the pastors and church workers of our Synod be encouraged to pray daily for the Lord to send workers into the harvest (perhaps setting alarms to go off at 10:02 as a reminder); and be it further

Resolved, That the congregations and institutions of Synod be encouraged to pray for harvest workers regularly in their meetings and worship services.

Christ the King
Kingwood, TX

Ov. 6-03

To Affirm and Strengthen the Synod’s Commitment to Well-Formed Clergy for Sake of Gospel

WHEREAS, “The Office of the Holy Ministry has been instituted by Christ Himself (John 20:19–23; Eph. 4:11–16); and calls qualified men to fill this divinely established office and send them as His ministers to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ and to administer the Sacraments publicly in the stead of Christ and by His command” (*Lutheran Service Book Agenda*, 155); and

WHEREAS, We confess “so that we may obtain this (justified, saving) faith, the ministry of teaching (*das Predigtamt*, preaching office) the Gospel and administration of the Sacraments was instituted” (Augsburg Confession [AC] V 1), and “our churches teach that no one should publicly teach in the Church, or administer the Sacraments, without a rightly ordered call” (AC XIV; 2016 Resolution 6-02); and

WHEREAS, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) is committed to a robust program of formation and education for those preparing for the sacred Office of the Holy Ministry, to which they are held accountable to God (1 Cor. 4:1–5; Heb. 13:17); and

WHEREAS, The Master of Divinity (M.Div.) route to call, examination, and ordination into the Office of the Holy Ministry is the most robust route in terms of academics and additional means of pastoral formation when compared to other approved routes in the LCMS and is considered “the most complete means of preparing a man for the general responsibilities of the pastoral office” (2016 Res. 6-03, *Proceedings*, 168), and “the preferred option for the preparation of men for pastoral ministry” (2019 Res. 6-02, *Proceedings*, 159); and

WHEREAS, Candidates for the Office of the Holy Ministry declared qualified for first calls are those who “will have

satisfactorily completed the prescribed courses of studies and will have received diplomas from their respective educational institutions of the Synod or have fulfilled the requisites of a colloquy or other approved education program of the Synod (Bylaws 2.7.2 and 2.7.3)” (Bylaw 2.8.1 [a]); and

WHEREAS, Despite intervening efforts to address ambiguities in the Specific Ministry Pastor (SMP) program route to ordination and Synod membership status, there remains apparent “confusion regarding the definition of ‘specific ministry’” (2013 Res. 5-04B, “To Continue and Strengthen Specific Ministry Pastor (SMP) Program,” *Proceedings*, 139–40) among members of Synod; and

WHEREAS, New, non-approved routes to ministerial service in the LCMS and the performance of the distinctive functions of the Office of the Holy Ministry are in various instances being encouraged, conceived, developed, and offered to individuals who sincerely desire to serve the church; and

WHEREAS, The 67th Regular Convention of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod in July 2019 adopted resolutions which assigned certain tasks to the Pastoral Formation Committee (as described in Bylaw 3.10.4) concerning routes to ordination; therefore be it

Resolved, That the residential M.Div. route continue to be positioned and understood as the Synod’s strongly preferred route to ordination, supplying LCMS congregations with well-formed, highly educated pastors who as members of the Synod (ministers of religion—ordained, Bylaw 2.6.1) are prepared to preach, teach, and care for souls over a lifetime of faithful ministry in any and every context into which the Lord calls them into service; and be it further

Resolved, That fiscally sound actions be undertaken over the 2023–2026 triennium by the Synod’s residential seminaries to maintain the continuance of guaranteed tuition support for all students enrolled in the residential M.Div. programs; and be it further

Resolved, That the SMP route be utilized only for its intended purposes (2007 Res. 5-01B; Bylaw 2.13.1) and strengthened under the following principles and boundaries:

1. SMP pastors and their ministries are valid, appropriate to the current needs of Christ’s body in certain circumstances, fruitful, and treasured by all, even as the Synod gives thanks to God for such men prepared, called, and placed into the Office of the Holy Ministry under this particular LCMS route to ordination;
2. the SMP route be understood and positioned as the “exception” and not become the “principal rule” with respect to the Synod’s available routes for the preparation and ordination of her pastors;
3. there be no change to the timing of SMP vicarage and ordination as currently practiced in the Synod and that biblical languages not become a mandatory part of SMP pastoral formation;
4. SMP students be consistently addressed as “vicar” in the first two years of study and not be addressed as “pastor” until after ordination; and
5. seminaries, districts, congregations, and pastors consistently encourage and strive to make provisions for prospective SMP students to consider entering instead into an M.Div. or Residential Alternate Route program;

and be it further

Resolved, That each approved non-residential route to ordination in the LCMS remain independent from the other and not consolidated under the SMP program; and be it further

Resolved, That those involved in the planning and implementation of *Set Apart to Serve*, the Synod's church work recruitment initiative, in collaboration with recruitment officers from the Synod's two residential seminaries explore, develop, and implement means to encourage and assist men "from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages" (Rev. 7:9) toward residential pastoral formation through the M.Div. program; and be it further

Resolved, That the Pastoral Formation Committee be assigned the following tasks, to be completed during the 2023–2026 triennium for inclusion in the 2026 *Workbook*:

1. to prepare a report that analyzes and assesses ministerial or pastoral formation programs that have emerged within the LCMS over the past several years, especially those preparing persons to perform the distinctive functions of the Office of the Holy Ministry, which lack approval of the Synod under current LCMS Constitution and Bylaws and are not included in the current list of Synod-approved routes to ordination (Master of Divinity, Residential Alternate Route, General Pastor Certificate, Specific Ministry Pastor, Specific Ministry Pastor *Español*, Ethnic Immigrant Institute of Theology, Center for Hispanic Studies, Cross-Cultural Ministry Center);
2. to prepare a report that examines and compares approaches and outcomes of residential (i.e., in-person) and non-residential (i.e., distance learning) routes to ordination as these relate to the Synod's commitment to a well-formed clergy for the sake of the Gospel of Jesus Christ; and
3. to thoroughly identify and evaluate options and rationales and prepare a report to the 2026 Synod convention, which proposes a beneficial, clear, and concise definition of appropriate contexts for the ministry of SMP pastors; and
4. to develop and present a comprehensive uniform synodwide Specific Ministry Supervision Plan.

and be it finally

Resolved, That all pastors be encouraged and expected to engage in continuing education throughout their pastoral ministry, beginning with their participation in Post-Seminary Applied Learning and Support, and self-report all continuing education experiences on their Self-Evaluation Tool.

Pastoral Formation Committee

Ov. 6-04

To Affirm Residential Pastoral Education at Our Seminaries

WHEREAS, The apostles left all to follow Jesus (Luke 5:11; 18:28–30; Matt. 19:27) showing that the life of the ministry is one of sacrifice; and

WHEREAS, Jesus set an example of the importance of in-person theological education by teaching his disciples, in-person, for nearly three uninterrupted years; and

WHEREAS, During the time of instruction, Jesus warned his apostles to "beware of 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, Scripture teaches that pastors are especially to "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 1:9); and

WHEREAS, The history of education and the COVID-19 pandemic have shown that remote teaching is an inferior form of education and formation owing to the inability of the teacher to interact with the student, the student to interact with other students, and of the student to focus; and

WHEREAS, Other disciplines that deal with the care of people, such as physicians, require intense in-person instruction that cannot be replicated remotely; and

WHEREAS, The care of souls in our parishes requires that our pastors be highly trained by orthodox Lutheran teachers and made ready for ministry, as the Scriptures declare in 1 Timothy 3:1–7 and Titus 1:5–16; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Synod in convention reaffirms its commitment to residential seminary education at Synod seminaries, in line with previous convention resolutions (e.g., 2019 Resolution 6-02, "To Promote Residential Seminary Education as the Preferred Option for the Preparation of Men for Pastoral Ministry"); and be it further

Resolved, That all qualified men, regardless of background and means, be encouraged to enter residential pastoral education at a Synod seminary, or a seminary that is in altar and pulpit fellowship with the Synod; and be it finally

Resolved, That seminaries, districts, congregations, and laity do their utmost to ensure the proper support of men training for the pastoral office, recognizing the sacrifices which are necessary for the training of pastors and the spread of the Gospel.

Pastors' Conference
Iowa East District

Ov. 6-05

To Establish Task Force to Determine Additions and Revisions for Training of Preachers within the Synod

WHEREAS, Our Lord directed in the last chapter of Matthew to "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, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you"; and

WHEREAS, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved ... how are they to believe in Him ... without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent?" (Rom. 10:13–15a); and

WHEREAS, Jesus "appointed twelve ... that ... He might send them out to preach" (Mark 3:14; Matt. 10:5) and sent seventy-two (Luke 10:1) to preach the Good News of Salvation; and

WHEREAS, At Pentecost, the Holy Spirit directed Peter, the other apostles, and those with them (120) to preach the Good News of salvation to thousands in Jerusalem (Acts 2:1–41), and later appointed other men to assist (Acts 6:1–7, including Phillip and Stephen) and succeed (Acts 14:23a; Titus 1:5; 1 Peter 5:1, etc.) them in the preaching ministry; and

WHEREAS, The Lord used Phillip (Acts 8:4–40) to preach in Samaria and to the Ethiopian eunuch, as well as Stephen who preached to the people, Freedmen, and the council (Acts 6:8–7:60); and

WHEREAS, Men who would be called to this preaching ministry must meet certain qualifications (1 Tim. 3:1–13; Titus 1:6–9); and

WHEREAS, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) has been blessed by God with two seminaries that are training men to fulfill this preaching office as either general pastors or Specific Ministry Pastors (SMP); and

WHEREAS, The LCMS has recognized for over 40 years a future and now present need for additional men, over and above those currently attending our seminaries, to be inducted into the preaching office, due to the additional requests that are received each year for preachers than the number of men who are graduating from our seminaries; and

WHEREAS, Additional opportunities to establish new congregations and preaching stations are often not realized due to the lack of sufficient number of men to fill the preaching office; and

WHEREAS, The Synod in convention has repeatedly requested that the members of Synod increase their recruitment efforts to expose the benefits of the preaching office to men who meet the scriptural qualifications; and

WHEREAS, The type and level of formal and informal training required by the church for a man to be admitted to the preaching office (1 Tim. 3:1–13; Titus 1:6–9) has varied throughout the centuries since Christ's ascension into heaven, as has the level of training provided at our seminaries over the 175 years of the Synod's existence; and

WHEREAS, The 1989 Synod convention established the office of lay deacon to assist in addressing the need for additional men in the preaching office, to serve under the direction of an ordained pastor; and

WHEREAS, The 2016 Synod convention reaffirmed its subscription to Article XIV of the Augsburg Confession, our churches "teach that no one should publicly teach in the Church or administer the Sacraments" without a rightly ordered call; and

WHEREAS, Despite these efforts, sufficient numbers of men to fulfill the needs of the preaching office within the LCMS has not occurred for many years and is forecast not to be fulfilled in the foreseeable future; therefore be it

Resolved, That the work of recruiting men for the preaching office continue; and be it further

Resolved, That a task force be established to study the potential options for training additional men for the preaching office in order to meet the multiple needs for additional preachers; and be it further

Resolved, That this task force be made up of one ordained and one lay member from each district of the LCMS, appointed by the respective district presidents; and be it further

Resolved, That this task force organize itself into committees made up of at least one ordained and one lay member from each region of the LCMS for the purposes of evaluating the training of men for preaching offices available through the regular seminary process, the SMP training process, the institutions of the Concordia University System (CUS), and other means within the various districts of the LCMS, including the training of lay deacons, along with other topics the task force shall determine as necessary or beneficial; and be it further

Resolved, That this task force begin its work no later than four months after the close of the 2023 Synod convention; and be it further

Resolved, That this task force work with and receive input from the various seminaries, institutions of the CUS, other boards and commissions of the Synod, the offices of the Synod President and district presidents in developing its recommendations; and be it further

Resolved, That this task force take into account the recommendations developed by the previous SMP task force and task force on Licensed Lay Deacons; and be it further

Resolved, That this task force provide to either the 2026 (preferred) or the 2029 Synod convention recommended additions and modifications to the existing training programs for men entering preaching offices within the Synod; and be it further

Resolved, That the preliminary recommendations of this task force be made available to members of the Synod no less than nine months prior to the presentation of the final recommendations at a future Synod convention; and be it finally

Resolved, That each member of the LCMS continue to adhere to Jesus' admonition in Luke 10:2: "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."

Pastors' Conference
Michigan District

Ov. 6-06

To Strengthen and Expand Routes to Ministry

WHEREAS, The Master of Divinity program is the preferred route to training pastors in the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS); and

WHEREAS, In 2006, the Atlantic District in convention passed resolutions designed to strengthen and expand the scope of mission and ministry by resolving to prepare 100 home-grown mission leaders for service to Lord and Church; and

WHEREAS, By God's grace well over 100 men and women have been developed, trained, and sent to serve in congregations of the Atlantic District as lay deacons, deaconesses, commissioned rostered workers, and pastors; and

WHEREAS, The benefits of this leadership development model have been visible signs of God's grace in more than half of the congregations of the district exercising various spiritual gifts in service; and

WHEREAS, Mission opportunity remains at the highest level in the district even as transitions in leadership demand more strong Lutheran Christian leaders in our congregations and their communities; and

WHEREAS, The Atlantic District Lay Deacon Program, the Specific Ministry Pastor (SMP) program, the Ethnic Immigrant Institute of Theology (EIIT), the Center for Hispanic Studies (CHS), Concordia University Irvine's Mission Training Center (MTC), and others have provided excellent avenues for continuing the development toward service of "home-grown mission leaders" in the district; and

WHEREAS, The pastors being developed, ordained, and called to the district through these programs—and others for commissioned

workers—remain a primary source of hope for the Lutheran Christian future in Eastern New York state; therefore be it

Resolved, That these programs leading to the development of mission leaders at all levels of service be commended and recommended to the congregations of our district for use; and be it further

Resolved, That the district in convention send this commendation and recommendation to the 2023 Synod convention for adoption; and be it further

Resolved, That in particular the global impact programs—EIIT, CHS, MTC—be commended to the seminaries and to the Synod in convention for strengthening and expanding, including the SMP, in scope and potential, in preparing and certifying “general pastors” for the LCMS; and be it finally

Resolved, That the district in convention in July 2022 resolve to renew its 2006 commitment by pledging to raise up and prepare 100 new home-grown mission leaders, including a significant percentage of ordained pastors, in the next six years.

Atlantic District

Ov. 6-07

To Create Plan to Address Near-Term Pastoral Needs

WHEREAS, There is broad recognition that the Synod is facing a significant shortfall of pastors; and

WHEREAS, Such recognition resulted in the passing of 2019 Resolution 6-01, “To Support and Participate in the Comprehensive Church Worker Recruitment Initiative,” which launched *Set Apart to Serve*; and

WHEREAS, The *Set Apart to Serve* initiative has established a multi-year approach seeking to encourage our youth to serve as pastors or church workers; and

WHEREAS, Such a multi-year effort does not address the immediate or near-term shortage of pastors; 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 in the near term; and

WHEREAS, The Synod, gathered in convention in 2016, limited Word and Sacrament ministry to ordained pastors, limiting the use of other designated servants; 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”; and

WHEREAS, The Gospel calls us to continue mission initiatives serving our congregants, communities, and world which requires that workers be recruited, trained, and released into ministry at present, in the near term, and over the coming decades; and

WHEREAS, Districts have experience utilizing programs to provide formal theological training for potential workers, including the current Specific Ministry Program, the Ethnic Immigrant Institute of Theology, and the Center for Hispanic Studies; and

WHEREAS, The implementation of the system in place in the Synod to foster and encourage worker recruitment and development

through our educational institutions has not met the present and near-term need; and

WHEREAS, Unless the Synod plans for comparable losses in congregations and mission efforts, there will continue to be a worker supply and demand problem; and

WHEREAS, Our God calls us not to bury the gift entrusted to us out of fear of the master but rather to be empowered to use it for His mission; and

WHEREAS, Such empowerment allows for responsible creativity as the history of the Synod in missions exhibits; and

WHEREAS, The Bylaws do not preclude the Pastoral Formation Committee from consulting with others with knowledge of the mission field and the pool of potential pastors for the mission field in formulating strategic direction of pastoral formation; and

WHEREAS, Receiving good and knowledgeable council is wise and reflects good stewardship; and

WHEREAS, The Bylaws do not limit the reporting of the Pastoral Formation Committee’s work to only the annual joint meeting of the boards of regents of the two seminaries; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Pastoral Formation Committee, working with the Council of Presidents, the seminaries, the CUS, and our partner institutions, where appropriate, develop a worker training plan to supply sufficient pastors to serve our congregants, communities, and world working with our partner institutions, where appropriate, in the near term; and be it further

Resolved, That this training plan account for recruitment, development, and sending of pastoral candidates; and be it finally

Resolved, That this training plan be presented to the districts at the 2025 district convention cycle.

Board of Directors
Florida-Georgia District

Ov. 6-08

To Encourage and Support Existing Learning-In-Ministry, Non-Residential, Distance Programs Leading 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, God is bringing thousands of new immigrants to our communities and thereby providing our congregations with new and vast harvest fields; and

WHEREAS, Our Minnesota South District pastors and congregations are identifying new potential pastoral leaders in and among these immigrant communities; and

WHEREAS, Our Synod seminaries have established a distance theological education through the Specific Ministry Pastor (SMP), Ethnic Immigrant Institute of Theology (EIIT), Cross-Cultural Ministry Center (CMC) and Center for Hispanic Studies (CHS) programs; and

WHEREAS, An unintended consequence of Synod promoting residential seminary education as the preferred option for the preparation of men for pastoral ministry (2019 Resolution 6-02) is that non-residential, immigrant students do not receive the same tuition assistance from the seminary to cover the costs of their

academic programs as compared with residential students; therefore be it

Resolved, That the district in convention encourage the seminaries to award the same tuition assistance as residential students to their nonresidential students; and be it further

Resolved, That the district hereby memorializes Synod to adopt this, or similar resolutions, at its next convention.

Minnesota South District

Ov. 6-09

To Encourage and Expand Support for Immigrant and Non-Anglo Pastoral Formation through Learning in Ministry, Non-Residential, Distance Programs that Lead 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, Jesus set an example of what a robust theological education looks like by teaching His disciples theology while they were, at the exact same time, engaged in real-world, real-time, hands-on ministry with Him; and

WHEREAS, The Apostle Paul educated and raised up new pastors and leaders by inviting them to join him and assist him and work alongside him in real-world, real-time, hands-on ministry; and

WHEREAS, God is bringing thousands of new immigrants to our communities and thereby providing our congregations with new and vast harvest fields; and

WHEREAS, Our Pacific Southwest District pastors and congregations are identifying new potential pastoral leaders in and among these immigrant, non-Anglo communities; and

WHEREAS, The pool of men who are interested in and gifted for pastoral ministry and who are, at the same time, able to give up jobs, sell homes, and relocate their spouse and children to either St. Louis, Mo. or Fort Wayne, Ind. continues to get smaller; and

WHEREAS, An unintended consequence of Synod promoting residential seminary education as the preferred option for the preparation of men for pastoral ministry (2019 Res. 6-02, *Proceedings*, 158) is that non-residential, immigrant students receive, proportionally, a lower percentage of tuition aid from the seminary to cover the costs of their academic programs than do residential students; and

WHEREAS, Pastors of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod are retiring in larger numbers than ever before (an estimated 1/3 of our congregations will be without a pastor by 2035) and the number of men entering our seminaries is less than what is needed to replace these faithful servants and expand further mission and ministry; therefore be it

Resolved, That the district in convention encourage its pastors, leaders, and congregations to continue to cultivate, from our immigrant, non-Anglo communities, new leaders who are intentionally engaged in the mission of God; and be it further

Resolved, That the district in convention memorialize the 2023 Synod convention to encourage the seminaries to maintain and strengthen their non-residential, learning-in-ministry, distance programs, and to award financial aid more equitably toward the students in these programs.

Pacific Southwest District

Ov. 6-10

To Encourage and Support Existing Learning-In-Ministry, Non-Residential, Distance Programs Leading 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” (Luke 10:2); and

WHEREAS, Jesus set an example of what a robust theological education looks like by teaching His disciples theology while they were, at the exact same time, engaged in real-world, real-time, hands-on ministry with Him; and

WHEREAS, The apostle Paul educated and raised up new pastors and leaders by inviting them to join him and assist him and work alongside him in real-world, real-time, hands-on ministry; and

WHEREAS, God is bringing thousands of new immigrants to our communities and thereby providing our congregations with new and vast harvest fields; and

WHEREAS, Synod pastors and congregations are identifying new potential pastoral leaders in and among immigrant, non-Anglo and Anglo communities; and

WHEREAS, The pool of men who are interested in and gifted for pastoral ministry and who are, at the same time, able to give up jobs, sell homes, and relocate their spouse and children to either St. Louis, Mo., or Fort Wayne, Ind., continues to get smaller; and

WHEREAS, Our Synod seminaries have established a successful track record of providing distance (non-residential) theological education through the Specific Ministry Pastor, Ethnic Immigrant Institute of Theology, Cross Cultural Ministry Center, and Center for Hispanic Studies programs; and

WHEREAS, These non-residential, learning-in-ministry seminary programs support our districts and their congregations in our joint efforts to cultivate leaders who are intentionally engaged in the mission of God; and

WHEREAS, An unintended consequence of Synod promoting residential seminary education as the preferred option for the preparation of men for pastoral ministry (2019 Resolution 6-02, *Proceedings*, 158) is that non-residential students receive, proportionally, a lower percentage of tuition aid from the seminary to cover the costs of their academic programs than do residential students; and

WHEREAS, The demographics of the Synod reveal a reduced pool of men to recruit for the ministry, which is estimated to result in a 50 percent reduction in the number of active pastors by 2032; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Synod in convention give thanks for the new pastors and leaders that God has been, and still is, raising up among us from our immigrant, non-Anglo and Anglo communities; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod in convention encourage the seminaries to maintain and strengthen their non-residential, learning-in-ministry, distance programs; and be it finally

Resolved, That the Synod in convention encourage the seminaries to award financial aid more equitably to its non-residential, learning-in-ministry students.

Florida-Georgia District

Ov. 6-11**To Increase Distance Education Opportunities to Train General Ordained Ministers**

WHEREAS, There is an increasing number of congregations with pastoral vacancies due to lack of ordained candidates; and

WHEREAS, There is a need for seminary training to address the variety of ministry contexts in which Synod is engaged in ministry; and

WHEREAS, The Synod has a history of variety in its training of ordained ministers (e.g., the practical seminary and the theological seminary of the 20th century); and

WHEREAS, Academic training has taken advantage of technology to offer distance education and it has become a standard of delivering training in many contexts in our culture; and

WHEREAS, The Cross-Cultural Ministry Center (CMC) has trained, through distance learning, ordained ministers who are serving effectively across the Synod; therefore be it

Resolved, That the seminaries of Synod be encouraged to study how to train general pastors by distance education; and be it further

Resolved, That the seminaries and the districts of Synod be encouraged to implement distance education methods and technologies for seminary education to provide more general pastors for the mission of the Gospel; and be it further

Resolved, That the CMC and the districts of Synod continue to work together to identify ministry settings and candidates and to provide for their training while they serve alongside ordained ministers; and be it finally

Resolved, That the Northwest District memorialize the 2023 Synod Convention to identify the CMC as a means to train general pastors for Synod.

Northwest District

Ov. 6-12**To Explore Non-Residential Opportunities for Pastoral Education**

WHEREAS, Our Lord invites us, “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, Throughout the generations, churches have been and are called to be led by pastors trained and equipped for biblically grounded, confessionally sound, and contextually appropriate ministry; and

WHEREAS, There is great need to raise up new pastors in a time when current pastors are retiring, and residential enrollment is decreasing at our seminaries; and

WHEREAS, The challenges of residential education in the 21st century include the financial costs, not only of tuition (which is currently covered by the seminaries), but also housing and basic living expenses such as food and clothing, the length of study while living with these burdens, and the challenges of these transitions in various life stages all limit the opportunities for men to answer the call to service; and

WHEREAS, There are opportunities for life and ministry in the 21st century, including technological advances for communication and learning, mid-life career changes, and the potential to recruit

men whose life situations may limit the possibility of residential formation; and

WHEREAS, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) showed adaptability in sending workers for the harvest, even in an age before our current technology: “More than half of those who graduated from the seminary in Fort Wayne during the first nine years of the school’s existence attended from one to two years: about one third of them, two to three years. The aim was to provide men with the most practical instructions so that they would enter the work as early as possible” (Carl S. Meyer, *Moving Frontiers: Readings in the History of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod* [St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1964], 217); and

WHEREAS, The LCMS has historically provided training in our present context, including the decision to create seminaries in North America, rather than returning to Germany for pastoral education; and

WHEREAS, The Southeastern District in its 2022 convention voted to forward this overture to the Synod convention for consideration; therefore be it

Resolved, That the seminaries and leadership of the LCMS explore and implement further non-residential opportunities for pastoral education and ordination, for the sake of the Church.

Southeastern District

Ov. 6-13**To Regularize Specific Ministry Pastoral Classification**

WHEREAS, Our Lutheran Confessions state “... that no one should publicly teach in the Church, or administer the Sacraments, without a rightly ordered call” (Augsburg Confession XIV) and that ordination is an essential component of a regular, ordered call (Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope 67, 69–71); and

WHEREAS, Membership Status and Limitations noted in the *Handbook* of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (2019 *Handbook*, Bylaw section 2.13) applies requirements and limitations on Specific Ministry Pastors (SMP) that include:

- remaining in a specific ministry context;
- remain under supervision by a general pastor;
- limits his Call outside of the context of his Call;
- is not eligible to serve as a voting delegate to the national convention;
- is not eligible to be elected or appointed to offices at the district and Synod level;
- may not supervise vicars; and
- may not serve as circuit visitor;

and

Whereas, Other classifications of pastors (Ethnic Immigrant Institute of Theology [EIIT], Hispanic, and others) who are not graduates from a residential program track (Master of Divinity and Alternative Route) have been granted ordination without notation of how these non-residential tracks are to be managed in the context of Bylaw 2.13.1 (a–c); and

Whereas, Confusion on how to deal with ordained pastors who are not SMP or graduates from residential ministry tracks continues to exist; and

Whereas, Non-residential tracks toward ordination are currently treated in a similar manner as SMP and SMP Colloquy; therefore be it

Resolved, That Synod in convention adopt language for all non-resident graduate and ordained ministers of religion—ordained; and be it further

Resolved, That Bylaw 2.13.1 be amended as follows:

~~PRESENT~~/PROPOSED WORDING

Reports and Overtures

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, EIT, Hispanic ministry, or any other non-residential ministry tracks 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.

...

Board of Directors
Mid-South District

Ov. 6-14

**To Encourage Further Consideration
of Successful Completion of Specific Ministry
Pastor Coursework before Ordination and
Placement on Ordained Roster**

WHEREAS, The 2019 Synod convention considered Overture 6-07, “To Request Synod to Move Ordination Upon Completion of SMP Four-Year Program” (*Workbook*, 451–52) with similar overtures from other districts and congregations; and

WHEREAS, The 2019 Synod convention adopted 2019 Resolution 6-03A, referring this matter to the Pastoral Formation Committee to “work to enhance the curriculum and standards of the SMP program between the two seminaries...” and to “review the SMP program regarding the optimal timing for vicarage and ordination and report its recommendation to the joint boards of regents at its 2020 meeting, as well as to the Synod at large”; and

WHEREAS, 2019 Res. 6-03A further resolved “That the joint board [sic] of regents prepare an overture to the Synod on the timing of vicarage and ordination for the SMP program for consideration in convention in 2022”; and

WHEREAS, The 2023 Synod convention will consider the recommendations of the Pastoral Formation Committee and the joint boards of regents of the seminaries, which are forthcoming; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Mid-South District in convention reaffirm the importance of the Pastoral Formation Committee, the joint boards of regents, and the Synod’s consideration of the issues regarding the timing of ordination in the SMP program; and be it further

Resolved, That the Mid-South District in convention encourage the Pastoral Formation Committee, the joint boards of regents of the seminaries, and the Synod in convention to consider moving ordination and placement on the minister of religion—ordained roster of the Synod from after the completion of the first two years

of the SMP program to after the completion of all SMP education and academic requirements; and be it finally

Resolved, That the Mid-South District in convention submit to the 2023 Synod Convention an overture with the above stated whereas and resolved statements.

Mid-South District

Ov. 6-15

**To Establish Specific Ministry Pastor Program
Oversight Board and to Revise Bylaws
Governing Program**

WHEREAS, The Specific Ministry Pastor (SMP) Program was established by 2007 Resolution 5-01B; and

WHEREAS, Specific ministry pastors serve the Church under supervision because their theological education has been formed in part by and for a specific ministry context (Bylaw 2.13.1 [a]); and

WHEREAS, This supervision is essential for the ministry as well as the confidence of those served and the Church at large that the ministry is conducted in a manner consistent with the Holy Scriptures and the pastor’s unconditional subscription to the Lutheran Confessions; and

WHEREAS, This supervision is not a perfunctory task, but one requiring close attention to the needs of the specific ministry and the conduct of that ministry; and

WHEREAS, Any change in ministry context is by its nature inconsistent with the purpose of the SMP program and the contextual theological education of the specific ministry; and

WHEREAS, It is essential that a student beginning his theological education in a specific ministry context be known by the people he serves; and

WHEREAS, “Residential seminary education is the preferred option for the preparation of men for pastoral ministry” (2019 Res. 6-02); and

WHEREAS, Confidence in the SMP Program will be increased by more clarity regarding the oversight and supervision of the program; therefore be it

Resolved, That an “SMP Program Oversight Board” be established; and be it further

Resolved, That Bylaw 3.10.8 be inserted as follows:

~~PRESENT~~/PROPOSED WORDING

H. Specific Ministry Pastor Program Oversight Board

3.10.8 The Specific Ministry Pastor (SMP) Program Oversight Board shall be responsible for ensuring that the specific ministry vicars and pastors are placed in ministry contexts which are consistent with the intentions of the program. Specifically, it shall ensure that any placement is not one which could expect to receive a candidate according to the process outlined in Bylaw Section 2.5.

3.10.8.1 The SMP Program Oversight Board shall consist of the First Vice-President of the Synod as chairman, the Secretary of the Synod, the Chief Mission Officer, a district president appointed by the Council of Presidents, and the Executive Director of Pastoral Education.

3.10.8.2 The SMP Program Oversight Board shall establish and monitor the standards under which a ministry and a man are suitable for a vicarage and placement in the SMP program after consultation with the President of the Synod and the faculties of the seminaries.

(a) In consultation with the President of the Synod, it shall develop all necessary policies to govern suitability of a ministry context for a specific ministry pastor and the suitability for a man entering the SMP program.

3.10.8.3 Prior to acceptance by the seminaries into the SMP program and initial placement as SMP vicars, the SMP Program Oversight Board shall approve the placement of all vicars enrolling in the SMP program.

(a) In order to be accepted into the SMP program and placed as a vicar, the applicant must have fulfilled at least ten years of significant service in a congregation of the LCMS and have been a member at the congregation in whose ministry he will serve for at least three years.

(b) Subject to the conditions above, decisions to declare ministry contexts and applicants for the SMP program suitable are at the sole discretion of the board.

(c) Once a ministry and applicant are declared suitable for the program, the seminary admissions offices may enroll the student and the Council of Presidents may assign the vicarage.

(d) If the board determines that the ministry and/or the applicant are not suited to the purposes of the SMP program, the man shall be directed to apply to the seminaries for admission in residential educational programs.

3.10.8.4 Prior to placing a specific ministry pastor in his first call, the SMP Program Oversight Board shall review the suitability of the call according to the purposes of the program.

3.10.8.5 Prior to issuing a call to a specific ministry pastor who is an inactive member, the SMP Program Oversight Board shall review the suitability of such a call according to the purposes of the program and the specific contextual training received by the specific ministry pastor.

(a) The board may specify additional training needed as preparation to serve in a new context.

and be it further

Resolved, That Bylaw 3.3.2.2 be amended as follows:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

3.3.2.2 The First Vice-President shall be a full-time executive and a nonvoting member of the Board of Directors.

(a) He shall be responsible to the President at all times for the performance of his duties.

(b) He shall serve as the chairman of the Colloquy Committee for the Pastoral Ministry.

(c) He shall serve as the chairman of the Colloquy Committee for Commissioned Ministry.

(d) He shall serve as the chairman of the Specific Ministry Pastor Program Oversight Board.

and be it finally

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 which has been approved by the SMP Program Oversight Board. 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. An example of this is regular preaching or service in a parish to which he has not been called, including during a pastoral vacancy.

(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.

(c) The ministers of religion—ordained records maintained by district presidents as well as the official membership roster of the Synod shall distinguish between specific ministry pastors and other pastors.

(d) The ministers of religion—ordained records maintained by district presidents as well as the official membership roster of the Synod shall include the ordained minister under whose supervision a specific ministry pastor serves.

(e) At any time a specific ministry pastor may continue his education through the seminaries. Upon completion of the requirements and certification by a seminary he shall be considered a minister of religion—ordained without the limitations above.

(1) His district president shall be responsible for informing the secretary of Synod of the change in roster status.

(2) His district president shall publish this change in status in an official periodical of the Synod.

(3) If the minister is currently an inactive member of the Synod, unless he has restricted or suspended status, he shall be eligible for placement through the Council of Presidents acting as the Board of Assignments or become a candidate.

(f) When a specific ministry pastor serves within a parish which is also served by an ordained minister who is not a specific ministry pastor, then that specific ministry pastor shall be supervised by a pastor of that parish.

(g) When a specific ministry pastor serves in a parish which is not served by an ordained minister who is not a specific ministry pastor then the specific ministry pastor shall be supervised by an ordained minister who resides within the visitation circuit containing the parish or within similar physical proximity.

(h) Excepting the district president, no ordained minister may supervise more than one specific ministry pastor, unless it is required by Bylaw 2.13.1 (f) above.

English District

Ov. 6-16

To Restore Original Intention of Specific Ministry Pastor Program

WHEREAS, The Specific Ministry Pastor (SMP) program was established by 2007 Resolution 5-01B; and

WHEREAS, Specific ministry pastors are a great blessing to the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and the entire kingdom of God; and

WHEREAS, Specific ministry pastors serve the Church under supervision because their theological education has been formed in part by and for a specific ministry context (Bylaw 2.13.1 [a]); and

WHEREAS, This supervision is essential for the ministry as well as the confidence of those served and the Church at large that the ministry is conducted in a manner consistent with the Holy Scriptures and the pastor's unconditional subscription to the Lutheran Confessions; and

WHEREAS, This supervision is not a perfunctory task but one requiring close attention to the needs of the specific ministry and the conduct of that ministry; and

WHEREAS, Any change in ministry context is by its nature inconsistent with the purpose of the SMP program and the contextual theological education of the specific ministry; and

WHEREAS, It is essential that a student beginning his theological education in a specific ministry context be known by the people he serves; and

WHEREAS, "Residential seminary education is the preferred option for the preparation of men for pastoral ministry" (2019 Res. 6-02); and

WHEREAS, Confidence in the SMP program will be raised by more clarity regarding the oversight and supervision of the program; therefore be it

Resolved, That an "SMP Program Oversight Committee" be established; and be it further

Resolved, That Bylaw 3.10.8 be inserted as follows:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

H. Specific Ministry Pastor Program Oversight Committee

3.10.8 The Specific Ministry Pastor (SMP) Program Oversight Committee shall be responsible for ensuring that the specific ministry vicars and pastors are placed in ministry contexts which are consistent with the intentions of the program. Specifically, it shall ensure that any placement is not one which could expect to receive a candidate according to the process outlined in Bylaw 2.5.

3.10.8.1 The SMP Program Oversight Committee shall consist of the First Vice-President of the Synod as chairman, the Secretary of the Synod, The Chief Mission Officer, a district president appointed by the Council of Presidents, and the Executive Director of Pastoral Education.

3.10.8.2 The SMP Program Oversight Committee shall establish and monitor the standards under which a ministry and a man are suitable for a vicarage and placement in the SMP program after consultation with the President of the Synod and the faculties of the seminaries.

(a) In consultation with the President of the Synod, it shall develop all necessary policies to govern suitability of a ministry context for a specific ministry pastor and the suitability for a man entering the SMP program.

3.10.8.2 Prior to acceptance by the seminaries into the SMP program and initial placement as SMP vicars, the SMP Program Oversight Committee shall approve the placement of all vicars enrolling in the SMP program.

(a) In order to be accepted into the SMP program and placed as a vicar, the applicant must have fulfilled at least ten years of significant service in a congregation of the LCMS and have been a member at the congregation in whose ministry he will serve for at least three years.

(b) Subject to the conditions above, decisions to declare ministry contexts and applicants for the SMP program suitable are at the sole discretion of the committee.

(c) Once a ministry and applicant are declared suitable for the program, the seminary admissions offices may enroll the student, and the Council of Presidents may assign the vicarage.

(d) If the committee determines that the ministry and/or the applicant are not suited to the purposes of the SMP program, the man shall be directed to apply to the seminaries for admission in residential educational programs.

3.10.8.3 Prior to placing a specific ministry pastor in his first call, the SMP Program Oversight Committee shall review the suitability of the call according to the purposes of the program.

3.10.8.4 Prior to issuing a call to a specific ministry pastor who is an inactive member, the SMP Program Oversight Committee shall review the suitability of such a call according to the purposes of the program and the specific contextual training received by the specific ministry pastor.

(a) The board may specify additional training needed as preparation to serve in a new context.

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 which has been approved by the SMP Program Oversight Committee. 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. Upon the termination of his call, a specific ministry pastor may apply for inactive status according to Bylaw 2.11.2 (d). If the pastor receives inactive status, he shall automatically be placed on restricted status for 12 months from the termination of his previous call. No application shall be necessary for the removal of such status. After 12 months, he may receive a regular call into a specific Word and Sacrament ministry context following the approval of the SMP Program Oversight Committee.

(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. An example of this is regular preaching or service in a parish to which he has not been called, including during a pastoral vacancy.

(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.

(c) The ministers of religion—ordained records maintained by district presidents as well as the official membership roster of the Synod shall distinguish between specific ministry pastors and other pastors.

(d) The ministers of religion—ordained records maintained by district presidents as well as the official membership roster of the Synod, shall include the ordained minister under whose supervision a specific ministry pastor serves.

(e) At any time, a specific ministry pastor may continue his education through the seminaries. Upon completion of the requirements and certification by a seminary, he shall be considered a minister of religion—ordained without the limitations above.

(1) His district president shall be responsible for informing the Secretary of Synod of the change in roster status.

(2) His district president shall publish this change in status in an official periodical of the Synod.

(3) If the minister is on restricted status solely because his previous call had terminated within the previous 12 months, this restriction shall be removed without the need for application.

(4) If the minister is currently an inactive member of the Synod, unless he has restricted or suspended status, he shall be eligible for placement through the Council of Presidents acting as the Board of Assignments or become a candidate.

(f) When a specific ministry pastor serves within a parish which is also served by an ordained minister who is not a specific ministry pastor, then that specific ministry pastor shall be supervised by a pastor of that parish.

(g) When a specific ministry pastor serves in a parish which is not served by an ordained minister who is not a specific ministry pastor, then the specific ministry pastor shall be supervised by an ordained minister who resides within the visitation circuit containing the parish or within similar physical proximity.

(h) Excepting the district president, no ordained minister may supervise more than one specific ministry pastor, unless such is required by Bylaw 2.13.1 (f) above.

St. John
Holbrook, NY

Ov. 6-17

To Call for Re-evaluation of Specific Ministry Pastor Program

WHEREAS, The Specific Ministry Pastor (SMP) program finds its ancestry in the Lay Minister program, the Licensed Lay Deacon (LLD) program, and the Distance Education Leading To Ordination (DELTO) program; and

WHEREAS, The 1989 Synod convention instituted the Lay Minister program in 1989 Resolution 3-05B, “To Adopt Recommendations of Lay Worker Study Committee Report as Amended,” resolving that “... when no pastor is available, and in the absence of any specific Scriptural directives to the contrary, congregations may arrange for the performance of [the distinctive functions of the pastoral office] by qualified individuals, lest God’s people be deprived of the opportunity for corporate worship and the celebration of the sacraments,” (1989 *Proceedings*, 112); and

WHEREAS, 2007 Res. 5-01B, “To Establish Specific Ministry Pastor Program,” established the DELTO program to “provide ordained pastoral service to congregations that cannot support a full-time pastor, ordained pastoral service to contexts where English is not spoken, ordained missionary personnel where finances and/or conditions do not permit calling a full-time missionary,” (2007 *Proceedings*, 136); and

WHEREAS, In short, the specific problem these original programs were intending to remedy was the need for Word and Sacrament

ministry in congregations or contexts that could not afford a full-time pastor such as small congregations; and

WHEREAS, The SMP program, as it is currently utilized, has far exceeded this original purpose (e.g., a large congregation, which has a pastor and can afford additional pastors, ordaining a SMP pastor, whose ministry is neither extraordinary, nor all that specific); therefore be it

Resolved, That in light of the variations of use of this program within our Synod and the original intent behind its creation, the Council of Presidents in consultation with Concordia Seminary and Concordia Theological Seminary re-evaluate the SMP program with the possibility of restricting those as men serving congregations of less than 300 baptized members.

Circuit 26 (Racine)
South Wisconsin District

Ov. 6-18

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 Synod, 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 SMPs; 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; and

WHEREAS, The Southeastern District in its 2022 convention voted to forward this overture to the 2023 Synod convention for consideration; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Synod expand its current support of the SMP program by increasing funding and expanding enrollment.

Southeastern District

Ov. 6-19

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 several circuits of the Southeastern District to benefit from the SMP program including 27 SMP pastors currently serving congregations and eight other students who are enrolled in the program; 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 2023 Synod convention expand current LCMS support of the SMP program by increasing funding and enrollment; and be it further

Resolved, That the LCMS improve and strengthen the academic requirements for the SMP program; and be it further

Resolved, That the LCMS also clarify the role that sole SMP pastors can undertake in their congregations while not overstepping the limits of the “supervising position” outlined in the SMP program; and be it further

Resolved, That the LCMS review the distinction between SMP and general pastors to consider other ways in which an SMP pastor with many years of service can be included as a general pastor; and be it finally

Resolved, That the LCMS continue 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 (Mecklenburg)
Southeastern District

Ov. 6-20

To Affirm Appropriate Standards for Specific Ministry Pastor (SMP) Program

WHEREAS, The 2019 Synod convention received a number of overtures (listed as references for 2019 Resolution 6-03A) that proposed changes to the Specific Ministry Pastor (SMP) program, including (1) whether to require study of biblical languages as part of the SMP program, and (2) whether ordination should occur at the end, rather than the midpoint, of the four-year program; and

WHEREAS, Currently, SMP students at both seminaries serve at least the first two years of the program as a vicar at the specific ministry site and then, once certified, are eligible to be called and ordained to serve as a supervised SMP during the remaining two years of the program, and to continue in that ministry after the completion of the SMP program; and

WHEREAS, The 2019 Synod convention chose not to adopt an amendment to 2019 Res. 6-03A that would have required that SMP students complete the entire four-year program prior to ordination; and

WHEREAS, The SMP is a non-degree certificate program, delivered primarily online, that does not require a bachelor’s degree for admission, and neither seminary requires SMP students to complete any biblical language coursework; in contrast, the Master of Divinity is a residential program that requires a bachelor’s degree for admission, requires students to study both Greek and Hebrew, and leads to an accredited academic degree; and

WHEREAS, Input was requested from the joint boards of regents of the seminaries by 2019 Res. 6-03A, which directed, “That the joint boards of regents prepare an overture to the Synod on the timing of vicarage and ordination for the SMP program for consideration in convention in 2022”; and

WHEREAS, 2013 Res. 5-04B resolved that “the authority over admission to and administration of the SMP program remains with the seminaries”; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Synod affirm that, as stated in 2016 Res. 6-02, “In keeping with God’s own mandate for filling the Office of the Holy Ministry, we confess 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’ (KW, German), as the Scripture says, ‘And how are they to preach unless they are sent?’ (Rom. 10:15)”;

Resolved, That the Synod affirm that, as stated in 2013 Res. 5-04B, “the SMP program be retained” and that “SMP pastors are properly called in accord with Article XIV of the Augsburg Confession;” and that district presidents should not approve specific ministry sites which could reasonably be expected to support a general pastor or sites where a minister of religion—commissioned could fulfill the duties; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod affirm that, as stated in 2007 Res. 5-01B for SMP students, “Ordination vows may be taken prior to the conclusion of a complete course of study provided that the ordained has received a preparation sufficient to preach and teach the Gospel rightly, administer the Sacraments correctly, and take his vows with integrity,” and “‘specific ministry pastor’ will be the designation for those educated for a specific ministry context through distance education”; and be it further

Resolved, That the current practice of not requiring Greek and Hebrew proficiency of SMP students, who in many cases are studying and serving bi-vocationally and who, in all cases, serve under the supervision of a pastor who has been trained with the biblical languages, be retained; and be it finally

Resolved, That the current timing for both vicarage and ordination be retained because the current timing is appropriate for the purposes of the SMP program.

Board of Regents
Concordia Seminary

Ov. 6-21

To Regularize Specific Ministry Pastoral Formation

WHEREAS, 2019 Resolution 6-03A resolved “That the joint boards of regents prepare an overture to the Synod on the timing of vicarage and ordination for the SMP program for consideration in convention in 2022” (*Proceedings*, 159); and

WHEREAS, Holy Scripture warns the church “Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands ...” (1 Tim. 5:22); and

WHEREAS, Our Lutheran Confessions state “... that nobody should preach publicly in the church or administer the sacraments unless he is regularly called” (Augsburg Confession XIV) and that ordination is an essential component of a regular, ordered call (Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope 67, 69–71); and

WHEREAS, Neither the Lutheran Confessions nor the historic practice of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) recognizes a “provisional ordination” to the Office of the Holy Ministry; and

WHEREAS, The current provision of ordination after two years with the proviso that the rostered worker complete two more years of required education has led to men being removed from the LCMS roster and created confusion about the pastoral office throughout the Synod; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Board of Regents of Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne memorialize the 2023 Synod convention to modify the provisions of the Specific Ministry Pastor (SMP) program as outlined in 2007 Res. 5-01B to require students enrolled in the SMP program after the 2027 academic year to complete all

academic requirements of the SMP program prior to ordination and placement on the Synod roster as ministers of religion—ordained; and be it further

Resolved, That students who have successfully completed the first six months of academic requirements be designated “SMP vicars” and may conduct Word and Sacrament services under the supervision of the local supervising pastor with the approval of the respective seminary program directors, the district president, and the sponsoring congregation; and be it further

Resolved, That SMP vicars may remain in that designation so long as they are enrolled in and actively pursuing completion of their program leading toward ordination; and be it further

Resolved, That if a student for any reason is no longer enrolled in the SMP program, the SMP vicar designation would be withdrawn until active enrollment in the SMP program is resumed; and be it finally

Resolved, That any delay or postponement of a student’s progress toward completion must be approved by the respective seminary’s program director in consultation with the president of the district where the student serves and resides.

Board of Regents
Concordia Theological Seminary

Ov. 6-22

To Increase Number of Students Preparing for General Ordination by Expanding Work of Cross-Cultural Ministry Center

WHEREAS, God has greatly blessed the congregations of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) and our global partner church bodies since 1839 with pastors educated and shaped by our wonderful seminaries; and

WHEREAS, The congregations of the Pacific Southwest District acknowledge that there is a growing need for well-trained, general ordination pastors who are able to receive divine calls from congregations without restriction, provide supervision for other rostered church workers, supervise vicars, hold elected or appointed office on the district or national Synod level such as a circuit visitor, and vote as delegates at the Synod convention of the church; and

WHEREAS, Pastors of the LCMS are retiring in larger numbers than ever before (an estimated one-third of our congregations will be without a pastor by 2035), and the number of men entering our seminaries is less than what is needed to replace these faithful servants and expand further mission and ministry; and

WHEREAS, Most students in today’s world of education expect that they will be afforded the opportunity to learn in a variety of educational methods which include both online as well as in-person instruction; and

WHEREAS, It has become increasingly difficult and prohibitive for prospective LCMS seminary students to leave homes, family, employment, and ministry context to move cross-country to enroll in a four-year residential Master of Divinity program; and

WHEREAS, The Cross-cultural Ministry Center (CMC) at Concordia University, Irvine, has, for 27 years, faithfully offered the only master’s degree in the LCMS with a hybrid model of online and in-person education leading to general ordination with certification through Concordia Seminary (CSL); and

WHEREAS, Enrollment in CMC is currently limited by: 1) A total enrollment of 29 students in the program; 2) where those students are geographically located (LCMS Region 5—Western US); and 3) A seemingly narrow definition of “culture crossing” that is required for enrollment; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Pacific Southwest District memorialize the 2023 Synod convention to direct CSL to remove the current limitations for the CMC (number of students, geographical locations of students, and criteria for culture-crossing ministries) to enable more men to prepare for the pastoral ministry.

Pacific Southwest District

Ov. 6-23

To Increase Number of Students Preparing for General Ordination through Distance Learning Opportunities and by Expanding Work of Cross-Cultural Ministry Center

WHEREAS, God has greatly blessed the congregations of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) and our global partner church bodies since 1839 with pastors educated and shaped by our wonderful seminaries; and

WHEREAS, The seminaries of the LCMS are currently offering, beyond the residential Master of Divinity program, a variety of routes for pastoral formation which take into consideration the needs, desires, and context of the students, including the Ethnic Immigrant Institute of Theology (EIIT), Center for Hispanic Studies (CHS), Specific Ministry Pastor (SMP) program, SMP to General Pastor Certification (typically an 8 year program), the Residential Alternative Route, and the Cross-Cultural Ministry Center at Concordia University, Irvine (CUI); and

WHEREAS, The congregations of the California-Nevada-Hawaii District acknowledge that there is a growing need for well trained, general ordination pastors who are able to receive Divine Calls from congregations without restriction, provide supervision for other rostered church workers, supervise vicars, hold elected or appointed office on the district or national Synod level such as a circuit visitor, and vote as delegates at the Synod conventions of the church; and

WHEREAS, Two thousand pastors of the LCMS are expected to retire in the next ten years and the Synod currently has 476 pastoral vacancies, and the entire graduating class of both seminaries was 88 in 2022 to replace these faithful servants and expand further mission and ministry; and

WHEREAS, Students in today’s world of education expect opportunities to learn in a variety of educational methods (pedagogy); and

WHEREAS, Academic training has taken advantage of technology to offer distance education and it has become a standard of delivering training in many contexts in our culture; and

WHEREAS, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis (CSL) and Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne (CTSF) provide only residential, in-person instruction for the general ordination route of the Master of Divinity; and

WHEREAS, It has become increasingly difficult and prohibitive for prospective LCMS seminary students to leave homes, family, employment, and ministry context to move cross-country to enroll in a four-year residential Master of Divinity program; and

WHEREAS, The Cross-Cultural Ministry Center at CUI has, for 27 years, offered the only master's-level degree in the LCMS with a hybrid model of online and in-person education leading to general ordination with certification through CSL; and

WHEREAS, Enrollment in the Cross-Cultural Ministry Center is currently limited by: 1) a cap on the number of students that can enroll in the program; 2) where those students are geographically located (typically LCMS Region 5–Western US); and 3) whether the student's ministry context is appropriately "culture crossing" enough to qualify for enrollment; and

WHEREAS, There is the opportunity for the Cross-Cultural Ministry Center and the districts of the Synod to work together to identify ministry settings and candidates and to provide for their training while they serve alongside ordained ministers; therefore be it

Resolved, That the California-Nevada-Hawaii District memorialize the 2023 Synod convention to enhance the Cross-Cultural Ministry Center's ability to meet the increasing demand for pastoral candidates by removing current restrictions on enrollment, geographic location, and ministry context; and be it further

Resolved, That the seminaries of the Synod be encouraged to study different education models of training general pastors; and be it finally

Resolved, That the seminaries and the Districts of the Synod consider how they can work together to increase the number of students preparing for general ministry through the existing distance study program opportunities (EIIT, SMP, CUI, CHS), hybrid models like Cross-Cultural Ministry Center, and residential programs including the residential Alternate Route to provide more general pastors for the mission of the Gospel.

California-Nevada-Hawaii District

Ov. 6-24

To Restore Both Biblical Languages to the Education of Future Pastors on All Pathways to the Office of the Holy Ministry

WHEREAS, One of the major qualifications for a man aspiring to the Office of the Holy 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 Epitome: Summary, Rule, and Norm 1); and

WHEREAS, To teach, a man in the Office of the Holy 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 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, In 2018, the English District in convention adopted Resolution 1-01, calling upon The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) to require instruction in both biblical Hebrew and *Koine* Greek as prerequisites for admission to the Office of the Holy

Ministry, that the district 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 Ministry, and that the district urge our seminaries to develop continuing education opportunities for all pastors to obtain and review such training; and

WHEREAS, In 2019, the Synod in convention adopted Res. 6-02, "To Promote Residential Seminary Education as the Preferred Option for the Preparation of Men for Pastoral Ministry," noting in the fourth whereas that, "'Handling the Word of Truth' (2 Tim. 2:15) rightly requires diligent study of God's Word and our Lutheran Confessions, with a foundational understanding of the original biblical languages . . .," and Res. 6-03A, "To Enhance the Specific Ministry Pastor (SMP) Program," including instruction in biblical languages in the second resolve, yet the residential alternate route programs to general pastor roster status require the study of Greek only, and the Center for Hispanic Studies and the Ethnic Immigrant Institute for Theology, also routes to general pastor roster status, require no study of either biblical language; therefore be it

Resolved, That the district once again call on the Synod to require instruction in both biblical Hebrew and *Koine* Greek as prerequisites in all programs leading to admission to the Office of the Holy Ministry; and be it further

Resolved, That the district call on the Synod to encourage our seminaries, with Synod funding, to include biblical Hebrew and *Koine* Greek in the curricula of all of the routes to the Office of the Holy Ministry; and be it finally

Resolved, That the district call on the Synod to encourage our seminaries, with Synod funding, to develop continuing education opportunities for all pastors to obtain and review such training.

English District

Ov. 6-25

To Create Third Pathway for General Pastoral Colloquy for Members of Synod Congregations Who Have Graduated with Accredited Masters of Divinity Degree from Non-Synod Seminary

WHEREAS, God's Word calls us to pray for additional workers in the harvest, "When [Jesus] saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, '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. 9:36–37); and

WHEREAS, Pastors of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) are retiring in larger numbers than ever before (an estimated 1/3 of our congregations will be without a pastor by 2035) and the number of men entering our seminaries is less than what is needed to replace these faithful servants and expand further mission and ministry; and

WHEREAS, The congregations of the Pacific Southwest District give thanks to God and celebrate the various alternate routes to ordination and pastoral ministry available in the LCMS, such as Specific Ministry Pastors (SMP), there is a growing need for general ordination pastors who are able to receive divine calls from congregations without restriction, provide supervision for other rostered church workers, supervise vicars, hold elected or appointed

office on the district or national Synod level such as a Circuit Visitor, and vote as delegates at the Synod conventions of the church; and

WHEREAS, There are pathways by which pastors from church bodies outside the LCMS who meet specific criteria may secure admission to the ministerium of the LCMS as general ordination pastors through colloquy. This admission may be provided through a “colloquy” (discussion, interview) with the Colloquy Committee for the Pastoral Ministry; and

WHEREAS, The *Policy Manual for Admission to the Pastoral Ministry of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod by Colloquy: Bylaws and Policies* states (Pastoral Colloquy, www.lcms.org/about/leadership/president/pastoral-colloquy, accessed Feb. 20, 2023):

To be eligible to apply for colloquy, applicants must fit into one of the categories listed below (the applicant will indicate under which category he is applying, but the Colloquy Committee for the Pastoral Ministry is responsible for the final determination of the category in each individual situation):

1. Active Pastors from Other Christian Church Bodies:

Men who, at the time of application are in good standing and in active service as pastors in another Christian Church body/denomination may apply for colloquy. Such applicants must be graduates of a program of study that leads to ordination, from an accredited institution, with no fewer than 60 semester hours (90 quarter hours) of required academic credit.

Such applicants must also have served at least three years in a recognized ministry of their church body. Applicants must supply suitable documentation of their active status and good standing in their current church body/denomination. Pastors of congregations that are not affiliated with a church body/denomination (are “non-denominational” or “independent”) also may apply, but they must supply suitable references and documentation of their authorization to perform pastoral ministry. In all cases the academic requirements will apply.

2. Men Who Have Prepared for Pastoral Ministry but, at the Time of Application, Are Not in Active Service as Pastors:

Such applicants must be graduates of a program of study that leads to ordination, from an accredited institution, with no fewer than 60 semester hours (90 quarter hours) of required academic credit. Applicants with prior pastoral service must provide the date (month and year) and the reason (e.g., retirement, resignation, dismissal) their active service ended. References and suitable documentation will be required. Such an applicant also must have been a communicant member in good standing in a congregation of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod for at least two years immediately prior to the time of application.

and

WHEREAS, Men who have been long-time members in good standing in an LCMS congregation, but are graduates of programs of study leading to ordination from an accredited institution outside the LCMS (meeting all the necessary academic credit requirements), are not afforded the same opportunity to apply for colloquy as are pastors from church bodies outside the LCMS, but must enroll in the Residential Alternate Route Program (requiring a two year residential academic program at one of our two seminaries

and a one year vicarage) before becoming a general ordination pastor in the LCMS; and

WHEREAS, Requiring a residential program for individuals who have completed an accredited degree is cumbersome and burdensome to many; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Pacific Southwest District memorialize the 2023 Synod convention to create a third pathway for general pastoral colloquy that provides the opportunity for members of LCMS congregations who have graduated from programs of study leading to ordination from outside the seminaries of the LCMS (satisfying all the necessary academic credit requirements) to become general ordination pastors in the LCMS by way of the colloquy process, without enrolling in the Residential Alternate Route Program.

Pacific Southwest District

Ov. 6-26

To Examine Additional Pathway(s) for General Pastoral Colloquy for Members of Synod Member Congregations Who Have Graduated with an Accredited Master of Divinity Degree from a Non-Synod Seminary

WHEREAS, God’s Word calls us to pray for additional workers in the harvest, “When he (Jesus) saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, ‘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. 9:36–37); and

WHEREAS, Two thousand pastors of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) are expected to retire in the next 10 years and the Synod currently has 476 pastoral vacancies, and the entire graduating class of both seminaries was 88 in 2022 to replace these faithful servants and expand further mission and ministry; and

WHEREAS, The congregations of the California-Nevada-Hawaii District give thanks to God and celebrate the various alternate routes to ordination and pastoral ministry available in the LCMS, such as Specific Ministry Pastors, there is a growing need for general ordination pastors who are able to receive Divine Calls from congregations without restriction, provide supervision for other rostered church workers, supervise vicars, hold elected or appointed office on the district or national Synod level such as a circuit visitor, and vote as delegates at the Synod conventions of the church; and

WHEREAS, There are pathways by which pastors, from church bodies outside the LCMS, who meet specific criteria may secure admission to the ministerium of the LCMS as general ordination pastors through colloquy. This admission may be provided through a “colloquy” (discussion, interview) with the Colloquy Committee for the Pastoral Ministry; and

WHEREAS, The *Policy Manual for Admission to the Pastoral Ministry of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod by Colloquy: Bylaws and Policies* states that applicants for colloquy must fit into one of two categories (the Colloquy Committee for the Pastoral Ministry is responsible for the final determination of the category in each individual situation):

- Active pastors from other Christian church bodies: Men who, at the time of application are in good standing and in

active service as pastors in another Christian church body/denomination may apply for colloquy.

- Men who have prepared for pastoral ministry but, at the time of application, are not in active service as pastors: Such applicants must be graduates of a program of study that leads to ordination, from an accredited institution, with no fewer than 60 semester hours (90 quarter hours) of required academic credit. Applicants with prior pastoral service must provide the date (month and year) and the reason (e.g., retirement, resignation, dismissal) their active service ended. Such an applicant also must have been a communicant member in good standing in a congregation of the LCMS for at least two years immediately prior to the time of application. This category does not apply to LCMS members who while members of LCMS congregations have obtained Master of Divinity degrees outside the LCMS.

and

WHEREAS, The colloquy committee has shown discernment over the years, recognizing that qualified men may not fit into the current policy manual categories; and

WHEREAS, Men who have been long-time members in good standing in congregations of the LCMS, but are graduates of programs of study leading to ordination from an accredited institution outside the LCMS (meeting all necessary academic credit requirements), are not afforded the same opportunity to apply for colloquy, but must enroll in the Residential Alternate Route (RAR) program (requiring a two year residential academic program at one of our two seminaries and a one year vicarage) before becoming a general ordination pastor in the LCMS; therefore be it

Resolved, That the California-Nevada-Hawaii District memorialize the 2023 Synod convention to examine additional routes for colloquy including online, hybrid, and routes for members in good standing in LCMS congregations who have graduated from programs of study leading to ordination from outside the seminaries of the LCMS (satisfying all the necessary academic credit requirements) to become general ordination pastors by way of the colloquy process, without enrolling in the RAR program.

California-Nevada-Hawaii District

Ov. 6-27

To Reaffirm Traditional Discretionary Authority of Colloquy Committee for the Pastoral Ministry

WHEREAS, The 2013 convention of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) adopted Resolution 5-14A, “To Conduct Study of Alternate Routes to Pastoral Ministry” (*Proceedings*, 155), which resolved:

That the Synod President appoint a task force ... to conduct a study of the non-Master of Divinity routes to the Pastoral Office, and that it report its findings and the recommendations regarding the appropriateness of each route, the optimal number of such routes, etc., to the Synod President by the end of 2015 for action at the 2016 Synod convention;

and

WHEREAS, The 2016 convention of the Synod adopted Res. 13-04B, “To Clarify Colloquy Requirements” (*Proceedings*, 239–40), which reads, in part:

The task force has concluded that all the several means by which the church recruits, trains, and certifies men to be placed into the pastoral office are both appropriate and needed for the life and mission of our Synod and ought be recognized as such by the Synod. The task force recommends that the Synod by resolution recognize that each of the means we have for the church to recruit and train men for pastoral office is appropriate and needed;

and

WHEREAS, The same 2016 Res. 13-04B went on to add a new provision to the Synod’s Bylaws, Bylaw 3.10.2.4, which reads:

The LCMS laymen and commissioned ministers who receive a Master of Divinity or equivalent degree from a non-LCMS seminary may seek certification for call and placement in the Synod by participating in the Residential Alternate Route program of one of the seminaries of the Synod, if otherwise eligible for admission to the seminary.

and

WHEREAS, The current Colloquy Committee for the Pastoral Ministry is interpreting the language “may seek certification for call and placement in the Synod by” of Bylaw 3.10.2.4 to mean “may seek certification for call and placement in the Synod *only* by,” such that Bylaw 3.10.2.4 does not merely provide a permissible route for such men to be certified but establishes the *only* route; and

WHEREAS, By this interpretation, the addition of Bylaw 3.10.2.4 would not recognize “that all the several means by which the church recruits, trains, and certifies men to be placed into the pastoral office are both appropriate and needed for the life and mission of our Synod” but rather would remove one of those means—namely, the means by which some LCMS laymen and commissioned ministers who receive a Master of Divinity or equivalent from a non-LCMS seminary might be certified by colloquy without necessarily required participation in a Residential Alternate Route (RAR) program; and

WHEREAS, Because the Constitution and Bylaws of the Synod did not previously require that all LCMS laymen and commissioned ministers who receive a Master of Divinity or equivalent from a non-LCMS seminary participate in the RAR program (a program that includes approximately two years of coursework), Bylaw 3.10.2.4, under this interpretation, has introduced a profoundly consequential change in practice—which change did not receive proportionate attention, study, or debate within the Synod before its adoption; and

WHEREAS, Historically the Colloquy Committee for the Pastoral Ministry has had authority to make case-by-case determinations regarding requirements appropriate for a given colloquy applicant, including authority to grant exemptions to the standard requirements in its own published policies, in order to account for unique situations; and

WHEREAS, Because, under this interpretation, this new requirement has been placed into the Synod’s Bylaws, the Committee no longer has authority to grant an exemption from this requirement, even in cases where an applicant’s situation clearly warrants an exemption and would have been granted one previously; and

WHEREAS, While residential study at one of the Synod’s seminaries is the preferred option for preparation for pastoral ministry, it is not an absolute necessity, as attested to by the number of ministers of religion—ordained of the Synod, past and present,

who did not complete any program of residential study, much less a two-year residential program, at either of the Synod's seminaries—a cohort of men that includes even past Synod presidents and past and present professors of the Synod's seminaries; and

WHEREAS, The Committee's published policies do not universally require participation in a RAR program for colloquy applicants who are active pastors from other Christian church bodies or who are from other Christian church bodies and have prepared for pastoral ministry but are not in active service as pastors—meaning that of those applicants for colloquy who hold the Master of Divinity or equivalent, the most burdensome requirements would under this interpretation of Bylaw 3.10.2.4 be imposed necessarily only on *those who have remained faithful members of the Synod throughout their seminary studies*; and

WHEREAS, The absence of such a universal requirement for the other categories of applicants just mentioned confirms that participation in a RAR program is, *even according to other current policies*, not considered universally necessary for adequate formation for pastoral ministry; and

WHEREAS, The Bylaws of the Synod state that “Decisions to declare applicants qualified for the pastoral ministry and to certify for placement shall be at the sole discretion of the committee” (Bylaw 3.10.2.2 [b]); in the absence of Bylaw 3.10.2.4 the committee could still choose to require applicants to participate in the RAR program when appropriate; and the men selected to serve on the committee have been selected on account of their demonstrated ability to carry out such discretion on behalf of the Synod; therefore be it

Resolved, That while the Synod continue “To Promote Residential Seminary Education as the Preferred Option for the Preparation of Men for Pastoral Ministry” (2019 Res. 6-02, *Proceedings*, 158–59), at the same time the Synod resume its historic recognition that proper formation for pastoral ministry can vary in certain circumstances, depending on the specific details of each applicant; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod therefore reaffirm clearly the traditional discretionary authority of the Colloquy Committee for the Pastoral Ministry to determine colloquy requirements as appropriate on a case-by-case basis, by removing the aforementioned Bylaw added by the 2016 convention, Bylaw 3.10.2.4, and renumbering Bylaw 3.10.2.5 to 3.10.2.4:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

B. Colloquy Committee for the Pastoral Ministry

...

~~3.10.2.4 The LCMS laymen and commissioned ministers who receive a Master of Divinity or equivalent degree from a non LCMS seminary may seek certification for call and placement in the Synod by participating in the Residential Alternate Route program of one of the seminaries of the Synod, if otherwise eligible for admission to the seminary.~~

3.10.2.4 All men desiring the ordained ministry who do not meet the eligibility requirements of the foregoing bylaws shall be directed to the seminaries for consideration in other programs.

Zion
Orange, Connecticut

Ov. 6-28

To Expand Roles and Leadership of All Existing Ordained Ministers of Word and Sacraments

WHEREAS, Article V of the Augsburg Confession acknowledges the Scriptural mandate and call for the institution of the office of the public ministry for the administration of the Word and Sacraments; and

WHEREAS, All those ordained by the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod into this ministry are equipped and trained by institutions approved and overseen by the Synod; and

WHEREAS, The need to fill vacant ministry roles has led the Synod to have forethought in planning and developing programs to support a well-equipped vocational presence where needed; and

WHEREAS, Ministerial needs are rapidly growing in scope in the areas of parish ministry as well as institutional leadership, necessitating greater ecclesiastical partnership and participation; and

WHEREAS, Synod-approved programs such as Specific Ministry Pastor (SMP) program and other alternate route vocations are established and supervised to fulfill Word and Sacrament vocational needs; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Synod, in partnership with the Commission on Theology and Church Relations and vocational training institutions, develop policies, including continuing education opportunities, supportive of greater roles and increased participation of all Word and Sacrament ministers, including, but not limited to service in the local congregation, leadership roles in the circuit, district, and the Synod; and be it further

Resolved, That this would include making the most use of the God-given gifts, talents, and abilities of our SMP program pastors; and be it finally

Resolved, That this would include an examination of the effectiveness of candidate status and a recommendation toward a policy change that employs the gifts of qualified and capable pastors otherwise unable to serve.

Southern District

Ov. 6-29

To Work to Resolve Issue of Qualified Ordained Candidates Remaining Without Calls

WHEREAS, The 65th Regular Convention of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod approved Resolution 3-10A, “To Appoint a Task Force to Study the Call Process for Returning Missionary and Military Chaplains and Other Rostered Church Workers without a Call” by a vote of 884 to 25; and

WHEREAS, The task force duly appointed in fulfillment of the above resolution stated in its report, “Short of changing Synod's bylaws that will accommodate the placement of candidate status ministers as they do for first call graduates, we must continue to follow the existing call processes” (2016 Report R60, *Workbook*, 232); and

WHEREAS, Despite the diligent efforts of district presidents and others to encourage congregations to call ordained ministers on candidate status, the current process has proven inadequate to remedy the issue of qualified candidates without calls; therefore be it

Resolved, That in response to the task force's report, Bylaw 2.11.2.2 be amended as follows:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

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.

...

(d) The Council of Presidents be authorized to place ordained ministers on candidate status at their request to placements among the congregations having asked for a candidate each spring under the following conditions:

(1) All new seminary graduates have received their first calls.

(2) The candidate's district president approves the candidate's request for a placement. Such a request in no way restricts a candidate from receiving a call in the regular manner. A candidate who has requested placement by the Council of Presidents shall immediately inform his district president upon reception of another call. He shall then be removed from consideration for a placement that year, excepting such circumstances as his district president certifies the call as non-viable for the candidate for a specified reason(s). If the reception of a call occurs between the placement decision by the Council of Presidents and the announcement of such a placement or for some other reason the candidate placed declines the call, the Council of Presidents shall at its next meeting place a candidate to that congregation if the congregation still desires. The announcement of the placements for ordained candidates shall take place at that year's second placement service after the announcement of calls issued to seminarians. If placements take place at the subsequent meeting they shall be announced then.

(3) If the candidate's district president rejects the candidate's request for placement, the candidate may appeal to the Colloquy Committee for the Pastoral Ministry to adjudicate, with both the candidate and his district president appearing before it according to rules to be established by the Colloquy Committee for the Pastoral Ministry and approved by the Council of Presidents.

(e) The Secretary of Synod and a member of the Council of Presidents selected by that body shall act as the directors of placement for all ordained candidates receiving placement by the Council of Presidents. These directors of placement shall both receive and examine from each candidate the same placement application paperwork used by the seminaries. They shall then either both or, according to a division mutually agreed upon by them, one of them shall interview each candidate and, if the candidate is married, the candidate's wife by phone or if convenient in person to better ascertain where a good placement for the candidate might be.

(f) The Council of Presidents in consultation with the seminary directors of placement and the Secretary of Synod shall at their first meeting following the passage of this resolution establish a deadline for ordained candidates to request placement by the Council of Presidents. This deadline may be changed by the Council of Presidents in consultation with the seminary directors of placement and the Secretary of Synod, but any such a change shall take effect only after the next spring placement occurs.

and be it further

Resolved, That a committee competent to address the specifics of placement of commissioned ministers be appointed to draw up similar bylaw changes, or that such an amendment be considered friendly to this resolution; and be it finally

Resolved, That the convention rise and sing a doxology in thanksgiving to God for the diligent work of district presidents to resolve the issue of qualified candidate status ministers within the limits available to them under the current bylaws.

Holy Trinity
Walnut, IL

Ov. 6-30

**To Consider Use of Deacons
in Word and Sacrament Ministry**

WHEREAS, There is an increasing number of congregations who are unable to support a pastor and his family on a full-time basis; and

WHEREAS, There is an increasing number of congregations with pastoral vacancies due to lack of ordained candidates; and

WHEREAS, Licensed Lay Deacons (LLD) served effectively in the Synod from 1989–2016 (with a short pause); and

WHEREAS, The licensed lay diaconate has resulted in deacons pursuing ordination; and

WHEREAS, The Synod has changed its position on the use of LLDs in Word and Sacrament ministry a number of times during these years; and

WHEREAS, The Synod has affirmed its position that Word and Sacrament ministry must be carried out under the office of the ministry; and

WHEREAS, The number of congregations facing shared ministry or potential closure continues to increase; and

WHEREAS, The scriptural and historical foundations of the diaconate being established through the laying on of hands is clear and continues in our partner churches today; and

WHEREAS, The present technological resources available to congregations make supervision of LLDs by general ministry pastor (i.e., not specific ministry pastor) more accessible and effective; and

WHEREAS, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod affirms the Word of God and the work of the Holy Spirit in calling people to faith in Jesus Christ and sustaining them in that faith through God's servants; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Northwest District in convention memorialize the Synod to form a task force to consider the establishment of a diaconate for Word and Sacrament ministry within its congregations; and be it further

Resolved, That members of the task force specifically include representatives from districts that have historically made extensive use of LLDs in Word and Sacrament ministry; and be it further

Resolved, That the task force examine the use of non-ordained servants in foreign partner churches; and be it further

Resolved, That any use of deacons in Word and Sacrament ministry must occur under the direct supervision of a general ministry pastor; and be it further

Resolved, That the appointed task force study the document, *Workers for His Harvest*, submitted by the Northwest District Board of Directors following the 2016 Synod convention; and be it finally

Resolved, That the Northwest District in convention submit this resolution to the 2023 Synod convention.

Northwest District

Ov. 6-31**To Reconsider Use of Licensed Lay Deacons in Word and Sacrament Ministry**

WHEREAS, There is an increasing number of congregations who are unable to support a pastor and his family on a full-time basis; and

WHEREAS, Licensed Lay Deacons (LLD) served effectively in the Synod from 1989–2016 (with a short pause); and

WHEREAS, The Synod has changed its position on the use of LLDs in Word and Sacrament ministry a number of times during these years:

- 1989: ministry of LLDs established at Synod convention (1989 Resolution 3-05B);
- 1995: ministry of LLDs taken back (1995 Res. 3-07A) by requiring LLDs to apply for colloquy;
- 2001: ministry of LLDs resurrected (2001 Res. 3-08B) and calls for Distance Education Leading To Ordination oversight committee;
- 2007: Specific Ministry Pastor program put into play;
- 2016: LLDs severely limited (2016 Res. 13-02A);

and

WHEREAS, The number of congregations facing shared ministry or potential closure continues to increase; and

WHEREAS, The present technological resources available to congregations make supervision of LLDs by ordained ministers more accessible and effective; and

WHEREAS, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod affirms the Word of God and the work of the Holy Spirit calls people to faith in Jesus Christ and sustains them in that faith; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Pacific Southwest District would memorialize the 2023 Synod convention to establish a task force to reconsider the use of LLDs in Word and Sacrament ministry within its congregations; and be it further

Resolved, That members of the task force specifically include districts that have historically made extensive use of LLDs in Word and Sacrament ministry; and be it further

Resolved, That any use of LLDs in Word and Sacrament ministry must occur under the direct supervision of an ordained minister; and be it finally

Resolved, That the appointed task force study the document, *Workers for His Harvest*, submitted by the Northwest District Board of Directors following the 2016 Synod convention.

Pacific Southwest District

Ov. 6-32**To Reconsider Use of Licensed Lay Deacons in Word and Sacrament Ministry**

WHEREAS, There is an increasing number of congregations who are unable to support a pastor and his family on a full time basis; and

WHEREAS, The seminaries of the Synod have been unable to satisfy the requests from the congregations of the Synod for seminary graduates to serve them as ordained pastors; and

WHEREAS, Licensed Lay Deacons (LLD) served effectively in the Synod from 1989–2016 (with a short pause); and

WHEREAS, The Synod has changed its position on the use of LLDs in Word and Sacrament ministry a number of times during these years; and

WHEREAS, The Synod has affirmed its position that Word and Sacrament ministry must be carried out under the Office of the Ministry; and

WHEREAS, The number of congregations facing shared ministry or potential closure continues to increase; and

WHEREAS, The present technological resources available to congregations make supervision of LLDs by ordained ministers more accessible and effective; and

WHEREAS, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod affirms the Word of God and the work of the Holy Spirit calls people to faith in Jesus Christ and sustains them in that faith; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Synod in convention establish a task force to reconsider the use of LLDs in Word and Sacrament ministry within its congregations; and be it further

Resolved, That members of the task force specifically include districts that have historically made extensive use of LLDs in Word and Sacrament ministry; and be it further

Resolved, That any use of LLDs in Word and Sacrament ministry must occur under the direct supervision of an ordained minister; and be it further

Resolved, That the appointed task force study the document, *Workers for His Harvest*, submitted by the Northwest District Board of Directors following the 2016 Synod convention; and be it finally

Resolved, That the California-Nevada-Hawaii District in convention submit this resolution to the 2023 Synod convention.

California-Nevada-Hawaii District

Ov. 6-33**To Re-establish Path to SMP Ordination for Those Serving as Deacons in the Synod**

WHEREAS, There is a clear biblical foundation for the role of deacon as a support to the apostolic ministry of Word and prayer (Acts 6:1–7); and

WHEREAS, Deacons are to have similar personal, spiritual, moral, and relational requirements as those who hold the office of *Episcopos* or “Overseer” (cf. 1 Tim. 3:1–7 and 1 Tim. 3:8–13); and

WHEREAS, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) already in 1989 recognized the need to develop intentional lay training programs in Synod districts to equip men as deacons to help meet the needs of existing congregations; and

WHEREAS, Since 1989 several districts have indeed developed formal and consistent training programs to properly equip laymen to serve as deacons as requested by their respective congregations and supervised by an ordained pastor on the roster of the Synod; and

WHEREAS, There is already in existence an alternate route to ordination for those who have been trained as rostered workers in the Synod, taking into account their previous training and faithful years of service; and

WHEREAS, 2016 Resolution 13-02A provided a process toward ordination through regional colloquy for licensed deacons to be rostered as Specific Ministry Pastors (SMP); therefore be it

Resolved, That such district lay training endeavors be celebrated, encouraged to continue, and expanded in an effort to develop more and more capable, well-trained, and qualified deacons to serve in unique ministry settings under the supervision of ordained pastors of the Synod, along with the faithful ecclesiastical oversight of the respective district president; and be it further

Resolved, That in accordance with 2016 Res.13-02A, the Synod restore the opportunity for deacons who have served for two or more years and are 50 years of age or older to seek ordination through colloquy, and thereby, roster status as a SMP, and as such will remain under the supervision of an ordained general pastor of the Synod.

Circuit 10 (Saginaw)
Michigan District

Ov. 6-34

To Prevent Admission, Reinstatement, or Colloquization of a Divorced Man into the Office of the Public Ministry Who Has Married Another Woman

WHEREAS, Christ our Lord says with regard to marriage, “What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate,” (Matt. 19:6; Mark 10:9; cf. Gen. 2:24); and

WHEREAS, A man is guilty of adultery if he marries another woman while his wife lives; however, if his wife dies he is free to marry (Rom. 7:2–3); and

WHEREAS, Men called into the Office of the Public Ministry are called to be above reproach. Specifically, with regard to marriage, this requires him to be the husband of no more than one wife (1 Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:6); and

WHEREAS, Divorce and remarriage disqualifies a man from the Office of the Public Ministry (1 Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:6); and

WHEREAS, The decision whether to accept or deny a request for reinstatement shall be at the sole discretion of the Council of Presidents (COP) (Bylaw 2.18.1); and

WHEREAS, The decision to declare applicants for colloquy to be qualified for the pastoral ministry and to certify such men for placement rests at the sole discretion of the Colloquy Committee for the Pastoral Ministry (CCPM; Bylaw 3.10.2.2 [b]); and

WHEREAS, In the action of reinstating or not reinstating a man into the office of the ministry, the COP does so as an officially established advisory body of the Synod (Bylaw 1.2.1 [g]); and

WHEREAS, By the actions of admitting, reinstating, or colloquizing, the COP and CCPM, respectively, state that a man is qualified for the Office of the Public Ministry in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. As this is an assignment given to them by the members of the Synod in convention (having been codified in the Bylaws), they do so as representatives of the members of the Synod (Bylaws 3.10.1.4; 2.18.1); therefore be it

Resolved, That the COP not admit a divorced man into the Office of the Public Ministry who has married another woman; and be it further

Resolved, That the COP not reinstate a divorced man into the Office of the Public Ministry who has married another woman; and be it further

Resolved, That the CCPM not colloquize a divorced man into the Office of the Public Ministry who has married another woman; and be it further

Resolved, That when a man is reinstated into the Office of the Public Ministry, the reason for reinstatement be made available upon request; and be it further

Resolved, That when a man is colloquized into the Office of the Public Ministry, the reason for colloquization be made available upon request; and be it finally

Resolved, That the Montana District in convention adopt this resolution and submit it to the Synod convention for adoption.

Montana District

Ov. 6-35

To Define “Domineering in Office”

WHEREAS, The Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR) in its 2003 report *Theology and Practice of “the Divine Call”* includes another category for removal of office: “domineering in office” (Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod CTCR, *Theology and Practice of “the Divine Call”* [adopted 2003], 24–25); and

WHEREAS, In the minority report, it is noted that the phrase “domineering in office” is ambiguous and is left open to interpretation; and

WHEREAS, In the procedures of congregations when amending, or rewriting a constitution, and/or bylaw, state: “The Constitution Committee looks to see that the wording is clear, concise, and unambiguous”; and

WHEREAS, In the 2019 guidelines for writing a constitution now include that phrase “domineering in office”; therefore be it

Resolved, That Concordia Seminary, Concordia Theological Seminary, and the CTCR provide a clear, concise, and unambiguous definition to the phrase “domineering in office”; and be it further

Resolved, That in the next Synod convention, deliberate that work and proposal by the seminaries and CTCR and furnish a more objective and clear understanding of that currently subjective and ambiguous phrase.

Redeemer
Deer River, MN

Ov. 6-36

To Require Knowledge of Scripture and Confessions from Candidates for Ordained Ministry

WHEREAS,

The Synod, and every member of the Synod, accepts without reservation:

1. The 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;
2. All the Symbolical Books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church as a true and unadulterated statement and exposition of the Word of God, to wit: the three Ecumenical Creeds (the Apostles’ Creed, the Nicene Creed, the Athanasian Creed), the Unaltered Augsburg Confession, the Apology of the Augsburg Confession, the Smalcald Articles, the Large Catechism of Luther,

the Small Catechism of Luther, and the Formula of Concord (Constitution Article II);

and

WHEREAS, One vows the same as part of the rite of ordination; and

WHEREAS, One cannot honestly take such vows without knowing the contents of the canonical Scriptures and the *Book of Concord*; and

WHEREAS, One cannot be considered “apt to teach” without a knowledge of what one is teaching; therefore be it

Resolved, That the following bylaw be added:

~~PRESENT~~/PROPOSED WORDING

2.7 Eligibility for Individual Membership

...

2.7.6 No one shall be considered qualified for membership as an ordained minister except upon his written affirmation to the pertinent faculty or colloquy committee that he has read the Holy Scriptures and the *Book of Concord* in their entirety.

Holy Trinity
Walnut, IL

Ov. 6-37

To Restore Binding Key to Rites of Ordination and Installation of a Pastor

WHEREAS, Jesus says in Matthew 16:19, “I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.” Again, He says in Matthew 18:18, “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.” And, in John 20:21–23, “Jesus said to them again, ‘Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.’ And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld’”; and

WHEREAS, The ordination and installation rites in *Liturgy and Agenda* (1921) ask only three questions of the man to be ordained and installed and do not go into detail about the duties of the Christ’s office that he will perform, but ask only if the man intends to discharge those duties faithfully in accordance with the Scriptures and the Symbols of the Evangelical Lutheran Church:

Dost thou hold and profess the doctrine of the Evangelical Lutheran Church as laid down in the Symbols contained in the Book of Concord of 1580, to wit, the three Ecumenical Creeds, the Augsburg Confession, the Apology of the same, the Smalcald Articles, the Small and Large Catechism, and the Formula of Concord, to be the true doctrine of the Holy Scriptures? *Answer*: I do so hold and profess.

Art thou determined to discharge faithfully the duties of the holy ministry [in this Congregation] in full accordance with the Holy Scriptures and the said Symbols of the Evangelical Lutheran Church? *Answer*: I have so determined by the grace of God.

The Ordination and Installation of a Minister:

Dost thou believe the canonical books of the Old and the New Testament to be the inspired Word of God and the only infallible rule of faith and practice? *Answer*: I do so believe.

Dost thou hold and profess the doctrine of the Evangelical Lutheran Church as laid down in the Symbols contained in the Book of Concord of 1580, especially the three Ecumenical Creeds, the Augsburg Confession, the Apology of the same, the Smalcald Articles, the Small and Large Catechism, and the Formula of Concord, to be the true doctrine of the Holy Scriptures? *Answer*: I do so hold and profess.

Art thou determined to discharge faithfully the duties of the holy ministry in this Congregation in full accordance with the Holy Scriptures and the said Symbols of the Evangelical Lutheran Church? *Answer*: I have so determined by the grace of God.

The Installation of a Pastor:

I ask thee, therefore, dear Brother, in the presence of God and this Congregation: Art thou willing and ready to take upon thee the charge of this Congregation, and to perform faithfully all the duties of thy ministry? *Answer*: I am.

Wilt thou preach and teach the pure Word of God in accordance with the Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, and adorn the doctrine of our Savior by a godly and holy life? *Answer*: Yes, with the help of God (*Liturgy and Agenda* [St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House (CPH), 1921], 375–85).

and

WHEREAS, The ordination and installation rites in *Lutheran Worship Agenda* (1984) specifically include the reading of John 20:21–23 and expand the number of questions asked of the man being ordained and installed to six while also going into more detail about the duties of Christ’s Office that he will fill, including explicitly mentioning the *loosing key* but omitting mention of the *binding key*:

Will you faithfully instruct both young and old in the chief articles of Christian doctrine; will you forgive the sins of those who repent, and will you promise never to divulge the sins confessed to you; will you minister faithfully to the sick and dying; will you demonstrate to the Church a constant and ready ministry, admonish the people to a lively confidence in Christ and holy living? *Response*: I will with the help of God (*Lutheran Worship Agenda* [St. Louis: CPH, 1984], 205–21).

and

WHEREAS, The ordination and installation rites in *Lutheran Service Book Agenda* (2006) add a seventh question for the man being ordained and installed while making only a minor change in the wording of other questions and also explicitly mentioning the *loosing key* but continuing to omit mention of the *binding key*:

Will you faithfully instruct both young and old in the chief articles of Christian doctrine, will you forgive the sins of those who repent, and will you promise never to divulge the sins confessed to you? Will you minister faithfully to the sick and dying, and will you demonstrate to the Church a constant and ready ministry centered in the Gospel? Will you admonish and encourage the people to a lively confidence in Christ and in holy living? *Response*: Yes, I will, with the help of God (*Lutheran Service Book Agenda* [St. Louis: CPH, 2006], 160–81).

and

WHEREAS, This omission of the binding key leaves out a significant portion of Christ’s command and necessary Christian doctrine and may improperly teach the full extent of the pastoral office’s responsibility; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Montana District in convention instruct the current and all future Montana District Presidents to include these words in the Rites of Ordination and Installation of Pastors: “and do you promise to retain the sins of those who are impenitent as long as they do not repent,” when he or his agent conducts these rites; and be it further

Resolved, That the district in convention request the Board for National Mission (BNM) of the Synod to insert the binding key language where applicable into the Rite of Ordination; and be it further

Resolved, That the BNM of the Synod deliver the revised rite to CPH for publication, or announce that they choose not to include the binding key in the Rite of Ordination and publicly provide the rationale for continuing to omit the binding key by November 30, 2024; and be it finally

Resolved, That the district in convention petition the Synod in convention to direct the BNM of the Synod to make this inclusion.

Montana District

Ov. 6-38

To Support and Participate in Post-Seminary Applied Learning and Support and “Preach the Word”

WHEREAS, The members of the Synod have agreed to and adopted the Synod’s Constitution and Bylaws that order our life together in service of the Gospel; and

WHEREAS, “A district is the Synod itself performing the functions of the Synod” (Bylaw 4.1.1.1), as set forth in:

- Bylaw 1.3.2, “The Synod divides itself into districts and authorizes its districts to create circuits. The criteria for the creation of districts and circuits are determined by the Synod in convention. Districts and circuits are included among the component parts of the Synod.”
- 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.”
- Bylaw 4.1.1, “The Synod 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.”
- Bylaw 4.1.1.1, “Resolutions of the Synod are binding upon the districts”; and

WHEREAS, District presidents shall represent the Synod in the district in which he was elected, as detailed in:

- LCMS Constitution Article XII 9 a, “[The district presidents] shall see to it that all resolutions of the Synod which concern the districts are made known to the districts and are carried out by them.”
- Bylaw 4.4.2 (a), “He shall cause the resolutions of the Synod to be implemented in the district, encouraging the congregations and schools to embrace the mission and ministry emphases adopted by the national convention for the triennium.”
- Bylaw 4.4.4 (b), “In his official visits [the district president] shall 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 5.2.3 (g), “[The circuit visitor] shall assist in the development and attainment of Synod-wide mission and ministry emphases”; and

WHEREAS, Congregations and members of Synod commit themselves to the Constitution and Bylaws of Synod in our life together as stated in:

- Bylaw 1.1.1, “Committed to a common confession and mission, congregations of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod join with one another in the Synod to support one another and to work together in carrying out their commonly adopted objectives.”
- Bylaw 1.3.1, “Individual Christians are joined together in a worshiping and serving community, the congregation. Congregations, the basic units of the Synod, have joined together to form the Synod and relate to one another through it.”
- 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, “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”; and

WHEREAS, Synod in convention has adopted resolutions that call for the encouragement, support, endorsement, and intentional, consistent usage of the following Synod initiatives and programs:

- Post-Seminary Applied Learning and Support (PALS). PALS helps pastors and their wives transition from seminary into the first three years of his call (lcms.org/how-we-serve/education/pastoral/post-seminary-applied-learning-and-support)—in LCMS conventions taking place in 1998, 2013, 2016 and 2019; and
- *Preach the Word* (PTW). PTW helps pastors work together to improve their preaching through video modules with accompanying resources and by interacting with seminary professors and fellow preachers (resources.lcms.org/preach-the-word/)—in LCMS conventions taking place in 2016 and 2019;

therefore be it

Resolved, That all districts and district presidents carry out and implement PALS and PTW in each respective district of Synod and not replace these programs and initiatives with district substitutes; and be it further

Resolved, That all the Synod congregations and church workers be encouraged to support and participate in PALS and PTW in our life together in service of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Pastoral Formation Committee

Ov. 6-39

To Recommend and Implement Rigorous Program of Study in Circuit Winkels

WHEREAS, While it is a blessed fruit of faith of all Christians to meditate upon God's Law day and night (Psalm 1:2), it is especially incumbent upon those who serve in the pastoral office to take up this charge, as those given by God to His Bride, the Church, to proclaim and teach His Word and exercise doctrinal oversight in the congregations committed to them; and

WHEREAS, All Christians, but especially the pastors of Christ's Church, should always be "prepared 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, Christ's promise of the Holy Spirit's work to "teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I [Jesus] have said to you" (John 14:26) is fulfilled in no other way than through His Word; and

WHEREAS, Paul—providing an example for all called servants of the Word—averred to the Ephesian elders, "for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God" (Acts 20:27); and

WHEREAS, "... In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead ..." (2 Tim. 4:1), Paul charged Timothy—and all pastors—to "preach the Word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching" (2 Tim. 4:2); and

WHEREAS, St. Gregory the Great in the foundational pastoral theology of the Western Church asserts: "It is certainly necessary that those who execute the office of preaching do not regress in their study of sacred writ" and "when a pastor is asked about a spiritual matter by a layperson, it would be disgraceful for him to have to learn the answer, when he should have been prepared to solve the question" (Gregory the Great, *The Book of Pastoral Rule* [Crestwood: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2007], 84–85); and

WHEREAS, At the 67th Regular Convention of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) on July 24, 2019, the Synod in convention passed Resolution 6-04 nearly unanimously and by voice vote, "To Support, Encourage, and Expect Continuing Education for all Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod Pastors" (2019 *Proceedings*, 160); and

WHEREAS, 2019 Res. 6-04 recognizes that the Synod's desire for enhancing continuing education amongst our pastors has been expressed continuously, though without real fruit, since 1998; and

WHEREAS, 2019 Res. 6-04 resolves that "the Synod fully support, encourage, and expect all LCMS pastors to be engaged in continuing education throughout their pastoral ministry from the time of their first call"; and

WHEREAS, 2019 Res. 6-04 furthermore resolves that "district presidents encourage, prompt, and expect all their pastors to be engaged in continuing education"; and

WHEREAS, 2019 Res. 6-04 furthermore resolves that "congregations be encouraged to support their pastors' continuing education financially and provide the time needed for continuing education"; and

WHEREAS, In the press of pastoral life, pastors often find it difficult to maintain a robust study of God's Word and the teachings of Scripture—along with the necessary tools for that study—and the use of the biblical languages; and

WHEREAS, In the heyday of the Synod conference, the pastoral winkels—traditional Synod conference winkel model—provided for:

- the regular, formal study of the Scriptures, led by pastors for pastors;
- the regular, formal study of the Lutheran Confessions and the Lutheran dogmatic tradition, led by pastors for pastors;
- the regular, formal study of illuminating historical issues and contemporary threats to the teaching of God's Word and our blessed Lutheran Confession, led by pastors for pastors;
- the regular, formal critique of the teaching and proclamation of the pastors in the winkel;

and

WHEREAS, Although the demise of the traditional Synod conference winkel model may be attributed to many factors, it has inevitably led to the backgrounding of sound doctrine in the pastoral mind and to a dearth of regularized and formal continuing education; and

WHEREAS, The contemporary, largely unstructured "9 to 12" model of the circuit winkel provides, anecdotally, little professional gain and is often bereft of serious study of God's Word and our blessed Lutheran Confession; and

WHEREAS, The *Circuit Visitors' Manual* of Synod notes that the two primary goals and purposes of the circuit winkel are "Spiritual Development and Enrichment" and "Continuing Education Experiences" (LCMS, *Circuit Visitors' Manual*, [Updated February 2020], 200–201); and

WHEREAS, Many circuit winkels have become increasingly irrelevant and ineffective in achieving those goals and purposes; and

WHEREAS, The observation in the *Circuit Visitors' Manual* that "the brethren respond with a higher sense of responsibility when a program is structured rather than casual" (202) is borne out by experience; and

WHEREAS, The *Circuit Visitors' Manual* recommends a 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. or 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. schedule to provide time for pastors to "present theological papers, do exegesis on a text, prepare sermon studies, and the like" (202); and

WHEREAS, Over against many other forms of continuing education, the traditional Synod conference winkel model proves cost-effective by not only involving pastors in the passive reception of the teaching of God's Word and our blessed Lutheran Confession on a monthly basis, but also in regularly providing pastors with the opportunity actively to mine the sources and in turn teach what they have learned, along with the ability to lay their gleanings before the brothers to verify whether these things be so (Acts 17:11); and

WHEREAS, Kansas District Circuit 6 pastors gathered in winkel have profitably and approvingly used the traditional Synod conference winkel model since September of 2019; and

WHEREAS, Kansas District pastors of Circuit 6 have been edified by the use of the traditional Synod conference winkel model, both in their personal study and in participating in and receiving the teaching and brotherly critique of their peers; and

WHEREAS, The traditional Synod conference winkel model generates *koinonia* around the only thing that in Christ's Church can create it—His Holy Word and our blessed Lutheran Confession—

but the absence of serious study of that Word and our Lutheran Confession leads to the rupture of *koinonia*; therefore be it

Resolved, That the district president provide to all circuit visitors and pastors of the district a template for the traditional Synod conference winkel model which provides, on a monthly basis, for significant and adequate time devoted to:

- the regular, formal study of God's Word in the original languages led by a circuit pastor;
- the regular, formal study of our blessed Lutheran Confession and/or the Lutheran dogmatic tradition led by a circuit pastor;
- the regular, formal study of an historical, pastoral-theological, or polemical topic led by a circuit pastor;
- regular, formal pastor-led critique of the winkel preacher's sermon;

and be it further

Resolved, That this convention and the district president provide strong encouragement to circuit visitors and pastors to adopt the traditional Synod conference winkel model described above as the regular practice in all circuits; and be it further

Resolved, That the pastors of the district be encouraged to embrace the traditional Synod conference winkel model and readily, gladly, and energetically to participate in it, for their own theological growth, to maintain the tools of theology in their midst, and to foster *koinonia* in their midst; and be it further

Resolved, That the congregations of the district encourage their pastors' robust participation in the study of God's Word and our blessed Lutheran Confession in their circuit winkels using the traditional Synod conference winkel model by providing them with adequate time—personal study and preparation and additional time spent with the circuit pastors in winkel—and sufficient resources—book purchases, travel to winkel; and be it further

Resolved, That the district president report back to this convention in 2026 on the implementation of the traditional Synod conference winkel model in the circuits of our district and its reception by and benefit to pastors and congregations alike; and be it finally

Resolved, That this convention memorialize the Synod at the 2023 convention to urge and encourage:

- the district presidents, the executive director of Pastoral Education, the circuit visitors, and pastors to adopt the traditional Synod conference winkel model in all circuits of the Synod;
- the pastors to embrace and readily, gladly, and energetically to use the model;
- the congregations to encourage their pastors' use of the model by providing them with adequate time and sufficient resources to do the same.

Kansas District

Ov. 6-40

To Increase Continuing Education Unit Opportunities throughout the Synod

WHEREAS, The Synod in convention in the year 2019, Resolution 6-04, encouraged the pastors of our Synod to attend continuing education courses every year; and

WHEREAS, Synod Bylaw 4.8.2 (d) requires pastors to attend two district-sponsored conferences each year; and

WHEREAS, Historically, many pastoral conferences, such as the Pittsburgh Pastoral Conference, were held throughout the Synod; and

WHEREAS, Many other conferences are held throughout the Synod each year; therefore be it

Resolved, That those pastors who attend both district conferences in a calendar year receive one Continuing Education Unit (CEU); and be it further

Resolved, That pastoral conferences be restored where they no longer function and that those who attend all meetings of these conferences during the school year receive one CEU; and be it further

Resolved, That other conferences held throughout the Synod be allowed to apply to the proper authorities, be they seminary or Synod office, to be able to grant one CEU to those who attend them; and be it finally

Resolved, That Synod investigate other ways to incentivize continuing education among her pastors and be mindful of a recently adopted document entitled, "Board for National Mission Policies for the Office of National Mission Under the Seven Mission Priorities of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod" (Adopted Oct. 2020).

English District

Ov. 6-41

To Encourage the Synod's Seminaries to Teach the *Handbook*

WHEREAS, The psalmist says, "Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity" (Psalm 133:1); and

WHEREAS, It is beneficial to that unity to avoid unnecessary offense; and

WHEREAS, Knowing and following the agreed upon procedures of our church body is very important to that end; therefore be it

Resolved, That the seminaries of the Synod be encouraged to teach students the *Handbook*.

Holy Trinity
Walnut, IL

Ov. 6-42

To Provide for Prior Approval for Seminary Adjunct Faculty

WHEREAS, Our seminaries currently utilize part-time faculty, sometimes referred to as adjunct, visiting, or guest instructors ("adjuncts"), to teach a significant portion of the credit hours offered for various programs; and

WHEREAS, Full-time faculty must receive prior approval from the Synod prior to being called or hired (Bylaw 3.10.5.7.3 [a]), whereas there is no such oversight for adjuncts; and

WHEREAS, Because a course taught by a part-time faculty member is no less a part of the seminary formative process than a course taught by a full-time faculty member, it is appropriate that the same level of oversight apply to persons regularly teaching as part-time faculty; therefore be it

Resolved, That Bylaw 3.10.5.7.3 be amended to read as follows:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

3.10.5.7.3 The board of regents on recommendation of the president of the seminary shall appoint all full-time members of the faculty and all instructors (other than instructors who are emeriti faculty of the seminary, or instructors who do not teach in more than one academic year in any three academic year period).

(a) All initial appointments to a seminary ~~faculties~~faculty, and all initial appointments of instructors (other than instructors who are emeriti faculty of the seminary, or instructors who do not teach in more than one academic year in any three academic year period), shall require prior approval by a majority vote of the President of the Synod (or his designee), the chairman of the Council of Presidents (or his designee), and the chairman of the Board for National Mission (or his designee), and shall include a thorough theological review. The three voters shall be ordained. The process shall be facilitated by the Executive Director of Pastoral Education.

(b) The terms and conditions of every appointment shall be stated in writing and be in the possession of both the seminary and the prospective faculty member or instructor before the appointment is consummated. Limitations of academic freedom because of the religious and confessional nature and aims of the seminary shall be stated in writing at the time of the appointment and conveyed to the person being appointed.

(c) Ordinarily candidates for full-time teaching positions and instructors shall be rostered members of the Synod. When laypersons are employed in full-time teaching positions or as instructors, they shall pledge to perform their duties in harmony with the Holy Scriptures as the inspired Word of God, the Lutheran Confessions, the Synod's doctrinal statements, and the policies of the Synod.

(d) The board of regents may decline to renew an initial-level appointment of a faculty member at its discretion and without formal statement of cause. If reappointment to the teaching staff is not contemplated, the board of regents shall so notify the faculty member in writing through the president of the seminary at least six months prior to the expiration of the current appointment. Notice of non-reappointment shall be made at least 6 months before the expiration of an initial-level appointment of a faculty member. Instructors shall serve only for the duration of their contract and shall not be subject to the foregoing provisions of this subsection.

(e) The board of regents shall maintain standards of good practice that provide uniform procedures for renewing faculty employment contracts.

(f) Each seminary shall state policies regarding faculty appointments, employment contracts, contract renewal, and contract termination for all employees.

(g) For purposes of this bylaw, an "instructor" means any person who is not a full-time member of the faculty of the seminary, who is engaged to teach one or more seminary courses as the instructor thereof.

St. Paul
Brookfield, IL

Ov. 6-43

To Provide Latitude to Seminary Boards of Regents in Faculty Matters

WHEREAS, Current Bylaw 3.10.5.7.2 circumscribes the ability of the seminaries' boards of regents to balance the composition of their faculty appointments, as it is understood to require an "up or out" standard whereby faculty members who have served six years

should either be granted continuing appointment status—tenure—or be terminated; and

WHEREAS, Current Bylaw 3.10.5.7.2 (d)(1) provides that persons who, prior to joining a seminary faculty, have taught at another educational institution of Synod for at least four years can petition the board of regents of the seminary for continuing appointment and receive credit for such prior service, meaning that the board must consider for tenure a person who may have taught at the seminary less than two years; and

WHEREAS, These requirements significantly limit the ability of the board of regents to determine the appropriate percentage of the seminary faculty that should hold tenured positions, insofar as all faculty who serve six years have the right to petition for tenure; and

WHEREAS, Such requirements do not exist for faculty of the Concordia University System schools; therefore be it

Resolved, That Bylaw 3.10.5.7.2 be amended as follows:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

3.10.5.7.2 Each theological seminary shall have established policies and procedures related to appointments. There shall be two levels of faculty appointments: (1) Initial level, where the appointment can be terminated with no formal requirement for a show of cause; (2) continuing level, where termination requires a formal show of cause.

...

(d) Standards or qualifications for moving a faculty member from initial-level appointment to continuing-level appointment shall be the following:

~~(1) The faculty member shall ordinarily have completed four to six years of creditable service (periods of leave are not included) as a member of the faculty of one or more educational institutions of the Synod, at least the last two years of which shall have been in the seminary currently served.~~

~~(2) The faculty members shall, as determined by their academic discipline, regularly continue to demonstrate scholarly achievement that may be institutionally funded as determined by the board of regents.~~

~~(3) The faculty member's reputation, character, concern for students, and ability to honor leaders shall present a good reflection on the seminary and the church.~~

~~(4) The faculty member's aptness to teach has been demonstrated by effective communication in the classroom.~~

~~(e) Steps in moving a faculty member from an initial level appointment to a continuing level appointment shall be the following:~~

~~(1) If the board of regents, on recommendation of the president of the seminary, determines that a faculty member meets the above requirements and is still at the initial level appointment, it shall either carry forward the procedure for promotion to a continuing level appointment or inform the faculty member of its decision not to do so, in which case the individual either may continue at the initial level appointment or be terminated. Any continuation of employment at the initial level appointment shall be on a year to year basis. Faculty employment during the initial level appointment period may be terminated without disclosure of cause. In cases in which the decision is made to terminate the individual's contract, the contract shall be extended for at least six months beyond the time at which notice is given. If the board of regents does not take up the question of promotion to a continuing level appointment at least nine months prior to the end of the sixth year of service, the faculty member may petition the board of regents to do so.~~

~~(2) After final review the board of regents may promote to a continuing level appointment status.~~

(fe) ...

(gf) ...

St. Paul
Brookfield, IL

Ov. 6-44

To Encourage Both Synod Seminaries to Continue Teaching Men for Faithful Service and to Petition the Synod to Dramatically Increase Funds Sent to Undesignated Seminary Operations

WHEREAS, Both of our LCMS seminaries continue to teach and prepare theological pastors who understand, believe, and teach the Lutheran Confession faithfully; and

WHEREAS, Our seminaries have increasingly been forced to secure their own funding for operations, necessitating the formation of separate development offices and staff (Current support for our seminaries from the Synodical budget amounts to 1 percent of the seminaries' budgets.); and

WHEREAS, One of the reasons for the formation of a Synod was the common and truthful belief that congregations could do together what none could do alone, including providing seminaries for the training of pastors in the Synod (1847 Constitution Article I 5: "Reasons for forming a Synodical Organization:...To make possible the promotion of common church projects [seminary, agenda, hymnal, Book of Concord, schoolbooks, Bible distribution, mission projects within and outside the Church]."); and

WHEREAS, The LCMS model of residential seminary education has served the Synod well since its founding and has become a model for seminaries around the world, with partner churches calling for aid and counsel in providing similar educational opportunities and standards for their students ("Today, the single most frequent and fervent request received by The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod from partner and non-partner Lutheran church bodies around the world is to share our theological treasures."; LCMS Web page for Global Seminary Initiative, www.lcms.org/makeagift/gsi, accessed February 16, 2023); and

WHEREAS, Congregations of the Synod and global missions will always need well-educated pastors and experienced and gifted faculties; and

WHEREAS, The cost of maintaining academic standards, recruiting and teaching future pastors, and operating residential seminaries continues to increase; and

WHEREAS, Many other church bodies in the United States are abandoning residential models and moving to online teaching and remote learning while requiring less overall education and training in the sacred texts and doctrine of the Christian Church to the detriment of pastoral formation; and

WHEREAS, Many in our Synod are also tempted to close a seminary and find cheaper and more expedient ways to solve the short-term clergy shortage that we face; and

WHEREAS, Such short-term thinking can provide some relief for the immediate crisis, but often has unintended consequences and creates greater struggles for the future; and

WHEREAS, Jesus has told us that the harvest is plentiful but the laborers are few, to pray to Him to send out laborers into His harvest field; and

WHEREAS, The Lord, in His mercy, has faithfully and generously provided these seminaries for the preaching and teaching of His Word, and they are a great blessing to confessional Lutheranism in the United States and throughout the world; therefore be it

Resolved, That letters of encouragement be sent to each seminary from the Montana District Board of Directors thanking them for their faithfulness to our Lutheran Confession and the formation of pastors, while also encouraging them to continue this work; and be it further

Resolved, That congregations of the Montana District be encouraged to consider generous contributions to the Joint Seminary Fund (LCMS Joint Seminary Fund, www.lcms.org/makeagift/joint-seminary-fund, accessed February 16, 2023), a fund that provides roughly one million dollars per fiscal year to each seminary (LCMS Communications, "'Reporter' supplement: Pastoral education—The truth of Christ is that important," *Reporter Online*, March 4, 2020, reporter.lcms.org/2020/reporter-supplement-pastoral-education-the-truth-of-christ-is-that-important) or directly to one or both of the seminaries; and be it further

Resolved, That the Montana District lead this effort by example, setting a goal of contributing 5 percent of unrestricted giving from district congregations to the Joint Seminary Fund beginning in fiscal year 2023; and be it further

Resolved, That the Montana District petition the Synod in convention to return to the earlier practice of our Synod when seminaries were mostly funded by unrestricted monies given to the Synod at large by districts, member congregations, and individuals. Specifically, that the Synod would adjust budget priorities as necessary so as to make our seminaries a priority by providing for 50 percent of each seminary's budget beginning in 2024, with a stated goal of increasing that percentage at each convention until both seminaries are fully funded by the Synod budget; and be it finally

Resolved, That this resolution be forwarded to The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod for adoption at its 2023 convention.

Montana District

Ov. 6-45

To Declare/Encourage Recognition of the Pastor's Wife and Honor Her in 2025

WHEREAS, Genesis 1 and 2 along with many Old Testament references (particularly in Prov. 31:1–31), in addition to Jesus blessing the wedding at Cana (John 2:1–11) as well as Hebrews 13:4, substantiate the God-given institution of marriage between a man and a woman; and

WHEREAS, Both Old and New Testaments clearly support the marriage of clergy (consider Ex. 6:23, 25; Lev. 21:1, 13; Luke 1:5; 1 Cor. 9:5; 1 Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:6); and

WHEREAS, The year 2025 will mark the 500th anniversary of Dr. Martin Luther's marriage to Katherine von Bora, June 13, 1525, helping to reestablish within the Reformation movement the sanctity of marriage among the Christian clergy in the West; and

WHEREAS, The wonderful blessing of marriage is underlined by both Martin and Katie, even establishing the role model of the pastor's family and the parsonage for generations to follow; therefore be it

Seying by standing and singing together the common doxology in English and Hmong.

Minnesota South District

Resolved, That the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) in its 2023 convention recognize the upcoming 500th anniversary of the Luther marriage in the year 2025; and be it further

Resolved, That the LCMS encourage its districts holding pastoral conferences and/or conventions in 2025 to help celebrate this anniversary milestone by recognizing wedding anniversaries of their pastors and their wives in whatever manner or custom might be deemed best; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod charge the Commission on Theology and Church Relations to issue an up-to-date booklet on the importance and vitality of the married clergy and their wives both theologically and pragmatically; and be it finally

Resolved, That in the long standing tradition of Reformation numismatics over six centuries commemorating milestone anniversaries such as the centennials of 1517, the Augsburg Confession, Luther's birth and many others, (i.e., a medal featuring Luther and Katherine as early as 1717 followed by other examples), the LCMS commission and sponsor a worthy commemorative medallion celebrating the 500th anniversary of the Luthers, and made available to districts, institutions, congregations, libraries, and individuals through Concordia Publishing House and Concordia Historical Institute, both of St. Louis, Mo. (as both agencies have on other past special occasions/anniversaries).

Immanuel
Clovis, NM

Ov. 6-46

To Thank the Lord of the Church for the Life and Ministry of Rev. Dr. Laokouxiang (Kou) Seying

WHEREAS, Holy Scripture proclaims, "Sing to the Lord, bless his name; tell of his salvation from day to day. Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous works among all the peoples!" (Psalm 96:2-3); and

WHEREAS, Rev. Dr. Laokouxiang (Kou) Seying was the first Hmong pastor ordained in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod; and

WHEREAS, Rev. Dr. Laokouxiang (Kou) Seying devoted his life and ministry to expanding cross-cultural and multiethnic ministry in the congregations, universities, seminaries, and global missions of our Synod; and

WHEREAS, Rev. Dr. Laokouxiang (Kou) Seying intentionally worked to raise up a new generation of church workers from the Hmong and Laotian community; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Minnesota South District give thanks to the Lord of the Church for the life and ministry of Rev. Dr. Laokouxiang (Kou) Seying and for his lasting contributions toward cross-cultural and multiethnic ministry and his living legacy of multiethnic pastors and other church workers in our church body; and be it further

Resolved, That the district in convention hereby memorializes the Synod to adopt this resolution at its 2023 convention; and be it finally

Resolved, That the district in convention thank the Lord of the Church for the life and ministry of Rev. Dr. Laokouxiang (Kou)

7. University Education

REPORTS

**R1, R2.2, R5.2, R14–R14.5,
R55, R61, R63–R64, R65**

OVERTURES

Ov. 7-01

To Provide Comment to 2019 Res. 7-03 Committee concerning CUS Governance Model Proposal

WHEREAS, The Synod in convention adopted 2019 Resolution 7-03 “To Direct a Collaborative Process to Propose a New Governance Plan” with respect to university education; and

WHEREAS, 2019 Res. 7-03 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;
- review the overall governance of CUS and the boards of regents of the CUS institutions;
- review the financial models for the institutions;”

and

WHEREAS, 2019 Res. 7-03 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

WHEREAS, At the February 19, 2021 meeting of the Board of Directors (BOD) the board approved dissemination of the initial governance model proposal, setting the stage for the “built-in, six-month period of comment ... by the Synod’s congregations, districts and circuits, the universities themselves, and others” (David Strand, “BOD advances new CUS governance model” *Reporter Online*, March 8, 2021, reporter.lcms.org/2021/bod-advances-new-cus-governance-model/); and

WHEREAS, In the report of the Texas District president to the 2021 Texas District Convention the president highlighted our woven “life together” with Concordia University Texas (CTX), while also referencing 2019 Res. 7-03 and the solicitation of feedback from constituents (Texas District 2021 Convention Workbook); and

WHEREAS, The Texas District president further reported that the CTX staff and Board of Regents (BOR) continues to be active in this feedback process; and

WHEREAS, The governance model proposal is a 27-page document of bylaw changes that have been and continue to be reviewed and discussed by the CTX president and BOR, as well as the presidents and BOR of other universities in the CUS; and

WHEREAS, This review has produced *affirmations*, among them being:

- An appreciation of the hard work that the Resolution 7-03 committee has done to review and evaluate the current structure and bylaws and create a new structure that serves the church and its needs.
- Giving to the boards of regents unfettered authority and responsibility in the business matters of the school (Section A, page 3, lines 15–16).
- Defining the universities as affiliates of the church rather than agencies (Section B).
- Providing an ecclesial accreditation process by which the schools demonstrate their commitment to being and remaining Lutheran (Section C).
- Creating structures and opportunities by which church worker programs at LCMS colleges and universities can be strengthened and sustained (Section D).

and

WHEREAS, This review has produced *concerns*, among them being:

- That while the new governance model allows greater autonomy to universities with respect to “left hand kingdom” responsibilities, the new bylaws are highly prescriptive and give large measures of control outside the local BOR, particularly the selection of members of the BOR. The concerns for both universities and Synod alike are diminishing any true legal separation and increasing any ascending liability rather than reducing it as intended.
- That the Commission for University Education (CUE) can not only and exclusively remove an BOR member for training deficiencies but can force a local BOR to remove an appointed BOR member for the same.
- That the prior approval panel, with a disproportionate amount of influence by the CUE, creates the list of presidential nominees from which the BOR may select their president versus the BOR creating and narrowing a list of nominees to be vetted and approved by the prior approval panel.
- That the Synod BOD, in consultation with the CUE, can specify, amend, or rescind the benefits of affiliation from time to time without the consultation of the local BOR, creating an unclear future for universities legally, financially, strategically, and missionally, and doing the same to students themselves.
- That the CUE’s decisions regarding accreditation with respect to Lutheran identity and mission outcome standards may not be appealed. Regional (secular) accreditors all have an appeal process in place that is outlined and known.

and

WHEREAS, This review has produced *questions*, among them being:

- How might the reality of today’s students and the schools as a mission field be more prominent and celebrated in the Preamble and throughout?
- It appears that the workload of the CUE is even greater than the CUS. How will that work be resourced? What will be any added costs to the church and/or schools over time? What is meant by “direct costs” in terms of accreditation visits and board training?

- What happens when the CUS is dissolved? What entities would retain any remaining assets or liabilities? How will all of the endowment funds currently overseen by the CUS be managed? As members of the CUS, would the schools now be liable for any debt that might remain? What are the legal implications of dissolving the CUS?
- What is the difference between being accredited and affiliated? Can a university be affiliated and not accredited?
- While an institution is on probation for up to five years, it can no longer certify graduates for placement on the Synod roster. How do those students become certified for placement? Additionally, while a church work program is on probation for up to three years, would students within the program need to transfer to a Concordia with an accredited program?

and

WHEREAS, The Governance and Administration Floor Committee for the 2021 Texas District Convention made an initial assessment of the CUS Governance Model Proposal to foster feedback and comment to the 2019 Res. 7-03 committee as requested of districts; and

WHEREAS, Previous complex proposals involving many changes to Synod bylaws have benefitted from the information-sharing and consensus-building that occurs when those proposals are widely discussed across the Synod (the proposals of the Blue Ribbon Task Force on Synod Structure and Governance [BRTFSSG] discussed in regional conferences prior to being acted upon at the 2010 Synod convention being a recent example); therefore be it

Resolved, That the Texas District in convention submit the previously stated affirmations, concerns, and questions to the 2019 Resolution 7-03 Committee; and be it further

Resolved, That the Texas District recommends to the Resolution 7-03 Committee that a process for Synod-wide introduction to, discussion of, and consensus concerning these significant changes be designed and implemented by the Synod BOD, with the concurrence of the Council of Presidents, to be completed no later than six months prior to the convention of the Synod during which these proposals will be considered, using the regional conferences held by the BRTFSSG as a model; and be it further

Resolved, That this resolution should also constitute an overture from the Texas District in convention to the 2023 Synod Convention to further study and/or amend the 2019 Res. 7-03 CUS Governance Model Proposal; and be it finally

Resolved, That congregations and circuits also be encouraged to submit comments to the Res. 7-03 Committee.

Texas District

Ov. 7-02

To Provide Comment to 2019 Res. 7-03 Committee concerning CUS Governance Model Proposal

WHEREAS, The 67th Regular Convention of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) adopted 2019 Resolution 7-03, “To Direct a Collaborative Process to Propose a New Governance Plan with respect to University Education” (2019 *Proceedings*, 171–72); and

WHEREAS, 2019 Res. 7-03 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 Concordia University System (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;
- review the overall governance of CUS and the boards of regents of the CUS institutions;
- review the financial models for the institutions;

and

WHEREAS, 2019 Res. 7-03 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

WHEREAS, At the Feb. 19, 2021, meeting of the LCMS Board of Directors (BOD) the Board approved dissemination of the initial governance model proposal, “setting the stage” for the “built-in six-month period of comment by the Synod’s congregations, districts and circuits, the universities themselves, and others” (*Reporter*, March 8, 2021); and

WHEREAS, The Texas District in convention adopted Res. 02-07-21a, “To Provide Comment to the LCMS 2019 Res. 7-03 Committee Concerning the CUS Governance Model Proposal”; and

WHEREAS, Res. 02-07-21a directed the Texas District Board of Directors to “provide additional comments to the LCMS 2019 Res. 7-03 Committee as necessary, with any additional comments to be submitted as an overture to the 2023 LCMS convention to further study and/or amend the LCMS 2019 Res. 7-03 CUS Governance Model Proposal”; and

WHEREAS, The Texas District Board of Directors has further reviewed the proposal, the Lutheran Identity and Mission Outcome Standards (LIMOS), the affirmations, concerns, and questions from Texas District Res. 02-07-21a, and feedback from the Concordia University presidents and boards of regents; and

WHEREAS, The Texas District Board of Directors has additional concerns about the level of control exercised by the Synod in university governance, the complexity of these bylaw changes, the ambiguity and vagueness prevalent in the bylaw changes, the potentially onerous burden on both universities and the Commission on University Education from the LIMOS, and unresolved financial questions; and

WHEREAS, To date there have been no other resolutions set forth on this subject by any other district conventions, giving anecdotal evidence that there has not been synodwide feedback to the LCMS 2019 Res. 7-03 Committee as sought; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Texas District Board of Directors affirms the affirmations, concerns, and questions outlined in Res. 02-07-21a adopted by the Texas District convention; and be it further

Resolved, That the Texas District Board of Directors requests the LCMS 2019 Res. 7-03 Committee withhold any resolutions to the 2023 Synod convention to implement the LCMS 2019 Res. 7-03

CUS Governance Model Proposal until there is extensive synodwide dialogue and feedback given; and be it further

Resolved, That the Texas District Board of Directors request the LCMS 2019 Res. 7-03 Committee publish through the appropriate Synod publications and the LCMS website the feedback they have formally received and the committee's disposition of those recommendations, questions, and concerns, and that all of this information would be made available to all delegates to the 2023 Synod convention through the convention workbook; and be it further

Resolved, That the Texas District Board of Directors recommends to the Res. 7-03 Committee that a process for synodwide introduction to, discussion of, and consensus concerning these significant changes be designed and implemented by the Synod Board of Directors, with the concurrence of the Council of Presidents, to be completed no later than six months prior to the convention of the Synod during which these proposals will be considered, using the regional conferences held by the Blue Ribbon Task Force on Synod Structure and Governance as a model; and be it finally

Resolved, That Texas District Board of Directors memorialize the Synod in convention in 2023 with these requests and recommendations to further study and amend the LCMS 2019 Res. 7-03 CUS Governance Model Proposal.

Board of Directors
Texas District

Ov. 7-03

To Provide Comment to 2019 Res. 7-03 Committee concerning CUS Governance Model Proposal

WHEREAS, The Synod in convention adopted 2019 Resolution 7-03, "To Direct a Collaborative Process to Propose a New Governance Plan" (*Proceedings*, 171) with respect to university education; and

WHEREAS, 2019 Res. 7-03 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 Concordia University System (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;
- review the overall governance of CUS and the boards of regents of the CUS institutions; and
- review the financial models for the institutions;

and

WHEREAS, 2019 Res. 7-03 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

WHEREAS, At the Feb. 19, 2021, meeting of the Synod Board of Directors (BOD) the board approved dissemination of the initial governance model proposal, "setting the stage" for the "built-in six month period of comment by the Synod's congregations, districts

and circuits, the universities themselves, and others" (*Reporter*, March 8, 2021); and

WHEREAS, The Florida-Georgia District in convention has concerns about the issues of control in CUS governance, the complexity of these bylaw changes, the ambiguity and vagueness prevalent in the bylaw changes, the potentially onerous burden on both universities and the Commission on University Education from the Lutheran Identity and Mission Outcome Standards, and unresolved financial questions; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Synod in convention, for the sake of the mission, health, and long-term viability of the remaining CUS institutions, request the 2019 Res. 7-03 committee withhold any resolutions to the 2023 Synod convention to implement the 2019 Res. 7-03 CUS governance model proposal until there is extensive synodwide dialogue and feedback given; and be it further

Resolved, That the 2019 Res. 7-03 committee provide to the Synod specific guidance and information regarding limits of ascending and descending liabilities through the appropriate Synod publications and the Synod website and that all of this information would be made available to all delegates to the 2026 Synod convention through the convention *Workbook*; and be it further

Resolved, That the 2019 Res. 7-03 committee publish through the appropriate Synod publications and the Synod website the feedback they have formally received and the committee's disposition of those recommendations, questions, and concerns, and that all of this information would be made available to all delegates to the 2026 Synod convention through the convention *Workbook*; and be it finally

Resolved, That the Res. 7-03 committee process for synodwide introduction to, discussion of, and consensus concerning these significant changes be designed and implemented by the BOD, with the concurrence of the Council of Presidents, to be completed no later than six months prior to the Synod convention during which these proposals will be considered, using the regional conferences held by the Blue Ribbon Task Force on Synod Structure and Governance as a model.

Florida-Georgia District

Ov. 7-04

To Delay Process of Restructuring Concordia University System

WHEREAS, Three of our 10 beloved schools of higher education have closed in the last several years, making clear the need for a careful study and reporting to the Synod as a whole before taking any significant steps at restructuring the Concordia University System (CUS); and

WHEREAS, The causes and implications of the closures of Concordia College Alabama; Concordia University, Portland; and Concordia College—New York have neither been fully studied nor shared with the owners (members of Synod: congregations and called workers) prior to the proposed restructuring; and

WHEREAS, The 2019 Synod convention called for a task force to study and propose a reorganization of the CUS before the closing of Concordia University—New York and Concordia University, Portland; and

WHEREAS, The task force was organized and such a reorganization is under consideration; and

WHEREAS, This reorganization is built around the theology of the two kingdoms that distinguishes between the practical matters of an institution (kingdom of the left hand) and the theological principles that form its foundation (kingdom of the right hand); and

WHEREAS, One of the difficulties in the administration of a university is the different roles and responsibilities in the kingdoms of the right hand (leaders of the Synod) and the left hand (presidents and boards of regents), which would need to be clarified prior to reorganization; and

WHEREAS, This reorganization provides a significant voice of influence for leaders in the Synod over the institutions with virtually no accountability for the impact of that influence; and

WHEREAS, This reorganization is dependent upon an interpretation of the First Amendment of the United States Constitution that provides the leadership of the Synod with a significant protection from financial liability that is still under consideration by the courts; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Northwest District memorialize the 2023 Synod convention to delay action on the recommendations of the task force; and be it further

Resolved, That this task force would fully study and broadly report on the closures of the three Concordias in the past five years to the Synod and all its members before developing a proposal for the reorganization of the Concordia University System.

Northwest District

Ov. 7-05

To Delay Consideration of Concordia University System Restructuring

WHEREAS, The 2019 Synod convention called for a task force to study and propose a reorganization of the Concordia University System; and

WHEREAS, The task force was organized and has proposed such a reorganization; and

WHEREAS, This proposal is built around the theology of the two kingdoms that distinguishes between the practical matters of an institution (kingdom of the left hand) and the theological principles that form its foundation (kingdom of the right hand); and

WHEREAS, This proposal allows the leaders in the Synod as those responsible for the right hand kingdom to exert influence that could hamper the leaders of the universities (their presidents and boards of regents) in their ability to manage their kingdom of the left hand responsibilities; and

WHEREAS, The proposal provides a significant voice of influence for leaders in the Synod over the institutions with limited accountability for the impact of that influence; and

WHEREAS, This proposal is dependent upon an interpretation of the First Amendment of the United States Constitution that provides the leadership of the Synod with a significant protection from financial liability that is still under consideration by the courts; therefore be it

Resolved, That the California-Nevada-Hawaii District memorialize to the 2023 Synod convention to delay action on the recommendations of the task force; and be it further

Resolved, That a new task force be formed composed of at least a district president from a district of a closed Concordia and a district president with an operating Concordia University and at

least multiple representatives chosen by current Concordia University presidents; and be it finally

Resolved, That this new task force study and report on the closures of the three universities in the past five years before forming a new proposal.

California-Nevada-Hawaii District

Ov. 7-06

To Suspend Recommendations of 2019 Res. 7-03 Committee

WHEREAS, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) in convention adopted 2019 Resolution 7-03, “To Direct a Collaborative Process to Propose a New Governance Plan,” with respect to the Concordia University System (CUS); and

WHEREAS, 2019 Res. 7-03 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;
- review the overall governance of CUS and the boards of regents of the CUS institutions;
- review the financial models for the institutions;

and

WHEREAS, 2019 Res. 7-03 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” (*Proceedings*, 172); and

WHEREAS, At the Feb. 19, 2021, meeting of the LCMS Board of Directors (BOD), the board approved dissemination of the initial governance model proposal, “setting the stage” for the “built-in six-month period of comment ... by the Synod’s congregations, districts and circuits, the universities themselves, and others” (David Strand, “BOD advances new CUS governance model,” *Reporter Online*, March 8, 2021, reporter.lcms.org/2021/bod-advances-new-cus-governance-model/); and

WHEREAS, The governance model proposal is a 27-page document of bylaw changes that have been and continue to be reviewed by the presidents and boards of regents of the universities in the Concordia University System (CUS); and

WHEREAS, This review has produced observations, among them being:

- Giving to the boards of regents unfettered authority and responsibility in the business matters of the school (Section A, page 3, lines 15–16).
- Defining the universities as affiliates of the church rather than agencies (Section B).
- Providing an ecclesial accreditation process by which the schools demonstrate their commitment to being and remaining Lutheran (Section C).

- Creating structures and opportunities by which church worker programs at LCMS colleges and universities can be strengthened and sustained (Section D).

and

WHEREAS, This review has produced concerns, among them being:

- That while the new governance model allows greater autonomy to universities with respect to “left-hand kingdom” responsibilities, the new bylaws are highly prescriptive and give large measures of control outside the local board of regents, particularly the selection of members of the board of regents.
- The concern is that the Commission for University Education (CUE) proposal seems to diminish the legal separation between the national Synod and the universities, which would therefore increase the liability risk to the Synod.
- That the CUE can not only and exclusively remove an elected BOR member for training deficiencies but can force a local board of regents to remove an appointed board of regents member for the same.
- That the prior approval panel, with a disproportionate amount of influence by the CUE, creates the list of presidential nominees from which the board of regents may select their president vs. the board of regents creating and narrowing a list of nominees to be vetted and approved by the prior approval panel.
- That the LCMS BOD, in consultation with the CUE, can specify, amend, or rescind the benefits of affiliation from time to time without the consultation of the local board of regents, creating an unclear future for universities legally, financially, strategically, and missionally, and doing the same to students themselves.
- That the CUE’s decisions regarding accreditation with respect to Lutheran identity and mission outcome standards may not be appealed. Regional (secular) accreditors all have an appeal process in place that is outlined and known.

and

WHEREAS, This review has produced questions, among them being:

- How might the reality of today’s students and the schools as a mission field be more prominent and celebrated in the Preamble and throughout?
- It appears that the workload of the CUE is even greater than the CUS. How will that work be resourced? What will be any added costs to the church and/or schools over time? What is meant by “direct costs” in terms of accreditation visits and board training?
- What happens when the CUS is dissolved? What entities would retain any remaining assets or liabilities? How will all the endowment funds currently overseen by the CUS be managed? As members of the CUS, would the schools now be liable for any debt that might remain? What are the legal implications of dissolving the CUS?
- What is the difference between being accredited and affiliated? Can a university be affiliated and not accredited?

- While an institution is on probation for up to five years, it can no longer certify graduates for placement on the LCMS roster. How do those students become certified for placement? Additionally, while a church work program is on probation for up to three years, would students within the program need to transfer to a Concordia with an accredited program?

and

WHEREAS, The Michigan District Board of Directors responded to the LCMS 2019 Res. 7-03 Committee request for comments in a letter dated Aug. 17, 2021, expressing their concern over proposed changes to the governance model for our Concordias; and

WHEREAS, The current and former chief executives of the Concordias publicly shared at the Council of Presidents meeting, Wednesday, Nov. 17, 2021, their concerns over the proposed changes; and recommended rescinding the 2019 Res. 7-03 recommendations; and

WHEREAS, The Michigan District board has examined these concerns and concurs with the executives of the Concordias; and

WHEREAS, These concerns need to be addressed in an open and transparent manner throughout Synod before any changes to our governance model are made; therefore be it

Resolved, That until these concerns are addressed, the implementation of the recommendations of the 2019 Res. 7-03 Committee should be suspended.

Michigan District

Ov. 7-07

To Appoint Task Force to Refocus Concordia University System for Education of Professional Church Workers Consistent with Lutheran Confessions

WHEREAS, The Concordia University System (CUS) is comprised of six universities in the United States which are affiliated with The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS); and

WHEREAS, The initial purpose of these universities was to prepare men and women for full-time service in the church; and

WHEREAS, The majority of students at CUS institutions are not preparing for full-time church work; and

WHEREAS, From 2004 to 2018 enrollment for pre-seminary (undergraduate) students declined by 59 percent; for Lutheran school teachers, by 61 percent; and at the seminaries, by 55 percent (*Set Apart to Serve* research). Furthermore, 44 percent of active ordained men are over 55 years of age; and

WHEREAS, A number of the faculty at CUS institutions are not rostered members of Synod nor members of LCMS congregations; and

WHEREAS, The encroachment of false teachings from the secular culture onto CUS campuses threatens the confession of our faith; and

WHEREAS, A refocused CUS would enhance the ability of the Synod to attend to the integrity of our confession; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Montana District in convention memorialize the Synod at its 2023 convention to direct the President of the Synod to appoint a blue-ribbon task force to perform the following:

- Establish a plan for restoring and retaining an LCMS identity on CUS campuses.
- Prioritize the training of rostered church workers of Synod with our confession of faith.
- Develop a plan to increase the percentage of LCMS rostered faculty, with a goal of 100%.
- Prepare a report on these tasks for the 2026 Synod convention.

Montana District

Ov. 7-08

To Reorganize the Synod's Higher Education (not including Seminaries)

Rationale

Soon after The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) was organized in 1847, it received two institutions of higher education: Wilhelm Loehe's Seminary in Fort Wayne, Ind. and the gymnasium and seminary founded by the Saxons in Perry County, Mo. As time went by, the Synod either opened or acquired additional higher education institutions whose primary, if not sole, purpose was to teach future church workers. For almost its entire history, the Synod has operated with the tacit understanding that no one else can train its rostered church workers as well as it can.

A task force reporting to the 2023 Synod convention says that after 176 years, major change is needed. It holds that Lutheran identity will be enhanced at institutions that provide undergraduate church worker education if the Synod places them into a new and untried category: "affiliates" of the Synod. The task force is basically telling the Synod that church worker training will be improved at these schools if the Synod does not own and operate them.

The task force's proposal is remarkable and unprecedented. It proposes to draw institutions closer to the Synod in mind and heart by organizationally de-coupling them from the Synod. Delegates to the 2023 Synod convention might do well to note this point and ponder it.

A feature essential to the task force's proposal is the Synod's future monitoring of the "affiliate" schools by regularly posing questions to them. Yet this reliance on questions can itself be questioned. Why are the contemplated questions not being asked at present? If these questions are being asked at present, why has the Synod's higher education reached such a state that the drastic step is proposed of taking institutions that are currently agencies of the Synod and making them into "affiliates" instead? And if these questions are not presently being asked of schools that are currently agencies of the Synod, why should anyone think these questions will be posed more effectively in the future if the schools turn into mere "affiliates"?

There is no similar proposal for the two seminaries to be rendered "affiliates" of the Synod. Why not, though? If "affiliate" status befits institutions that train both commissioned church workers who are to assist pastors and pre-seminary students who will one day become pastors, why should it not also encompass the institutions where future pastors receive their final training? Why not? Because we still understand that no one else can train pastors for the Synod better than the Synod itself can! Should the quality of education for our other church work students—as well as pre-seminary students at a relatively early stage of pastoral formation—suffer by comparison?

The task force's task has been unenviable. For some years, the Synod's colleges and universities have been proceeding on a premise that is making it nearly impossible for the Synod to carry out its historic determination to give church workers the best possible preparation. The Synod must abandon this premise right away. The premise is that we finance the education of our church work students at least in part on the money of others. These "others" could be non-church work students in a variety of disciplines and at a number of academic levels, or government.

Giving up this premise will not be easy because it amounts to relinquishing a great deal of financial support. It will likely require significant sacrifice. Moreover, even if the Synod gives up this premise today, it will take a while to implement the changes that would necessarily follow. There is no time to waste.

Therefore be it

Resolved, That the Synod today declares certain bedrock principles to guide its higher education efforts into the future:

1. The Synod will own and operate not only its seminaries but also the undergraduate institutions that prepare its church workers. It will subsidize the undergraduate institutions for at least two-thirds of their total operating expenses, and it will require that these institutions accept no money from federal, state, or local governments.
2. This will require a massive shift in the Synod's funding priorities at the national level, quite possibly resulting in a reduction of parish services Synod-wide. The 1.1.1 mission funding model, one dollar per member per week, (2019 Resolution 8-02, "To Encourage a Synodwide 1.1.1 Funding Model for Defined Mission Outcomes") may have to be diverted from use at district level to the national level.
3. The colleges and "universities" that the Synod owns will have it as their purpose to prepare church workers for the Synod and perhaps its sister church bodies. Other students may attend, on the understanding that they will content themselves with the course offerings that are provided to the Synod's church work students. Undergraduate students from LCMS congregations pursuing study in non-church work programs would be encouraged to attend the Synod's schools especially for their first two years, to get a good Christian liberal arts education in a safe environment before they perhaps matriculate elsewhere to finish their bachelors' degrees.
4. This shift in emphasis will almost certainly necessitate a reduction in the number of institutions that the Synod owns as well as reduction in enrollment at such schools, possibly also campus modifications at any schools that remain agencies of the Synod.
5. The remaining institution or institutions may engage to a limited extent in graduate-level teaching under the direction of and with the approval of the Concordia University System (CUS) Board of Directors. While under no requirement to do so, they may offer masters' degrees in fields directly related to church work specialties—specifically, education, family life, church music, and theology. No more than one institution is to offer the Doctorate in Education, or Ed.D., degree. This degree program and any of its sub-specialties—curriculum, leadership, counseling—would be designed especially for LCMS church workers. No other doctoral programs will be offered by the Synod's colleges and "universities."

6. Other present CUS institutions will close or separate from the Synod. Some sort of recognition relationship with schools in the latter category may be developed, subject to approval by a future convention of the Synod. But to become commissioned rostered LCMS church workers, graduates of those institutions would have to go through the Synod's colloquy process.

and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod directs its Board of Directors and the CUS Board of Directors to make the changes necessary to act consistently with the above-enumerated bedrock principles by the time of the 2026 Synod convention, including proposing to that convention any desirable refinements or additions for the Synod's bylaws; and be it finally

Resolved, That Synod also directs its Board of Directors and the CUS Board of Directors to provide the 2026 Synod convention a full report on the implementation steps that have been taken.

Board of Directors
Central Illinois District

Ov. 7-09

To Form Task Force to Restructure Concordia University System

WHEREAS, The Synod has had to close three of our colleges in the past two trienniums plus one year; and

WHEREAS, Our colleges on average, have more non-Lutheran students than students from Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) congregations; and

WHEREAS, A majority of students in our colleges are enrolled in programs unrelated to providing church workers; and

WHEREAS, The debt of church work students is becoming so large to make church work unattainable for students to consider; and

WHEREAS, The influence of non-LCMS students are pushing our schools in the direction of accepting or tolerating LGBTQ clubs and groups contrary to Scripture; and

WHEREAS, Government regulations are pushing our colleges into accepting LGBTQ lifestyles; and

WHEREAS, Concordia University Texas has declared itself to be no longer under the guidance of the LCMS; therefore be it

Resolved, That a committee of 13 be formed, appointed by the President of the Synod, with the President serving as a voting member of this committee. This committee shall include an expert in finances, law, and real estate. An outside law firm shall be hired to guide the committee and a reasonable budget be appropriated; and be it further

Resolved, That this committee recommend to the Synod the following: Which one or two of our current colleges be retained while the rest are closed or divested from the LCMS; and be it further

Resolved, That the following criteria be used along with other criteria deemed necessary by the committee:

- current percentage of LCMS students enrolled;
- current debt of the school; and
- property value and potential ability to sell the facilities;

and be it further

Resolved, That the schools are divested or allowed to become independent colleges, and that after all debt is paid to the Lutheran Church Extension Fund, the LCMS be paid for the value of the property and that money go into the endowment fund for church worker tuition; and be it further

Resolved, That a district may not take over the operations of a college slated to be closed or divested; and be it further

Resolved, That with regard to all monies in endowments or pledged to be given in future gifts, the giver of the monies be informed of the colleges' status and their legal options concerning their gifts; and be it further

Resolved, That the work of this task force be completed one year before the next Synod convention; and be it further

Resolved, That the recommendations be made known to the congregations for study; and be it further

Resolved, That the recommendations then be brought forth to the next convention for consideration; and be it finally

Resolved, That the colleges and two seminaries remaining after this process no longer be allowed to take federal, state, or local government monies, including student loans.

Concordia, Burlington, IA;
Circuit 8 (Mount Pleasant), Iowa East District

Ov. 7-10

To Bring Accountability to Concordia Boards of Regents

WHEREAS, Our Concordia universities have long been and continue to be precious gifts to the world and to the Church, especially when they clearly confess Christ Jesus as Lord and Savior according to Holy Scripture and our Lutheran Confessions; and

WHEREAS, The board of regents at each of our Concordia universities is vital to offering to its students, the world, and the Church a clear confession of what we in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) believe, teach, and confess; and

WHEREAS, While each of our Concordia universities has expanded its academic offerings to include other God pleasing vocations, and at the same time our Concordia universities continue to be the primary training ground in preparing future ordained and commissioned ministers for the LCMS; and

WHEREAS, While each Concordia University Board of Regents is to hold its members accountable, which at times has proved problematic, and there is currently no mechanism in the Synod Bylaws for the church at large to deal with regents, including laity, who fail to faithfully adhere to the bylaws; and

WHEREAS, Neither the Synod President nor the geographic district president in whose district the Concordia University resides has any authority over the laity; therefore be it

Resolved, That the South Wisconsin District in convention appeal to the 2023 Synod convention to request that the Commission on Handbook (COH) draft a series of bylaws so that the geographic district president in whose district the specific Concordia University resides, and/or the Synod President, may, after futile admonition, appeal to the Board of Directors for relief; and be it further

Resolved, That, once completed, the COH forward these new bylaws to the Board of Directors for approval and implementation.

South Wisconsin District

Ov. 7-11

**To Reform Composition of Boards of Regents
of Concordia University System Universities
to Improve Doctrinal Fidelity
and Amenability to Ecclesiastical Supervision**

WHEREAS, The Concordia University System (CUS) is a synodwide corporate entity of the Lutheran Church— Missouri Synod (Bylaw 1.2.1 [w]); and

WHEREAS, Synodwide corporate entities are separate corporations established by the Synod for business and legal reasons, and not for purposes of independence from the Synod, immunity from ecclesiastical supervision by the Synod, or propagation of positions contrary to the teachings of the Synod; and

WHEREAS, Synodwide corporate entities including the CUS “are to be servants of and to the Synod and its members” (Bylaw 3.6.1); and

WHEREAS, Synodwide corporate entities “shall be accountable to the Synod in convention for the discharge of [their] assigned duties” (Bylaw 3.6.1.6 [h]); and

WHEREAS, Synodwide corporate entities “shall be accountable to the President of the Synod for doctrinal faithfulness” (Bylaw 3.6.1.6 [i]); and

WHEREAS, All governing documents and instruments of synodwide corporate entities must be in conformity with the Constitution, Bylaws, and applicable resolutions of the Synod in convention (Bylaw 3.6.1.7) and must provide that the entity is “a component part of the Synod” (Bylaw 3.6.1.8 [b]); and

WHEREAS, The CUS has 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 for theology appointments to college or university faculties (Bylaw 3.6.6.1); and

WHEREAS, The CUS Board of Directors is charged with a mandatory duty to ensure that the boards of regents and campus administrators are actively working to preserve their Lutheran identity by supporting the objectives of the Synod (Constitution Article III) and deliver academic and student programs designed to give students Christ-centered values (Bylaw 3.6.6.6 [a–b]); and

WHEREAS, The composition of the board of regents of the institutions of the CUS was expanded to include from four to eight regents appointed by each board itself to add expertise to the boards; and

WHEREAS, While expertise certainly is needed in the board of regents, subsequent experience has shown a tendency, resulting in part from the new composition of the boards, for those boards and campus administrators to exhibit independence from the Synod, propagation of positions contrary to the teachings of the Synod, and resistance to ecclesiastical supervision by the Synod; and

WHEREAS, A board of regents of an institution of the CUS violated in multiple substantial ways numerous bylaws governing the search for and appointment of a new president of the institution, inasmuch as to practically abdicate their responsibilities; and

WHEREAS, By virtue of the duties imposed upon him and the powers vested in him by the Constitution and Bylaws of the Synod

to exercise ecclesiastical supervision (Bylaw 1.2.1 [j]), the President of Synod with a visitation team visited the campus of that institution to gather facts; and

WHEREAS, Following the visitation by the President of Synod and visitation team, the President delivered to that institution a letter exercising the ecclesiastical supervision imposed upon and vested in him (letter from President Harrison to members of the CUWAA Board of Regents, May 9, 2022); and

WHEREAS, The board of regents of that institution has failed or refused to give the letter of ecclesiastical supervision even the consideration, let alone the action, due in the circumstances and under the Constitution and Bylaws of the Synod; and

WHEREAS, This failure or refusal is, in part, a symptom of the independence from the Synod and resistance to ecclesiastical supervision by the Synod that stems in part from the new, expanded composition of the board of regents where many members are appointed by the board of regents itself; and

WHEREAS, The harms resulting from independence and resistance to ecclesiastical supervision clearly outweigh the benefits of expertise provided by the new, expanded composition of the boards of regents; and

WHEREAS, It is necessary to reform the composition of the boards of regents for the sake of maintaining the CUS as a component part of the Synod, as servant of and to the Synod and its members, in doctrinal faithfulness, with Lutheran identity and Christ-centeredness, amenable to ecclesiastical supervision by the Synod through the Synod’s chosen office for exercising supervision; therefore be it

Resolved, That Bylaw 3.10.6.2 (1–5) be amended 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 members, all voting.

1. ~~One~~Two ordained ministers, one commissioned minister, and two laypersons shall be elected by the conventions of the Synod.

2. ...

3. ~~No fewer than four and no more than eight members shall be appointed as members by the board of regents according to a process determined by the individual institution.~~

43. The president of the district in which the college or university is located or a district vice-president as his standing representative shall serve as ~~an~~ *ex officio a voting* member.

54. One member, who may be an ordained minister, a commissioned minister, or a layperson, shall be appointed by the ~~Presidium of the Synod after consultation with the President of the respective institution and the Board of Directors of the Synod~~ *President of the Synod*.

65. ... (*renumbering following*)

and be it further

Resolved, That each college, university, or institution of the CUS shall devise a plan of transition to the number of regents and composition of the board of regents mandated by this resolution to be fully implemented no later than the regents’ first meeting in the third quarter of 2026 so that no current regent shall have the regent’s current term shortened but no unnecessary delay in implementing this resolution is allowed; and be it further

Resolved, That the plans of transition shall be subject to approval by the President of Synod, and shall be submitted to the President of Synod for review by Feb. 1, 2024; and be it finally

Resolved, That this resolution be forwarded to the Synod for adoption at its 2023 convention.

Montana District

Ov. 7-12

To Make All Concordia University System Board-Appointed Regents Advisory Members

WHEREAS, Accountability to the Word of God and the Lutheran Confessions have been a hallmark of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod; and

WHEREAS, The members of Synod, congregations, and the institutions of Synod have agreed to be held accountable to these authoritative documents through the process of ecclesiastical supervision and convention action; and

WHEREAS, The current bylaw provision of board self-appointments for the purpose of management of the institution is both good and necessary; and

WHEREAS, These board self-appointments present a conflict to the accepted practice of fraternal accountability to the Synod as a whole; and

WHEREAS, This lack of accountability could afford the devil an opportunity to divide the community of the Synod; therefore be it

Resolved, That all board appointed members of any Concordia University System (CUS) board of regents be vetted in the same manner as elected members as determined by the Commission on Handbook; and be it further

Resolved, That Bylaw 3.10.6.2 be amended 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 members, all voting.

...

3. No fewer than four and no more than eight members shall be appointed as members by the board of regents according to a process determined by the individual institution. Board-appointed members of any board of regents are advisory. They will have voice but no vote.

...

and be it finally

Resolved, That upon the approval of 2023 Synod convention this action be applied immediately to all board self-appointed regents across the CUS regardless of their time of appointment.

South Wisconsin District

Ov. 7-13

To Return Concordia University System Institutional Governance to the Synod

WHEREAS, the Concordia University System (CUS) institutions, which are agencies of Synod (Bylaw 1.2.1 [a]), were initially founded by the Synod; and

WHEREAS, Until 1986, all CUS institution board members were elected by the Synod or by a district in convention; and

WHEREAS, In 1986, two board-appointed positions were authorized; in 1992, two additional board-appointed positions were authorized; and in 2007, an additional four board-appointed positions were authorized, with the result that since 2007, the eight board-appointed members (who can vote on other appointed

members) have outnumbered the five Synod-elected members of each CUS Board of Regents; and

WHEREAS, Recent actions by the Board of Regents of Concordia University Texas demonstrate that when a board is not primarily accountable to the Synod, it can seek to act primarily for institutional self-preservation rather than in the interests of, and in service to, the broader church (see Concordia University Texas memo, steadfastlutherans.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/CUTexasLetter.pdf); and

WHEREAS, The geographic district in which each CUS school is located also elects five members to the board of regents (including the district president), with the result that six districts of the Synod elect regents at their conventions whereas 29 districts do not, even though the CUS schools serve the entire Synod and are not the property of any one district; and

WHEREAS, The seminaries, which likewise serve the entire Synod, have boards with a district president elected by the entire Council of Presidents, and have four board-appointed regents chosen by the elected board members (to avoid creating a self-perpetuating board, appointed members do not vote on other appointed members), which arrangement has been salutary for the governance of the seminaries and has caused no financial, governance, or accreditation problems; therefore be it

Resolved, That in order to rebalance the governance of the CUS Boards of Regents, the Synod revise the appropriate bylaws to provide for election of a thirteen member Board of Regents, consisting of four laypersons, two ordained ministers, and one commissioned minister, each elected by the Synod in convention for six year terms, with the terms staggered; one district president elected by the Council of Presidents for a three year term; one representative appointed by the Praesidium of Synod for a three year term; and four persons appointed by the elected members of the board for six year terms, such persons to be ineligible to vote on the appointment of appointed members; such changes to take effect for the 2024 district and 2025 Synod convention cycle, with all current members to complete their current three-year terms.

St. Paul
Brookfield, IL

Ov. 7-14

To Restore Composition of Boards of Regents of Our Concordias

WHEREAS, 2007 Resolution 5-04 changed the composition of the boards of regents at our colleges and universities, increasing the number of members on the boards, but decreasing the number elected by the Synod in convention, and making more regents appointed voting members; and

WHEREAS, Since the 2007 change, there have been instances in which some of our Concordias have acted in ways not reflective of the will of the Synod; and

WHEREAS, It is desirable that the boards of regents of our Concordias more closely reflect the will of the Synod, and that goal can be served by restoring the composition of the boards to their pre-2007 numbers, with a greater proportion of the boards being elected by the Synod in convention, rather than appointed; therefore be it

Resolved, That Bylaw 3.10.6.2 be amended 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 members, all voting~~ 13 voting members.

1. One ordained minister, one commissioned minister, and ~~two laypersons~~ three laypersons shall be elected by the conventions of the Synod.

2. One ordained minister, one commissioned minister, and ~~two laypersons~~ one layperson shall be elected by the geographical district in which the institution is located. If any board is required by its governing documents to include one or more persons holding residence or church membership in a specific locality, the institution is responsible for ensuring (including by appointment, if necessary) that individual(s) meeting such requirements are included among those persons serving on such board, and no such geographic restriction shall apply to Synod-elected regents.

3. ~~No fewer than four and no more than eight members~~ Four laypersons shall be appointed as members by the board of regents according to a process determined by the individual institution.

...

Grace, Desoto, MO; St. Matthew, Bonne Terre, MO

Ov. 7-15

To Facilitate Greater Oversight of Concordia Universities

WHEREAS, Recent issues have led to the closure of three Concordia universities and the formal visitation by the President of the Synod of two others; and

WHEREAS, These institutions have been created and supported by our faithful forebearers, often at great personal sacrifice; and

WHEREAS, It is incumbent upon us to continue their legacy and make good use of the treasures they have handed down to us for the benefit of Christ's Church; and

WHEREAS, Bylaw 3.10.5.2 provides for the appointment of a Synod vice-president to the board of regents for the seminaries; therefore be it

Resolved, That in order to facilitate greater oversight of the Concordia University System schools, Bylaw 3.10.6.2 be amended 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~~ 19 members, all voting.

...

4. The president of the district in which the college or university is located or a district vice-president as his standing representative shall serve as ~~an ex officio~~ a regular member.

5. One member, who may be an ordained minister, a commissioned minister, or a layperson, shall be appointed by the Praesidium of the Synod after consultation with the President of the respective institution and the Board of Directors of the Synod.

6. The Synod vice-president of the region in which the college or university is located or his appointed representative shall serve as a regent.

67. Except for the district president and Synod vice-president, college ~~College~~ and university board of regents members may be elected or appointed to serve a maximum of three consecutive three-year terms and must hold membership in a member congregation of the Synod.

78. ...

89. ...

Holy Trinity
Walnut, IL

Ov. 7-16

To Address Concordia University Wisconsin/Ann Arbor Board of Regents Representation

WHEREAS, The Ann Arbor Campus of Concordia Wisconsin is located in Michigan; therefore be it

Resolved, That the president of the Michigan District, or a district vice-president as his standing representative, be regarded as a voting member of the Concordia University Wisconsin/Ann Arbor (CUWAA) Board of Regents; and be it further

Resolved, That as a member of the board, the Michigan District president has a vote in the selection of the CUWAA president.

Michigan District

Ov. 7-17

To Memorialize Commission on Handbook to Revise Number of Voters for Election of Presidents of Concordia University System Schools

WHEREAS, The schools of the Concordia University System (CUS) are agencies of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) and were originally developed by the congregations of the Synod for the training of church workers to assist the spread of the Gospel; and

WHEREAS, The presidents of our CUS schools hold a primary level of importance in providing vision and oversight under the broad assignment of Synod; and

WHEREAS, The current selection of presidents of schools of the CUS is strictly tasked to the schools' boards of regents who are specifically tasked in Bylaw 3.10.6 to do their business (including the selection of presidents) "subject to the general policies set by the Synod, including those established by the Concordia University System," and whose duty is defined in Bylaw 3.10.6.1 as "defining and fulfilling the mission of the institution within the broad assignment of Synod"; and

WHEREAS, Recent changes to the makeup of CUS boards of regents call for the appointment of members based on certain skill sets (i.e., financial, legal, etc.) which, while necessary and good, have in the past proven also to politicize and distract certain boards from their duty to be mindful of the "broad assignment of the Synod," namely teaching the Word faithfully and proclaiming the Gospel; and

WHEREAS, The election of our seminary presidents, outlined in Bylaw 3.10.5.6.2 (h) prescribes an election process requiring four votes (regents, elected regent district president, President of Synod, and chairman of Synod Board of Directors), thus offering greater Synod inclusion in the election process; and

WHEREAS, This election process serves as a good template for greater mindfulness of the Synod's mission in the CUS presidential election process as well; therefore be it

Resolved, That the South Wisconsin District in convention appeal to the 2023 Synod convention to request that the Commission on Handbook (COH) draft a series of bylaws so that the election process of Concordia University presidents follow the pattern of seminary president elections; and be it further

Resolved, That once completed, the COH forward these new bylaws to the Synod Board of Directors for approval and implementation; and be it finally

Resolved, That upon ratification, this resolution be passed on to the 68th Regular Convention of the Synod for deliberation by the entire Synod.

South Wisconsin District

Ov. 7-18

To Protect People's Offerings Given to Concordia University Schools

WHEREAS, Since the founding of the Addison Teachers Seminary (now, Concordia University Chicago) in 1864, the people of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) have generously supported the Synod's collegiate and university institutions of higher education with their donations and bequests; and

WHEREAS, As a result of the closure of Concordia University, Portland, endowment funds that were donated to that school by LCMS congregations and their members are currently at risk; they are subject to potential claims of creditors and to potential claims by the Oregon Department of Justice (according to media reports); in each case, such claims could result in the funds being diverted from their intended purpose—support for Lutheran higher education—and diverted to pay creditors, settle lawsuits and pay legal fees, and/or be seized by the state; and

WHEREAS, The Board of Regents of Concordia University Texas has declared independence from the governance of Synod, leaving the status of endowment funds at that institution unsettled with respect to the training of church workers for the Synod; and

WHEREAS, It would be tragic for millions of dollars in endowment funds given by God's people to be lost or wasted if other Concordia University System (CUS) schools encounter financial difficulties; and

WHEREAS, The Synod has formed The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod Foundation to act as an independent fiduciary and trust company, and the primary provider of charitable expertise for the LCMS; the LCMS Foundation has decades of charitable expertise, helping to ensure that families are provided for and beloved ministries are supported; the LCMS Foundation serves our Lord and our Church by providing trained professionals to assist individuals and ministry congregations in practicing biblical, Christ-centered stewardship; and

WHEREAS, The LCMS Foundation currently holds and manages numerous endowments for the benefit of the CUS schools; the income is distributed to the intended beneficiary institutions, but the principal is invested and safeguarded by the LCMS Foundation in trust, both protected from claims of creditors of the institutions and preserved for use in accordance with the direction of the original donors; and

WHEREAS, Transferring all CUS endowment funds to the LCMS Foundation would result in optimal stewardship by:

- ensuring that such funds remain available to the CUS schools as intended by the donors, protecting donor intentions with no change in the distribution of funds so long as the CUS schools remain in operation and part of the Synod;

- reducing the overhead costs of managing funds, and spreading risk across a broader investment base, meaning a higher return on investment for the schools; and
- safeguarding such funds from creditors and/or state seizure if a school were to become insolvent and/or leave affiliation with the Synod;

therefore be it

Resolved, That the Synod in convention to direct all CUS schools to transfer their endowment funds, whether held directly or indirectly, to the LCMS Foundation in trust, to be held consistent with the donor-intended purposes and distributed to such CUS schools consistent with current practices so long as the CUS schools operate as agencies of the Synod, and otherwise to be used for LCMS higher education, by Dec. 31, 2023.

St. Paul
Brookfield, IL

Ov. 7-19

To Encourage and Provide Support for Currently Non-rostered Lutheran School Educators to Receive Colloquy

WHEREAS, Proverbs 9:9 (NIV) teaches, "Instruct the wise and they will be wiser still; teach the righteous, and they will add to their learning"; and

WHEREAS, Dedicated non-rostered Christian educators are currently serving in our Lutheran schools; and

WHEREAS, Many non-rostered educators live full lives and would not otherwise be able to attend our Concordia University System in person; and

WHEREAS, We seek to support non-rostered educators as they, alongside rostered workers, pastors, deacons, and lay leaders, minister to the children and their families as we seek to do our Father's will in kingdom work; and

WHEREAS, We recognize the mission field is at our door in our Lutheran schools; and

WHEREAS, We support our currently rostered educators and do not seek to replace them, but recognize the smaller number of rostered educators and so seek to support them by building in number, through colloquy, the amount of Synod trained educators; and

WHEREAS, Our Synod trained educators tend toward intentionally raising up future leaders in the Church by proclaiming to individual students the call of the Holy Spirit on their lives to become pastors, educators, youth workers, and other church workers; and

WHEREAS, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few" (Matt. 9:37); therefore be it

Resolved, That the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod encourage currently rostered educators and Lutheran schools, through regular communication, to support non-rostered educators and to intentionally recognize and encourage those faithful workers to prayerfully consider the colloquy program; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod recognize the gifts that non-rostered educators bring to the work of the kingdom through regular communication; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod encourage non-rostered educators who are faithfully serving in our Lutheran schools by way of acknowledging their role as a position that is in God's plan of kingdom work and use this communication as an opportunity to introduce the possibility of the colloquy program; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod both spiritually and financially support non-rostered educators who are led by the Holy Spirit to enter into the colloquy program; and be it finally

Resolved, That the Synod set up an endowment to fund this support for coming generations.

Board of Directors
Florida-Georgia District

Ov. 7-20

To Support Colleges and Universities of the Concordia University System

WHEREAS, Colleges and universities of the Concordia University System (CUS) provide "Christian higher education communities 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" (Concordia College—New York Mission Statement, 2021); and

WHEREAS, Each of the colleges and universities within the CUS is committed to the integration of curricula and academic subjects with the Gospel of Jesus Christ; and

WHEREAS, The colleges and universities of the CUS have served thousands of people throughout the nation and around the world by giving them access to quality Christian education and rigorous opportunities to pursue studies in the liberal arts; and

WHEREAS, Thousands of people have graduated from colleges and universities within the CUS including thousands of professional church workers who have served throughout Christ's holy Church all over the world as they have been provided quality theological education and vocational formation; and

WHEREAS, The colleges and universities of the CUS have provided many people the opportunity to hear the saving Gospel of Jesus Christ as they are encouraged and directed in their vocations of service throughout the world, with many people being baptized and countless people being re-rooted to the Christian faith; therefore be it

Resolved, That the colleges and universities of the CUS be commended for their God-pleasing work; and be it further

Resolved, That Lutherans in their congregations promote the colleges and universities of the CUS and their programs and offerings, especially programs that train workers for the Church; and be it further

Resolved, That Lutherans throughout The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod be encouraged to support the colleges and universities of the CUS with their regular prayers, precious time, diverse talents, and generous financial resources; and be it further

Resolved, That all who have benefitted in any way through the years from the colleges and universities of the CUS support them in any way possible; and be it finally

Resolved, That both the Atlantic District and the entire Synod take every available step and use every gift given to them by God to ensure that the colleges and universities of the CUS continue to

operate with their inspiring mission for generations to come to the glory and praise of Almighty God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Atlantic District

Ov. 7-21

To Reinstate the Rev. Dr. Gregory Schulz

WHEREAS, The Rev. Dr. Gregory P. Schulz has enjoyed a long and distinguished career as a pastor of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and as a university faculty member in the area of philosophy, most recently as a faculty member at Concordia University Wisconsin; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Schulz has brought to light serious concerns regarding the infiltration of worldly and unbiblical philosophies at Concordia University Wisconsin; and

WHEREAS, Such concerns have been validated in a letter from the Rev. Dr. Matthew C. Harrison, President of the Synod, to the Concordia University Wisconsin Board of Regents dated May 9, 2022, following an official visitation to the university, in which Pastor Harrison wrote, *inter alia*:

... throughout our visit, concerned faculty, staff, and students expressed concern over the introduction of secular diversity, equity, and inclusion language and initiatives into the mission of the university. This philosophy is laden with ideas antagonistic to the sacred Scriptures, including great lies about human sexuality and race ...

and

WHEREAS, Dr. Schulz was suspended from his position due to his good faith presentation of his concerns in the exercise of his academic freedom, and under circumstances which have caused harm to his reputation through public statements by administrators at Concordia University Wisconsin, with serious questions having been raised as to whether appropriate process was followed in such action; therefore be it

Resolved, That, so that all things may be done decently and in order, Dr. Schulz immediately be reinstated to his position and, if there exists good cause to take disciplinary action against him, such be stated by the Concordia University Wisconsin administration publicly—because this has now become a public matter through its actions—so that Dr. Schulz may have all process due him and the right to defend his good name before the Church.

St. Paul
Brookfield, IL

Ov. 7-22

To Encourage Training for Volunteers Stepping into Roles of Youth Education and Faith Formation

WHEREAS, The number of church work students from the Concordia University System (CUS) has decreased in recent years, especially in commissioned church work students; and

WHEREAS, In order to meet the need created by the decreased rate of church work students, volunteer lay persons have been stepping into roles that would be otherwise served by commissioned workers, especially roles of youth education and faith formation; and

WHEREAS, Commissioned workers in active calls are often serving in roles training volunteer lay persons in their circuits and districts above and beyond their responsibilities to their calling congregations; and

WHEREAS, Opportunities to use the internet to disseminate training in theological education exist and continue to arise; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod in Convention direct CUS to produce resources and credentials specific to the tasks of volunteers fulfilling roles that may be otherwise served by commissioned workers; and be it further

Resolved, That these resources be published and made available to congregations at a reasonable cost.

Board of Directors
Florida-Georgia District

Ov. 7-23

To Request Comprehensive Review of Commissioned Ministry Colloquy Process

WHEREAS, The Synod in convention has repeatedly passed resolutions related to the dire need for and advantages of having Lutheran teachers, most recently in 2016 Resolution 8-01A, “To Encourage and Strengthen the Lutheran Ethos of Our LCMS Early Childhood Centers, Elementary Schools, and High Schools” (2016 *Proceedings*, 181) and in 2019 Res. 12-02A, “To Exhort the Congregations of the LCMS to Actively Encourage Future Lutheran School Teachers” (2019 *Proceedings*, 221); and

WHEREAS, In 2020–2021, only 26 percent of educators in schools of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) were on the active roster of Synod (LuthEd, “Early Childhood and School Statistical Report, 2020–2021” www.luthed.org/early-childhood-and-school-statistical-report/, accessed Feb. 17, 2023); and

WHEREAS, The number of requests for Lutheran teachers from the Concordia University System (CUS) has outpaced the number of actual graduates since 2012 (2021 CONFEDX Placement Report); and

WHEREAS, Schools in the South Wisconsin District have increasingly had to hire non-rostered Lutheran teachers; and

WHEREAS, The typical cost of the Concordia online Teacher Colloquy Program offered through CUEnet is \$6,452; and

WHEREAS, Graduating from a CUS school is the only other option to a Lutheran Teacher Diploma; and

WHEREAS, Synod Bylaw subsection 3.10 establishes a Colloquy Committee for Commissioned Ministry (CCCM); and

WHEREAS, Synod Bylaw 3.10.3.1 names “the First Vice-President of the Synod as chairman”; and

WHEREAS, Synod Bylaw 3.10.3.2 (b) gives authority to the CCCM to “establish and monitor academic and theological standards for each of the colloquy programs”; therefore be it

Resolved, That congregations and schools of the South Wisconsin District give thanks for the service of all teachers in Lutheran schools, regardless of Synod roster status; and be it further

Resolved, That the district in convention request that the CCCM complete a comprehensive review of the teacher colloquy process in order to establish a more efficient route to colloquize teachers who are committed members of the LCMS; and be it further

Resolved, That the district in convention request that the CCCM complete a comprehensive review of the teacher colloquy process in order to establish a more cost-effective route to colloquize teachers; and be it finally

Resolved, That this review be completed, and the results be communicated to the South Wisconsin District Board of Directors and the Board for National Mission by Jan. 1, 2024.

South Wisconsin District

Ov. 7-24

To Recognize and Give Thanks for Work at Concordia College—New York

WHEREAS, Concordia College—New York (CCNY) was founded in 1881 in what was the Eastern District and is now the Atlantic District when The Evangelical Lutheran Church and School of St. Matthew in Manhattan established a “Sexta” and “Quinta” at St. Matthew Academy, thereby beginning what would be called the “New York Progymnasium”; and

WHEREAS, CCNY (referred to as the “Progymnasium,” “Concordia Progymnasium,” and “Concordia Lutheran Collegiate Institute” before being known universally as “Concordia College”) relocated to the hamlet of Hawthorne, N.Y. on Buttermilk Hill before moving to its current location in the village of Bronxville, N.Y.; and

WHEREAS, CCNY not only has served the East Coast of the United States but people throughout the nation and around the world by giving all people access to quality Christian education and rigorous opportunities to pursue studies in the liberal arts; and

WHEREAS, CCNY has been a place for Lutherans and for others to gather for conventions, meetings, concerts, art events, sports events, and other activities for over a century; 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 (Eccl. 3; Isaiah 40; James 1); and

WHEREAS, CCNY ceased all academic operations at the end of the 2020–2021 academic year; and

WHEREAS, The closure of CCNY has left an enormous hole in the hearts of alumni, faculty, staff, friends, and the Atlantic District; therefore be it

Resolved, That we, the Atlantic District in convention recognize, remember, and give thanks to God for the good and godly work of the many alumni, faculty, and staff throughout the history of CCNY in the training and instruction of God's Word and Christian life; and be it further

Resolved, That we recognize, remember, and give thanks to God for the good and godly work of the many friends of CCNY which they have done and will continue to do in our congregations and communities; and be it further

Resolved, That we recognize, remember, and give thanks to God for the Care and Comfort Committee that raised dollars to support the faculty and staff members of CCNY who were losing jobs due to the closure of the school; and be it further

Resolved, That we give voice to our thanks and praise to God for working through CCNY, and pray His continued guidance, as we rise and sing the common doxology; and be it finally

Resolved, That we memorialize the 2023 Synod convention to adopt the above resolution.

Atlantic District

Ov. 7-25

To Give Thanks for Concordia College—New York

WHEREAS, Concordia College—New York (CCNY) served as an institution of higher education for over 140 years; and

WHEREAS, Through the Concordia University System, countless women and men receive a quality, Christian education to be sent out to live their vocations in the name of Jesus; and

WHEREAS, CCNY continues to have a significant impact on the church at large through the witness of the priesthood of believers who attended the college; and

WHEREAS, The Southeastern District in its 2022 convention voted to forward this overture to the Synod convention for consideration; therefore be it

Resolved, That Synod in convention give thanks to God for CCNY and its contribution to the wider church and society.

Southeastern District

Ov. 7-26

**To Honor and Give Thanks for Ministry
of Concordia University, Portland**

WHEREAS, Concordia University, Portland (CUP) served the mission of the Gospel in the Pacific Northwest for 115 years (1905–2020); and

WHEREAS, Many ministries across the United States and the world have been impacted by graduates from CUP; and

WHEREAS, Many people grew spiritually and came to and/or renewed their faith in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior through their experience at CUP; and

WHEREAS, The students benefitted greatly from the dedicated faculty and staff who served them at the university; and

WHEREAS, CUP became a place where many people were introduced to the Gospel for the first time; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Northwest District in convention give thanks to God for the ministry of CUP; and be it further

Resolved, That the district in convention give thanks to God for the faculty and staff who gave of themselves to the ministry over the years; and be it further

Resolved, That the elected officers of the district be charged with keeping the legacy and ministry of CUP alive within the district and within the Synod; and be it further

Resolved, That the elected officers of the district seek ways to provide appropriate means of identifying and training “workers for the harvest” from within the district who are from the district and who wish to serve the Lord of the harvest both in the district or throughout the world; and be it finally

Resolved, That the Synod in convention gratefully acknowledge the blessing that CUP was to our church body and to the spread of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Northwest District

8. Finance

REPORTS

**R1, R1.2–R1.2.2, R1.2.4–R1.2.5, R1.3,
R5–R8, R15–R57**

OVERTURES

Ov. 8-01

To Request Expanded Permissions for 1986 *Small Catechism* Translation

WHEREAS, The Great Commission compels the Church to proclaim God's salvation to the nations and thoroughly catechize the baptized; and

WHEREAS, We pledge ourselves to the Small Catechism along with the rest of the *Book of Concord* as a faithful exposition of God's Word; and

WHEREAS, The Small Catechism is a wonderful tool for leading people into the truth of Scripture; and

WHEREAS, The society around us is moving to digital platforms for an increasing amount of communication; and

WHEREAS, The internet opens doors to share the faith with those unable or hesitant to come into a church building; and

WHEREAS, Christians also (even our own members) are increasingly seeking technological approaches to everyday tasks; and be it further

Resolved, That the Oklahoma District give thanks to God for Concordia Publishing House and the catechetical resources they have provided to the church; and be it further

Resolved, That we commend these resources to our congregations and their members for use in church, home, and outreach; and be it finally

Resolved, That the Oklahoma District memorialize the Synod in convention to direct Concordia Publishing House to allow the 1986 translation of the Enchiridion of the Small Catechism to be used by congregations, church workers, and members in various media including print and online platforms free of charge, with proper attributions, in support of evangelistic and catechetical efforts.

Oklahoma District

Ov. 8-02

To Form Synodical Technology "Help Desk"

WHEREAS, The pandemic of 2020 has caused many of our congregations to offer a myriad of different types of "virtual" worship services via internet platforms to continue proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ; and

WHEREAS, Many Bible studies, devotionals, and fellowship opportunities are also being offered by these "virtual" means to teach Christ's truth and mature believers in faith; and

WHEREAS, These "virtual" offerings now in place are likely to continue in use into the foreseeable future; and

WHEREAS, Many of our congregations lack personnel with the technological and social media expertise to make the best use of the available technology and platforms, make informed decisions about

purchasing equipment, and competently resolve the problems that arise in producing broadcasts and content; and

WHEREAS, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) has access to personnel with the technology and media familiarity that is lacking in many congregations; therefore be it

Resolved, That the LCMS examine the feasibility of creating a central "help desk" available to congregations to provide information, advice, and assistance to churches struggling with technology and "virtual" production challenges.

Southern District

Ov. 8-03

To Establish a Commission to Study the Possibility of Utilizing a Health Sharing Community Group

WHEREAS, Concordia Plan Services (CPS) only offers health insurance for church staff and professional church workers employed by Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) congregations, schools, districts and other approved Synod entities; and

WHEREAS, The cost of providing CPS health care coverage often proves cost prohibitive to many smaller congregations/schools and/or restricts the viability and growth of their respective ministries; and

WHEREAS, The Affordable Care Act requires the purchase of health insurance that complies with government regulations but also allows for health care cost sharing programs to provide such health care coverage, often at a more reasonable cost; and

WHEREAS, Some health insurance providers pay for medical procedures that violate Biblical teachings and values, such as abortions or gender reassignment surgeries; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Montana District request the 2023 convention to appoint a commission to study establishing a health care cost sharing program open to all members of Synod, as well as all individual members of LCMS congregations, with the objective of reducing health care costs.

Montana District

Ov. 8-04

To Audit Concordia Plan Services Retirement Funding

WHEREAS, The number of professional church workers in The Lutheran—Church Missouri Synod has been declining, therefore resulting in a smaller pool of resources which are a part of the Concordia Plan Services (CPS) Retirement Plans; and

WHEREAS, Increased life expectancy and growing number of retired workers increases the payout of monies to retirees; and

WHEREAS, Financial challenges in the economy have impacted investment earnings; and

WHEREAS, Critical shortages could threaten the financial stability of the independent CPS Retirement Plan; and

WHEREAS, Transparency is critical for trust and compliance; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Atlantic District move the 2023 Synod convention to create an audit committee to review the retirement plans, including projections for funding and capacity of the funds for the next 25 years, safeguards to protect funds and its solvency

for the next 25 years, and any recommendations for changes to the structure for best practices; and be it further

Resolved, That the reports of the audit committee be shared with the Council of Presidents and then electronically shared to all workers in CPS Retirement Plans by December 31, 2023.

Atlantic District

9. Structure and Administration

REPORTS

**R1, R2, R3–R9, R11, R15–R19,
R21–R55, R62, R65, R66.12**

OVERTURES

Ov. 9-01

To Amend Bylaws to Provide Clarity for Cross-Circuit and Cross-District Multi-Congregation Parishes

Preamble

The 2019 Synod convention labored significantly to clarify the representation of multi-congregation parishes in Resolution 9-05, “To Amend the Constitution to Address Individual Membership and Advisory Representation”; Res. 9-08, “To Amend Bylaws to Clarify Multi-congregation Parish Representation at the Circuit Forum”; and Res. 9-12, “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.” These resolutions had the following principal relevant effects:

- The multi-congregation parish now has a clear definition and clear and consistent representational expectations: “The total number of congregations regularly cared for (served) by a pastor or pastors constitutes a parish 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. XII 10 A), and in voting for the Synod President (Bylaw 3.12.2.3).” (Bylaw 2.5.5)
- Congregations of a multi-congregation parish other than the one supplying the district convention voting lay delegate may send an advisory/non-voting lay delegate to the district convention.
- Multi-congregation parishes are now represented at circuit forums by one pastor and one voting lay representative (lay representatives of congregations other than the one supplying the voting lay delegate are possible, but advisory/non-voting). Previously each congregation got a voting lay delegate.

The convention’s new bylaws did not, however, provide clarity about *which* district conventions and circuits these representatives and delegates attend when multi-congregation parishes cross circuit and/or district lines. While the several congregations of a multi-congregation parish reside ideally within one visitation circuit, this is not necessarily the case. Congregations of one parish may belong to distinct visitation/electoral circuits and even different districts. As of March 5, 2021, records appear to indicate 13 parishes involving congregations from more than one district:

- Four established cross-district parishes involving a non-geographic district and a geographic one;
- Seven established cross-district parishes involving two geographic districts; and
- Two apparent but not recorded cross-district parishes involving two geographic districts.

In addition, there appear to be 63 additional parishes (all of the above, of course, naturally involve multiple circuits and are not included in the counts below) that involve congregations from more than one visitation circuit:

- 38 established parishes (including two triples and a quad) involving two visitation circuits each; and
- 12 apparent but not recorded parishes involving two visitation circuits.

Bylaws are presently silent as to how congregations involved in such situations are to be represented at district conventions and electoral and visitation circuit meetings. The Commission on Constitutional Matters (CCM) has from time to time been called upon to opine on questions of representation for such parishes and has reached a variety of conclusions on the basis of various principles and inferences. Of these, the following are held at present:

- No parish divided across circuit or district lines is entitled to additional representation on account of the division (i.e., each parish gets one pastoral and one lay vote and garners no additional votes in the “other” circuits or districts in which it may be involved).
- No pastor, due to a multi-congregation parish involving multiple districts, votes in the convention of a district in which he himself is not a member (CCM Op. 11-2618). (But cf. Bylaws 2.12.1–2 and following)

In CCM Op. 11-2618, the commission opined: “When a parish crosses district lines, it is nonetheless entitled to representation at district conventions by one pastor and one lay member. The pastor is a voting delegate to the convention of the district of which he is a member. The lay vote is shared by the congregations as in any other parish, presumably in a manner that is fair and equitable. The district membership of the congregation of the lay delegate determines the district convention that he/she will attend as a voting delegate.” [Previously, in Ag. 1959 (Oct. 16, 1993), the commission had ruled: “Because two districts would be involved in the circumstances described, because the congregation cannot be deprived of its vote, and because the matters under consideration vary from district to district (including also elections), each congregation would have a lay vote in the respective district in which the congregation holds membership.” Before that, Apr. 23–24, 1970, the commission in an unnumbered opinion indicated that the lay delegate of such a parish would vote in the same district as the pastor, even if the congregation to which he belongs is of the other district.]

The Commission on Handbook has proposed the following bylaw amendments (Item 19-019), consistent with the above guidance from currently standing CCM opinions, which will make clear how cross-circuit and cross-district multi-congregation parishes are to be represented at circuit forums and district conventions. These will provide clarity, with regard to important representational processes, to the not insignificant and increasing number of member congregations, circuits, and districts involved in such situations, without reference to CCM opinions external to the *Handbook*.

A. WITH REGARD TO DISTRICT CONVENTIONS

Rationale

At the district level, the sense of existing CCM Op. 11-2618 may simply be implemented in the bylaw treating accreditation of delegates, which already mentions a “multi-congregation parish.”

Therefore be it

Resolved, That Bylaw 4.2.2 be amended as follows:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

4.2 District Conventions

...

4.2.2 The delegates of a voting congregation or multi-congregation parish to a district convention shall be accredited.

(a) To be entitled to vote, delegates shall return the proper credentials provided by the district secretary and signed by two of the congregation's officers, either by mailing them to the district office at a date determined by the district or by presenting them to the district secretary at the opening of the convention.

(b) All duly elected voting delegates shall attend all sessions of the convention regularly until the close of the convention.

(c) Should a multi-congregation parish involve congregations having membership in different districts, the pastoral delegate shall be accredited in the convention of the district in which he holds membership and lay delegates, voting and advisory, shall be accredited in the convention of the district in which each delegate's respective congregation holds membership. No multi-congregation parish is entitled to more than one pastoral and one lay voting delegate because of its inclusion of congregations from different districts.

B. WITH REGARD TO VISITATION CIRCUITS

Rationale

While any number of arbitrary rules could be applied, the following seemed to the commission the simplest, most readily applicable, and most aligned with the role of the circuit visitor as assistant and representative of a particular district president (Bylaws 5.2.3–5.2.3.1): At the visitation circuit level, lay representatives attend the circuit of which their respective congregations are members; the pastor attends that circuit (of those to which belong the congregations he serves, and within his own district only) to which he is assigned by his district president.

Therefore be it

Resolved, That Bylaw 5.3.2 be amended as follows:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

5.3 Circuit Forums

...

5.3.2 The circuit forum consists of one pastor and one layperson from 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.

...

(d) Should a multi-congregation parish involve congregations having membership in different visitation circuits, each lay representative, voting and advisory, shall attend the forum of the circuit of which the representative's congregation is a member. The pastoral representative shall attend the forum of that circuit, within which he serves a congregation and within the district in which he holds membership, to which he is assigned by his district president. No multi-congregation parish is entitled to more than one pastoral and one lay voting representative because of its inclusion of congregations from different visitation circuits.

C. WITH REGARD TO ELECTORAL CIRCUITS

Rationale

At the electoral circuit level, the same rule is proposed (with regard to the pastor, his assignment to a visitation circuit will dictate his

assignment to an electoral circuit). It is important to note that this impacts his eligibility to serve as circuit delegate.

Therefore be it

Resolved, That Bylaw 3.1.2.1 be amended as follows:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

Voting Delegates

...

3.1.2.1 Elections of voting delegates shall take place in accordance with established policy and procedure.

(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.

(b) Each electoral circuit may adopt procedures and methods that will insure efficiency and accuracy, including the use of mechanical, electronic, or other methods of casting, recording, or tabulating votes.

(c) The privilege of voting shall be exercised by one pastor and one layperson from each member congregation or multi-congregation parish of the circuit, both of whom shall have been elected in the manner prescribed 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. A pastor serving a congregation in an assisting capacity (Bylaw 2.5.6) is not eligible to cast that congregation's pastoral vote.

(d) Should a multi-congregation parish involve congregations having membership in different electoral circuits, each lay representative, voting and advisory, shall attend the forum of that circuit of which the representative's congregation is a member. The pastoral delegate shall attend the forum of the circuit, within which he serves a congregation and within the district in which he holds membership, to which he is assigned by his district president. His eligibility for election as circuit delegate shall be within that circuit only. No multi-congregation parish is entitled to more than one pastoral and one lay voting representative because of its inclusion of congregations from different electoral circuits. No circuit shall elect as a lay delegate or alternate a member of any congregation that is served (in other than an assisting capacity) by a pastor elected as delegate or alternate.

(~~e~~) ... (*etc.*)

Commission on Handbook

Ov. 9-02

To Amend Various Bylaws to Provide Clarity or to Address Practical Considerations

Preamble

The Commission on Handbook (COH) "responds to requests from agencies of the Synod to propose new provisions to address specific *Handbook*-related issues that surface between conventions" (Bylaw 3.9.4 [c]). Where it finds that these changes may be of a substantive nature, it proposes them to the Synod convention for adoption. This omnibus contains a variety of more minor changes, which are severable by a floor committee or by the convention but otherwise not likely to merit individual convention consideration. As a result of its work in the 2019–2023 "triennium," in consultation with the

noted officers and agencies, COH has proposed the following for adoption:

A. ELECTION OF SYNOD CONVENTION ADVISORY DELEGATES

Rationale

The Commission on Constitutional Matters (CCM) in its Opinion 22-3000 (Minutes, Nov. 4–5, 2021), in response to a request from a university faculty member for an opinion to clarify, in Bylaw 3.1.4.1, who participates in election of faculty representatives and who could serve in that capacity, ultimately found that if an inference had to be drawn from Bylaw section 3.1.3, it would be sensible for those members of the faculty included in the ratio calculation to be those who do the electing of, and who are eligible to be elected as, the advisory representatives. The opinion continues:

However, this is clearly an inference and, since Bylaw 3.1.4.1 (a) does not address the issue of how the advisory representative of an educational institution is to be selected, the commission must conclude that Bylaw 3.1.4.1 (a) does not provide a definitive answer to the question as asked.

The commission notes that the present questions reflect the reality that the essential content of these provisions has remained static while the makeup of Concordia college and university faculties has changed substantially over time. This commission therefore recommends that the Commission on Handbook consider this matter and provide language that clarifies—if the above inference is to be made normative—that the representative is to be selected by those individuals being represented, which would be consistent, regarding those eligible to make the selection, with Bylaw section 3.1.3.

The commission therefore offers the following proposal to the convention to make Bylaw 3.1.4.1 more precise, specifying who does the electing of, and who is to be elected as, the advisory representatives of Synod educational institutions.

Therefore be it

Resolved, That Bylaws 3.1.4.2 be amended as follows:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

Other Advisory Representatives

...

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, elected from among and by the same.

(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.

B. ELECTION OF EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION ADVISORY REPRESENTATIVES

Rationale

The Commission on Constitutional Matters (CCM) in its Opinion 22-2999 (Minutes, Nov. 4–5, 2021), in response to a request for opinion from a district secretary, interpreted Bylaws 3.1.3–3.1.3.1, regarding the election of Synod convention advisory delegates. While its interpretation did not challenge current practice, it did note

unclearities that should be remedied, some of which resulted from or were exacerbated by features of 2019 Res. 9-05. The proposal removes the first sentence of Bylaw 3.1.3, which relates to district conventions instead of the Synod conventions treated here. It is also redundant with Bylaw 4.2.3 and Const. Art. XII 10 b. It also treats uniformly the two reasons an individual might be excluded from the advisory delegate pool: either potential for election as circuit delegate or for selection as an advisory representative. Finally, the bylaw is updated to take into account those who may be serving in only an assisting capacity (cf. Bylaw 2.5.6), a feature not previously made explicit.

Therefore be it

Resolved, That Bylaws 3.1.3–3.1.3.1 be amended as follows:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

Nonvoting Advisory Delegates

3.1.3 ~~The advisory delegates of a district convention shall consist, unless they present a valid excuse, of all individual members of the Synod within the district, except those pastors representing member congregations as voting delegates.~~ In a convention of the Synod, all commissioned ministers and those ordained ministers not eligible for election as a voting delegate under Bylaw 3.1.2.1 (d) and who are not eligible to represent other entities or offices in the Synod as advisory representatives in any category under Bylaw 3.1.4 shall be represented as follows:

3.1.3.1 ~~Each Within each district shall select one advisory delegate shall be selected for every 60 such advisory-ordained ministers and specific ministry pastors, and one advisory delegate shall be selected for every 60 such 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.

(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 via electronic means according to Board of Directors policy (Bylaw 1.5.3). The district secretary may assist the groups by facilitating the elections.

(b) Such selections must be completed at least nine months prior to the opening day of the convention.

(c) ~~Individuals~~ Ordained ministers who are eligible for election as a voting delegate under Bylaw 3.1.2.1 (d) (that is, all parish pastors except specific ministry pastors and those serving only in an assisting capacity) and all individuals who are eligible for selection in any category under Bylaw 3.1.4 shall not be counted in determining the number of advisory delegates from each district, shall not be eligible to be selected as delegates from the groups defined in this bylaw, and shall not participate in the election process.

3.1.3.2 All district voting and nonvoting advisory delegates and representatives and their alternates shall be certified before attending a convention of the Synod.

(a) The names and addresses of all voting and nonvoting advisory delegates and representatives and their alternates shall be forwarded by the district secretary before the announced registration deadline to the Secretary of the Synod on registration forms provided by the latter.

(b) This procedure shall constitute certification.

C. COMMISSION ON THEOLOGY AND CHURCH RELATIONS, STAFF REPRESENTATION AT SYNOD CONVENTIONS

Rationale

The Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR) requested attention to Bylaw 3.1.4.1, which fixes the default advisory representation of the Synod's commissions at Synod conventions, for CTCR, providing for a single "principal staff person" (Bylaw 3.1.4.1 [a]) to participate unless the Board of Directors makes an exception prior to each convention. CTCR has two executive staff members (not just one "principal staff person"), of whom it desires to make maximal use at the convention and during prior floor committee work. The Board of Directors has regularly granted an exception to allow this, but CTCR desires not to have to make this a standing request. Bylaw 3.1.4.1 (a) was amended in 2016 (Res. 11-17) to include the executive directors of ONM and OIM. The CTCR staff issue was left unaddressed. The CTCR is the only commission with executive staff. The Commission on Handbook has proposed the following (Item 19-022).

Therefore be it

Resolved, That Bylaw 3.1.4.1 (b) be amended as follows:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

3.1.4.1 Each board and commission of the Synod shall be represented at conventions of the Synod.

(a) Each board or commission shall be represented by its chairman or another board or commission member and by its principal staff person. The boards for National and International Mission shall also be represented by the executive directors of the Offices of National and International Mission, respectively.

(b) Standing exceptions shall be the Board of Directors, the Commission on Constitutional Matters, the Commission on Handbook, and the Commission on Theology and Church Relations, who may be represented by as many of their membership and executive staff as they deem necessary.

(c) Other exceptions must have the approval of the Board of Directors of the Synod prior to each convention.

D. LUTHERAN CHURCH EXTENSION FUND DISTRICT MEMBERSHIP FORMULA

Rationale

The formula by which the corporate membership of The Lutheran Church Extension Fund—Missouri Synod (LCEF) is calculated is stated in the Bylaws of LCEF and was also copied into the Synod Bylaws pursuant to 1983 Resolution 4-03 (*Proceedings*, 166), presently as Bylaw 3.6.4.2.2. (Typographical errors in the formula, present in the printed 2016 and 2019 *Handbooks*, have already been corrected by the Commission on Handbook.)

While the formula itself has remained unchanged, the LCEF Bylaws were amended in November 1990 to limit the total number of district members to a maximum of 135, so that the formula was used thereafter on a *pro rata* basis, to compute the *fraction* of the total 135 district members to be assigned to each district, rather than to compute a raw number of members per district, which would have allowed the membership to grow without bound. The formula has been applied in this manner ever since.

No corresponding change has, however, been made to Synod Bylaws to indicate explicitly that the formula is to be applied on a *pro rata* basis. Noting that this is not a change to the formula, but a clarification of how the formula has historically been applied, it is proposed to revise Bylaw 3.6.4.2.2 as follows to reflect more clearly what is the established and ongoing practice. The proposal leaves the definite number of delegates to be prescribed in LCEF Bylaws,

where, subject to approval by the Synod's Commission on Constitutional Matters and Board of Directors, as well as by the LCEF membership (Bylaws 3.6.1.7, 8 [c]), the cap may someday be adjusted in the interest of efficient and effective membership meetings. The Commission on Handbook has proposed the following (Item 19-021).

Therefore be it

Resolved, That Bylaw 3.6.4.2.2 be amended as follows:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

The Lutheran Church Extension Fund—Missouri Synod

...

3.6.4.2 As established by its bylaws, the members of the Lutheran Church Extension Fund—Missouri Synod are divided into two classes.

3.6.4.2.1 One class of members consists of the President of the Synod or his representative, the Chief Financial Officer of the Synod, and such additional members appointed by the Board of Directors of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod as shall equal one for each ten members of the other class of members.

3.6.4.2.2 The second class of members consists of representatives of participating districts, ~~the number determined according to the following formula, with any fraction rounded to the nearest whole number of a total number set by the bylaws of the Lutheran Church Extension Fund—Missouri Synod, with representation allotted proportionally to the districts according to the following formula, except that at least one representative shall be allotted to each district:~~

$$\frac{\text{Baptized Members}}{50,000} + \frac{\text{Investments}}{\$10,000,000} + \frac{\text{Investments}}{\text{Baptized Members}} \times 0.015 + \frac{\text{Fund Balance}}{\$100,000} \times 0.010 = \text{Number of Members per District}$$

E. SEMINARY AND UNIVERSITY "SURPLUS FUNDS"

Rationale

Bylaws 3.10.5.5 (e)(2) and 3.10.6.4 lack a clear definition of "surplus institutional funds." The Board of Directors (BOD) Governance Committee (Minutes of the Board of Directors, November 15–16, 2018, and May 21–22, 2021) has addressed itself to the requirement that such be deposited with the Chief Financial Officer of the Synod (seminaries) or Concordia University System (universities) for investment, the earnings being credited to the depositing institution. It may be noted that: (1) the requirement of Bylaw 3.10.6.4 (e)(2), dealing with the Synod's universities, is proposed for removal in the 2019 Res. 7-03 proposal on university governance, as presently conceived; (2) the Lutheran Church Extension Fund is today principally managing lines of credit and deposits of surplus funds, rather than doing so through the Concordia University System as an intermediary; (3) that the seminaries and universities have developed capacity for other investment approaches. In its meeting of April 28, 2021, the BOD Governance Committee recommended simply striking both passages, a proposal with which the Commission on Handbook concurs in its Item 19-004.

Therefore be it

Resolved, That Bylaw 3.10.5.5 (e) be amended as follows:

~~PRESENT/PROPOSED~~ WORDING**E. Seminary Boards of Regents**

...

3.10.5.5 The board of regents of each theological seminary shall become familiar with and develop an understanding of pertinent policies, standards, and guidelines of the Synod.

...

(e) It shall approve institutional fiscal arrangements, develop the financial resources necessary to operate the seminary, 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 the Synod.~~

~~(2) All surplus institutional funds above an adequate working balance shall be deemed to be surplus and shall be deposited with the Chief Financial Officer of the Synod for investment. Earnings from such investments shall be credited to the depositing seminary.~~

...

and be it further

Resolved, That Bylaw 3.10.6.4 (e) be amended as follows:

~~PRESENT/PROPOSED~~ WORDING**F. Concordia University System Boards of Regents**

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.

...

(e) It shall approve institutional fiscal arrangements, develop the financial resources necessary to operate the institution, and participate in its financial support.

~~(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. REGISTRATION PROCEDURE FOR PRESIDENTIAL VOTERS

Rationale

Bylaw 3.12.2.3 governs the registration of presidential voters by the congregations-and-parishes of the Synod. This process involves the collection of name, address, e-mail address, phone, and a “security question” for the pastoral and lay voters to be registered. Handwriting of this information on a form and subsequent data entry have proven very error-prone and time-consuming. Especially the important e-mail address has been a challenge. Improperly completed or signed forms take a long time to detect and correct, with the consequence that some congregations have difficulty completing the process in time.

The Office of the Secretary implemented an online registration process in preparation for this convention to address the above issues and to allow for districts to be involved in reminding congregations to register their voters, as required by 2019 Res. 9-16 and its amendment of Bylaw 3.12.2.3 (d). This required an interpretation of the Commission on Constitutional Matters (CCM

Op. 20-2930) to understand an online interface to be within the definition of “form” and the “signatures” required to be satisfied by “verifiable attestations, by some commonly understood means of physical or electronic signature.”

Proposed is to adapt the language of the Bylaw to be similar to the “secure and verifiable method” used elsewhere, so as to clarify requirements without seeming to imply use of an unwieldy paper process.

Therefore be it

Resolved, That Bylaw 3.12.2.3 be amended 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 each member congregation or multi-congregation parish (assisting pastors are not eligible)

(2) a lay person from the congregation or parish

(b) The congregation or parish shall present to the Secretary of Synod 90 days prior to the election ~~a proper credentials form provided, via a secure and verifiable method provided by the Secretary, the voter(s) selected by the congregation or parish, signed as well as an attestation by two of the congregation's officers that the voter(s) are properly authorized by the congregation to vote on its behalf.~~ 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.

(c) If one or both voters are unavailable, congregations shall be provided opportunity to select substitute voters up to a deadline designated by the Secretary.

(d) The registration status of congregations shall be made available to respective district presidents for the sole purpose of their encouraging registration for greater congregational participation. The registration status of congregations shall not be further disseminated.

G. NOMINATION PROCEDURE FOR REGIONAL VICE-PRESIDENTS

Rationale

The Office of the Secretary implemented for the first time, in connection with the 2023 convention, “a secure and verifiable” online method for submission of congregational nominations for President, First Vice-President, and regional vice-presidents of the Synod. The use of a “secure and verifiable” (possibly electronic) method was enabled by 2010 Res. 3.12.2.4, to which this language in Bylaw 3.12.2 (b–c) is due. The same convention made the second and following vice-presidents regional (2010 Res. 8-14A) but copied over the *old* procedure used for pre-convention nomination of the President and First Vice-President (paper ballots, signed by two officers) rather than adopting the new “secure and verifiable method” language. At the request of the Office of the Secretary, the Commission on Constitutional Matters (CCM) found in its Op. 20-2930 (CCM Minutes, April 24, 2020) that:

[In addition to 2010 Res. 8-14A, which provided for vice-presidents after the first to be elected regionally] [t]he 2010 Synod convention also adopted Resolution 4-07, which made a large number of bylaw changes pertaining to the preparations for conventions of the Synod. One of these bylaw changes altered how the President and *all vice-presidents* of the Synod were to be nominated. The 2010 change to then-Bylaw 3.12.1 eliminated

the requirement of 3.12.1 (b) that all nominating ballots be signed by the president and secretary of the nominating congregation, replacing it instead with a provision directing the Secretary of the Synod to provide “a secure and verifiable method that will offer opportunity to every congregation of the Synod to submit nominations.” This change was not, however, incorporated into the 2010 *Handbook* with regard to the nomination of regional vice-presidents.

...

Since the procedure for nomination by the congregations today applies only to the offices of President of the Synod, First Vice-President, and the five regional vice-presidents [and no longer to regional Board of Directors or mission board offices, which used a parallel paper process in the 2013 and 2016 conventions], it is the opinion of the commission that Resolution 4-07, adopted by the 2010 convention, can be followed in its original intention to allow the Secretary of the Synod to provide “a secure and verifiable method that will offer opportunity to every congregation of the Synod to submit nominations,” not only for the President of the Synod and the First Vice-President, but also for the five regional vice-presidents as well, without requiring the signature of the president and secretary of nominating congregations.

In its Item 19-014B, the Commission on Handbook has proposed “finishing the work” of 2010 Res. 4-07 and amending the language of Bylaw 3.12.2.7 to allow explicitly for the use of a “secure and verifiable” (possibly electronic) method for the election of the regional vice-presidents, to parallel exactly the language used for President and First Vice-President. While it found the change would only make explicit the sense of Bylaw 3.12.3.7 already determined by the CCM, it found the change important enough to be presented to the convention for adoption.

Therefore be it

Resolved, That Bylaw 3.12.2.7 be amended as follows:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

Nominations and Elections of Regional Vice-Presidents

3.12.2.7 After the results of the first-vice-presidential election have been announced, the convention shall elect five regional vice-presidents according to the following nominations and elections process.

(a) Each member congregation of a region (including any non-geographic-district congregations in that region) shall have been given opportunity, through a secure and verifiable method provided by the Secretary of the Synod, to nominate two ministers of religion—ordained from the clergy roster of the Synod with residence in its designated region as candidates for regional vice-president.

(b) ~~The Secretary of the Synod shall receive such nominations (signed by the president and secretary of the nominating congregation).~~

(c) The names of the five ministers of religion—ordained residing within the boundaries of each geographic region who receive the most nominating votes shall form the slate from which the Synod convention shall select by majority vote each regional vice-president.

...

H. ELECTION OF DISTRICT PRESIDENT AND VICE-PRESIDENTS

Rationale

In Commission on Constitutional Matters (CCM) Opinion 22-2987, a review of district bylaws, the commission noted that Bylaw 4.7.3 specifies a procedure for successive balloting for offices of the districts *other than* president and the vice-presidents. It is customarily understood that the proper procedure for president and vice-presidents is, should a ballot not produce a majority election, to produce a successive ballot by removing the candidate who received the fewest votes, repeating until an election occurs (cf. Bylaw 3.12.2.6 [b] but cfr. Bylaws 3.12.2.4 and 3.12.2.7 [e–f]). The variety of approaches available for President and regional vice-presidents of the Synod—both of which, to be sure, have unique election mechanisms not likely to be reproduced exactly on the district level—leads to a question, especially given Bylaw 4.7.1, which allows for district election regulations, provided that “these do not conflict with the Bylaws of the Synod,” of what is the proper procedure for use by the districts (Const. Art. XII 5).

In its Item 19-024, COH proposed that the common understanding be implemented clearly and explicitly in the Bylaws.

Therefore be it

Resolved, That Bylaw 4.7.3 be amended as follows:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

4.7 District Nominations, Elections, and Appointments

4.7.1 Each district may adopt regulations for the nomination and election of its president; the nomination, selection, election, ranking, and succession in case of vacancies of its vice-presidents; and the nomination or selection of any regional officers or regional board of directors members, as long as these provisions do not conflict with the Bylaws of the Synod.

4.7.2 A nominating committee of each district shall be elected by the district convention. Nominating committees may not be employed in the election of the president and vice-presidents.

4.7.3 A majority of all votes cast by a district convention shall be required in every election to all elective offices and elective board positions. ~~Except in the election of the president and the vice-presidents, the~~ The following regulations shall apply:

(a) Candidates receiving a majority on the first ballot shall be declared elected.

(b) In the election of the president and the vice-presidents, when a second or succeeding ballot is required for a majority, the candidate receiving the fewest votes shall be dropped from the ballot.

~~(bc) In other elections, when~~ ~~When~~ a second or succeeding ballot is required for a majority, the candidate receiving the fewest votes and all candidates receiving less than 15 percent of the votes cast shall be dropped from the ballot, unless fewer than two candidates receive 15 percent or more of the votes cast, in which case the three highest candidates shall constitute the ballot.

(ed) In every election balloting shall continue until every position has been filled by majority vote.

I. SUGGESTION OF NOMINEES FOR CIRCUIT VISITOR

Rationale

When the 2010 convention amended the process for election of a circuit visitor, an amendment made in the course of the convention adopted, instead of the initially proposed language (that “nominations for circuit [visitor] may be submitted by a voting congregation of the circuit *and by the district president, in consultation with the praesidium of the district*”) the practice that “the district president be provided opportunity to [instead of

nominate, as initially proposed] *suggest* eligible candidates from within the circuit.” The fact that the convention made this evident distinction between *nominating* and *suggesting a nomination* has led to triennial guidance of circuit visitors by the Office of the Secretary as follows:

“Nominations for candidates for the office of circuit visitor may be submitted by a voting congregation of the circuit and suggested by the district president, in consultation with the praesidium of the district” (Bylaw 5.2.2 [b]). Unlike names *suggested* by district presidents, which names may be added to the slate of candidates at the meeting by majority vote of the assembly, the names *submitted* by congregations must appear on the ballot for circuit visitor. All suggested or submitted names of pastors, whether serving congregations or emeriti, should be accompanied by pertinent information regarding each nominee (Bylaws 5.2.2 [d][1] and 3.12.3.6 [c]). All nominations must be received by the circuit visitor before the day of the circuit forum (Bylaw 5.2.2 [b]).

In its item 19-018, the Commission on Handbook, at the suggestion of the Secretary, proposed the following change that would make this practice, with regard to suggested nominations, an explicit part of the *Handbook*.

Therefore be it

Resolved, That Bylaw 5.2.2 be amended 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.

(a) Circuit forums shall meet at the call of their circuit visitors to select their circuit visitors no later than the time established by the district. 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.

(b) Prior to the day of the circuit forum, nominations for candidates for the office of circuit visitor may be submitted by a voting congregation of the circuit and suggested by the district president, in consultation with the praesidium of the district. Names suggested by the district president may, during the circuit forum, be received into nomination by a majority vote of the assembly.

(c) Each circuit may adopt procedures and methods that will insure efficiency and accuracy, including the use of mechanical, electronic, or other methods of casting, recording, or tabulating votes. The privilege of voting shall be exercised by the representatives from each member congregation of the circuit, who shall have been selected in the manner prescribed by the congregation (Bylaw 5.3.2).

Commission on Handbook

Ov. 9-03

To Clarify Bylaws Regarding Appointment of a Synodwide Corporate Entity Chief Executive **Rationale**

The Commission on Constitutional Matters (CCM) in its Opinion 21-2970 (Minutes, Dec. 3–4, 2021), in response to a request for clarification from a member of a synodwide corporate entity board, interpreted Bylaw 3.6.1.5 (a) to envision—instead of a process

whereby the board would present nominees to the President of the Synod for him to strike unacceptable names, leaving the remainder as the board’s appointment slate—a “continued dialogue by which the board and President jointly construct—by a process not specified in further detail in the bylaw—a slate of candidates in which they can mutually concur.” CCM referred the matter to the Commission on Handbook for clarification of the bylaw language; the latter commission now presents the following proposal, which recasts the appointment process, including any interim, in chronological order and more precisely describes its various steps. Therefore be it

Resolved, That Bylaw 3.6.1.5 be amended as follows:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

3.6 Synodwide Corporate Entities

General Principles

...

3.6.1.5 Synodwide corporate entities may create chief executive positions (who may be designated as an officer of the corporation) pursuant to Bylaw 1.2.1, and fill them in accordance with the Bylaws of the Synod and the human resources policies adopted pursuant to Bylaw 1.5.5.

(a) The chief executive shall ~~serve at the pleasure of the governing board~~ be appointed by the governing board according to the following process:

~~(1) The slate of candidates for the initial appointment of the chief executive shall be selected by the governing board in consultation with and with the mutual concurrence of the President of the Synod.~~

~~(2) In the event of a vacancy, the appropriate governing board and the President of the Synod shall act expeditiously to fill the vacancy. This governing board shall present its list of candidates to the President.~~

(2) Any appointment of an interim chief executive shall be made by the governing board in consultation with and the concurrence of the President of the Synod. Interim service shall last no more than 18 months, unless renewed by the governing board with the concurrence of the President of the Synod.

(3) Nominations shall be gathered by a process that includes solicitation, in an official publication of the Synod, of nominations from agencies and officers of the Synod and the congregational and individual members of the Synod, along with lay persons of the congregations of the Synod.

(4) The governing board shall from the nominees gathered, in consultation with and ultimately with the concurrence of the President of the Synod, select the slate (consisting of one or more candidates), from which the governing board shall attempt to select a chief executive for appointment.

(5) In the event of a failure to appoint or a declination, the governing board may as necessary repeat stages of nomination gathering, candidate selection, and appointment, but may only select an appointee from a slate established as described above.

(b) The chief executive shall serve at the pleasure of the governing board.

~~(31) The governing board shall conduct an annual review of its chief executive and, before the expiration of five years, conduct a comprehensive review.~~

~~(42) At the conclusion of each five-year period, the appointment shall terminate unless the governing board takes specific action to continue the person in the office, each subsequent term not to exceed five years.~~

~~(b) Any interim appointment of a chief executive shall follow a process similar to the initial appointment of a chief executive.~~

~~(1) Such interim appointees must be approved by the President of the Synod, and may not serve more than 18 months without the concurrence of the President of the Synod.~~

~~(2) Such interim appointees shall be ineligible to serve on a permanent basis without the concurrence of the President of the Synod.~~

(c) The chief executives shall normally attend all meetings of their board except when their own positions are being considered.

Commission on Handbook

Ov. 9-04

To Reaffirm “Bottom-Up Nature of Synod”

WHEREAS, The establishment of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod in 1847 under the guidance of C.F.W. Walther set aside the “top-down” polity structure found in the European church and firmly established its roots as a “bottom-up,” ministry-oriented church body; and

WHEREAS, The Synod is well established in supporting congregations and their needs by encouraging, strengthening, training, and providing through its many institutions; and

WHEREAS, We as a nation continually gravitate to a “single source” as a governing body, news source, or life solution, establishing a precedent to immediately seek the top executive for any matter of opinion or resolution for the sole purpose of personal efficiency and expediency; and

WHEREAS, There is a concern that for the same purpose of improved efficiency and expediency, the Synod is tempted to practice a more hierarchical structure; and

WHEREAS, A “top-down” polity structure robs the intimacy and identity that all ministry is local and the church loses its core family character; and

WHEREAS, Like a healthy body, the body of Christ is healthiest when all of her members fully participate; and

WHEREAS, The participation of her members brings forth ownership in the work that the Holy Spirit has set before her; therefore be it; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Synod reaffirm its historic role of strengthening and supporting congregations as emphasized under Article III and Article VII of the Synod Constitution:

Article III Objectives

The Synod, under Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions, shall—

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;

4. Provide opportunities through which its members may express their Christian concern, love, and compassion in meeting human needs;
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;
6. Aid congregations by providing a variety of resources and opportunities for recognizing, promoting, expressing, conserving, and defending their confessional unity in the true faith;
7. Encourage congregations to strive for uniformity in church practice, but also to develop an appreciation of a variety of responsible practices and customs which are in harmony with our common profession of faith;
8. Provide evangelical supervision, counsel, and care for pastors, teachers, and other professional church workers of the Synod in the performance of their official duties;
9. Provide protection for congregations, pastors, teachers, and other church workers in the performance of their official duties and the maintenance of their rights;
10. Aid in providing for the welfare of pastors, teachers, and other church workers, and their families in the event of illness, disability, retirement, special need, or death.

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.
2. Membership of a congregation in the Synod gives the Synod no equity in the property of the congregation.

and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod shall reaffirm its emphasis of serving congregations and assisting them in their work for the kingdom of God including the support of raising up church workers and lay leaders, supporting the planting of new outreach congregations throughout the world, as well as the support of campus and youth ministry.

Board of Directors
Florida-Georgia District

Ov. 9-05

To Create a Restructuring Task Force to Consider Transfer of Synod Congregations, Ministries, and Assets

WHEREAS, The baptized and communicant membership of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod is declining; and

WHEREAS, The COVID-19 pandemic and cultural trends have and are accelerating this decline; and

WHEREAS, Proactive planning is good stewardship; and

WHEREAS, Ecclesiastical structure is not mandated by Scripture and may be decided by congregations for the good of mission and ministry; therefore be it

Resolved, That the 2022 Atlantic District in convention memorialize the 2023 Synod convention to create a restructuring task force to report results and make recommendations to the 2026 Synod convention; and be it further

Resolved, That this task force be constituted by the Council of Presidents and include one lay person, one commissioned minister, and one ordained minister from each region of the Synod; and be it further

Resolved, That the following question be addressed: What are the short term (10 years) and long term (20–30 years) projections for Synod in the areas of:

- baptized membership;
- average in person weekly attendance;
- average digital weekly engagements;
- ordained workers;
- rostered workers;
- Lutheran school enrollment;
- funding for national Synod and districts; and
- the viability and adaptability of recognized service organization (RSO) partners and Synod entities (Concordia Plan Services, Concordia Publishing House) to transfer; and be it further

Resolved, That protocols be researched for orderly implementation in the event of a shut-down of Synod so that mission may continue with vigor. Special emphasis should be given to address transfer of congregations and assets that honors the local intention, and the study of the following questions:

- What is the process for Synod to consider this plan for adoption properly?
- What is a realistic timeline to enact the transition, if adopted?
- What are methods to help congregations, schools, ministries, RSOs, entities of Synod to celebrate restructuring as a healthy part of the life cycle that perpetuates ministry?

and be it finally

Resolved, That this matter be undertaken only with prayerful reliance on the Holy Spirit and in a spirit of humility to God's goodness to work in and through Synod, even if that means a restructuring for the sake of mission and ministry.

Atlantic District

Ov. 9-06

To Recommend Moving to 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

WHEREAS, Significant savings of time and money would be made possible by moving to a four-year cycle; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Synod adopt a four-year convention cycle; and be it further

Resolved, That the President of the Synod, district presidents, and circuit visitors, and their respective staff utilize the extra year to accomplish visitation and the implementation of both district and Synod resolutions in a more reasonable and equitable fashion; and be it further

Resolved, That this become effective upon completion of the 2023 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 2023 Synod convention for immediate implementation of election cycles, terms of office, staggering of terms, and any other necessary issues that arise prior to the 2027 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, English District;

Board of Directors, Kansas District

Ov. 9-07

To Adopt Four-Year Convention Cycle

WHEREAS, The 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, The direct cost of the 2019 Synod convention was over \$4 million; and

WHEREAS, We currently have a three-year convention cycle resulting in four conventions in 12 years totaling an estimated direct cost of \$16.8 million; and

WHEREAS, As one of 35 districts, the expenses of the 2022 Nebraska District convention was \$122,841, and the expenses of the last four district conventions was \$502,511; and

WHEREAS, The overall cost to host a district or national convention has continued to increase over the years, with this cost borne by offerings and convention assessments received from congregations, many of which are struggling financially, impacting district and national budgets; and

WHEREAS, The amount of time and resources of Synod and district staff dedicated for convention preparation is astronomical and could be redirected to other opportunities for the work of the Church; and

WHEREAS, We are all charged to be good stewards of our time and treasure; and

WHEREAS, The one-year extension due to COVID-19 has shown us that there is no meaningful disadvantage to four years between conventions; and

WHEREAS, Moving to a four-year convention cycle may give the Synod and districts new opportunities to focus on the Church's common mission and confession, particularly on contemporary issues faced by the Church through theological conferences; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Synod adopt a four-year convention cycle; and be it further

Resolved, That the four-year cycle would be as follows:

- year one: additional time for visitation, implementation of convention resolutions, and regional gatherings for theological conferences;
- year two: circuit forums meet for the purpose of discussions of theology and collaborative efforts in ministry and mission work;
- year three: district conventions;
- year four: national convention;

and be it further

Resolved, That the Council of Presidents develop additional resources to assist the circuit visitors in facilitating circuit forums and the renewed emphasis on visitation; 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.
2. ...

and be it further

Resolved, That this become effective upon completion of the 2026 Synod convention and shall affect every Synod and district convention thereafter; and be it further

Resolved, That a task force be formed and charged to change any additional bylaw provisions for adoption at the 2026 Synod convention for immediate implementation of election cycles, terms of office, staggering terms, and any other necessary issues to bring them into conformity with such a four-year cycle; and be it further

Resolved, That this task force consist of:

1. one member of the Commission on Handbook (COH), appointed by the COH, who shall serve as chair;
2. one member of the Commission on Constitutional Matters (CCM), appointed by the CCM;
3. the Secretary of Synod;
4. the Chief Financial Officer of Synod, or his designee;
5. two district presidents, appointed by the Council of Presidents (COP);
6. two district business managers, appointed by the COP; and
7. two lay members of a district board of directors, appointed by the COP, with no district—except the Missouri District—represented by more than one task force member;

and be it finally

Resolved, That this task force shall present its report to the Synod, and that it be published on the Synod's website, at least one year prior to the 2026 Synod convention.

Board of Directors
Nebraska District

Ov. 9-08

To Move to Four-Year Convention Cycle

WHEREAS, The social upheaval and financial uncertainty of the past two years have presented significant challenges for the

congregations and workers of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS), as well as the districts and the Synod; and

WHEREAS, In the face of these financial pressures, a greater burden has been placed on our workers as more have moved to multi-point service positions or have had to seek secular employment, becoming bi-vocational, often negatively impacting their families, as well as their service to congregations and places of service in the church; and

WHEREAS, Congregations have in increasing numbers been forced to form multi-point parishes, and some ultimately experience closure; and

WHEREAS, These challenges have led congregations and districts to an even greater awareness of the need to practice good stewardship of the gifts and offerings received from the sacrificial contributions of their members; and

WHEREAS, The congregations, districts, and the Synod have demonstrated their sensitivity to the challenges and problems faced, as well as their ability to respond in a timely, scriptural, and thoughtful manner; and

WHEREAS, The Synod could realize significant savings of time and money by moving to a four-year convention cycle; and

WHEREAS, A move from a three-year cycle to a four-year cycle would allow for the gifts and offerings of the people of the Synod to increasingly support the fundamental mission and ministry of congregations, districts, and the Synod; therefore be it

Resolved, That the LCMS adopt a four-year cycle, amending Constitution Article VIII A 1 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.
2. ...

and be it further,

Resolved, That the four-year cycle would be as follows:

- year one: circuit forums for the establishment of relationships, building of collegiality, the encouragement of the members of the circuit, especially the lay members; and discussion of theology/practice and collaborative opportunities for mission and ministry within the circuit, especially in light of national convention action(s);
- year two: district conventions;
- year three: circuit forums for the establishment of relationships, building of collegiality, the encouragement of the members of the circuit, especially the lay members, and discussion of theology/practice and collaborative opportunities for mission and ministry within the circuit, especially in light of district convention action(s), election of national convention delegates would also take place;
- year four: national convention;

and be it further,

Resolved, That this become effective upon completion of the 2023 convention and subsequent congregational approval of the constitutional amendment, and shall affect subsequent Synod and district conventions; and be it further

Resolved, That bylaw provisions shall be determined for adoption by the 2023 convention for the implementation of election cycles, terms of office, staggering of terms, and all necessary issues which may arise prior to the 2027 convention; and be it finally

Resolved, That the Commission on Handbook be charged with the responsibility to update and amend all additional bylaws to bring them into conformity with this four-year cycle.

Board of Directors
Northern Illinois District

Ov. 9-09

To Change to Four-Year Convention Cycle

WHEREAS, It has been studied and discussed for several years to move from a three-year district and Synod convention cycle to a four-year cycle; and

WHEREAS, Such a change would save millions of dollars in district and Synod convention expenses; and

WHEREAS, Moving to a four-year convention cycle would demonstrate a sensitivity to the financial challenges facing many congregations and a commitment to practice wise stewardship; and

WHEREAS, In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Synod and many districts pivoted temporarily to a four-year convention cycle without great difficulty; and

WHEREAS, The Southeastern District in its 2022 convention voted to forward this overture to the Synod Convention for consideration; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Synod adopt a four-year convention cycle, effective upon completion of the 2023 Synod convention.

Southeastern District

Ov. 9-10

To Continue Four-Year Convention Cycle

WHEREAS, Many congregations are facing significant financial pressures that have led to pastors seeking secular employment, to multi-point parishes, and even to closure. These pressures also necessitate greater grassroots dialogue and collaboration at the circuit level. The costs associated with district and national conventions are ultimately borne by congregations, for whom the current three-year cycle leads to a heavy burden. The rising costs of such conventions should cause the Synod to consider how to practice wise stewardship and facilitate conversations at the grassroots level that could lead to greater collaboration and aid our walking together; and

WHEREAS, The upheaval of the last three years and The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod's ability to respond to such upheaval at a national, district, circuit, and congregational level has shown that a four-year cycle was tenable and that district and Synod leadership were able to respond to issues without waiting for conventions; and

WHEREAS, Moving to a four-year convention cycle would demonstrate a sensitivity to the challenges facing congregations and the commitment to practice wise stewardship so that less funds are taken from the support of ministry and mission work; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Synod adopt a four-year convention cycle; and be it further

Resolved, That the four-year cycle would be as follows:

- year one: circuit forums meet for the purpose of discussions of theology and collaborative efforts in ministry and mission work;
- year two: district conventions;
- year three: circuit forums for the purpose of theology and collaborative efforts in ministry and mission work; and
- year four: 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 the Council of Presidents develop additional resources to assist the circuit visitors in facilitating circuit forums and the renewed emphasis on visitation; and be it further

Resolved, That this become effective upon completion of the 2023 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 2023 convention for immediate implementation of election cycles, terms of office, staggering terms, and any other necessary issues that arise prior to the 2027 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 all additional related bylaws to bring them into conformity with such a four-year cycle.

Board of Directors
Missouri District

Ov. 9-11

To Appoint Task Force to Evaluate Current Electoral Circuit Parameters

Rationale: The Principle of Franchise in the Synod

The basic principle of franchise in the Synod at the time of its formation in 1847 involved two essential components. The first essential component was that the Synod consisted of equal (*Pfarrgemeinde*) (pastor-congregation), no matter their numerical size, and it was these *Pfarrgemeinde* (pastor-congregations) that held the franchise. The second essential component was the maintaining of a "balance of power" in the conventions of the Synod between the clergy and the laity. To accomplish this principle of franchise, the 1847 Constitution of the Synod assigned the franchise to each member *Pfarrgemeinde* of the Synod, with each *Pfarrgemeinde* to receive two votes, one to be cast by its pastor and the other, by the lay delegate accredited by the congregation.

The German term used was *Pfarrgemeinde*, and it was defined in a footnote to the 1847 Constitution as “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.”

In 1924, when the Constitution was translated into English from German, the term “parish” was used in reference to situations in which a pastor served more than one individual congregation and the term “congregation” was used to reference situations in which a pastor served only one congregation. Thus, each congregation or parish (in this specific limited sense) was entitled to two votes, one by its pastor, and the other by its accredited lay delegate. Today the term “parish” has been replaced with “multi-congregation parish” (Constitution Article XII 10 a).

A. The Historic Practice of Franchise at the Conventions of the Synod

At the time of its inception every congregation or parish was entitled to send its pastor and a lay delegate to the conventions of the Synod. When the Synod divided into districts this did not change. Each congregation or parish sent two delegates to both the conventions of the Synod and the district. The entire Synod would meet in convention every three years and the districts would meet in convention annually.

Originally conventions were held in one of the congregations of the Synod. As a result of the growth of the Synod, it was becoming difficult to find host congregations large enough to provide the necessary housing for all the delegates. Therefore, it was proposed to the 1864 convention to begin to hold delegate conventions. However, the congregations in Fort Wayne and St. Louis assured the convention that they would have no problem serving as hosts, so no changes were adopted (1864 *Proceedings*, 3). However, by 1869 this assurance proved to be unrealistic, and C.F.W. Walther suggested establishing delegate conventions. Professor George Schick was given the responsibility to develop a plan. This tentative plan was for two or more congregations to select one pastor and one lay delegate. When the plan was adopted in 1872 it was specified that the pastor and lay delegate should be selected from between two to seven congregations (1872 *Proceedings*, 96–97). Presumably, small congregations would form large groupings and large congregations would form small groupings. While the convention was originally scheduled for 1875, the first delegate convention was convened a year earlier in 1874.

The suggestion for a delegate convention, proposed in 1869, was actually the second grouping of congregations within the Synod. Prior to this formation of electoral circuits, visitation circuits had been established by the Synod at its 1866 convention. While the two existed side by side, they were created for completely different purposes. Electoral circuits functioned only for the purpose of selecting delegates to conventions of the Synod. However, the concept behind the establishment of visitation circuits was to address a concern considered crucial from the very beginning of the Synod, which was to ensure and retain the unity of doctrine and commitment to the Scriptures and Lutheran Confessions within the Synod.

At the founding of the Synod in 1847 the responsibility for visitation to ensure unity and faithfulness to the Scriptures and Lutheran Confessions was assigned to the President of the Synod. When the

Synod divided into districts in 1854, one of the major concerns was maintaining this unity within the Synod, and it was resolved by giving the responsibility of visitation not only to the president of each district of the Synod, but also to the President of the Synod as well. However, with the rapid growth of the number of congregations in the Synod, it became impossible for the President of the Synod to carry out this duty of visitation. Therefore, the 1864 convention removed the duties of visitation from the general President and essentially entrusted all duties of visitation of the congregations and individual members of the Synod to the district president. The one exception specified was that if the President of the Synod was convinced that a district president had erred in his dealing with a congregation or individual member, the President of the Synod himself was authorized to investigate personally (1864 *Proceedings*, 4; 1873 *Handbook*, 89).

Again, due to the growth of the Synod, these visitation responsibilities quickly proved to be too great for a district president alone to carry out. Therefore, the 1866 convention adopted a resolution establishing visitation circuits of two to seven congregations in order to help the district presidents carry out their visitation responsibilities (1866 *Proceedings*, 85).

When the decision to have delegate conventions was adopted at the 1872 convention, while the guidelines were also set at two to seven congregations being given one pastor and one lay delegate, which was the same numbers as used for visitation circuits, there does not seem to have been any effort to have these two types of circuits coincide, or even an indication that they should. In both cases, districts were free to group them as they pleased.

In the ensuing years a significant variation in the size of electoral circuits developed among the various districts, with many districts having electoral circuits of two or three congregations. In an effort to reduce the number of delegates at Synod conventions, the 1893 Synod convention adopted a resolution calling for circuits to number between five to seven congregations (1893 *Proceedings*, 125). However, there was no change in Article III “Membership” as the 1899 edition of the *Synodical Handbook* does not reflect this continuing to read: “The power of this corporation shall be lodged with the accredited clerical and lay delegates of the congregations in actual membership with this synod. Not less than two and not more than seven congregations being entitled to one clerical and one lay representative in this organization at the option of said congregations, and only such delegates shall be entitled to a vote at the meetings of this Synod” (1899 *Handbook*, Fourth Edition, 54).

Synod President Dr. Ludwig Fuerbringer reported to the 1908 convention of the Synod that 77 of the 245 electoral circuits did not conform to this rule adopted by the 1899 convention, and he recommended enlarging electoral circuits to at least ten congregations. However, no action was taken until the 1917 convention, which would then become effective with the 1920 convention. This convention also adopted a resolution indicating that visitation and electoral circuits should coincide as much as possible (1917 *Proceedings*, 108–9). The following resolution is noteworthy as it explains the reasoning for the change.

Reducing Number of Delegates

On the past scale of representation in the Delegate Convention, Synod has become too large a body, both for effective dispatch of business and even more so with respect to the quartering of delegates. After considering various propositions, Synod

Resolved, 1. That henceforth from five to ten congregations shall combine to form an electoral circuit, with the understanding that the relative size of congregations shall determine how many shall constitute a circuit, provided, however, that no circuit comprise less than five nor more than ten congregations; each circuit, as heretofore, to be represented by a clerical and a lay delegate.

... (1917 *Proceedings*, English, 52)

These parameters remained in effect until the 1944 convention when a change was made, again prompted by the perception that the conventions were becoming too large. Note the reasons specified in the resolution adopted:

ACTION

The following resolutions submitted by Committee 6 were adopted:

WHEREAS, The number of delegates to synodical conventions is steadily growing larger; and

WHEREAS, This causes great difficulty in providing proper housing; and

WHEREAS, An equal reduction of delegates will not infringe upon the representation rights of any congregation; therefore be it

Resolved, That Art. IV, A, page 19 of the *Synodical Handbook* be revised to read: "Every ten to fifteen member congregations shall form an electoral circuit, which shall elect one pastor and one layman and their alternates to represent them at the conventions of Synod"; ... (1944 *Proceedings*, 207)

The Synodical Survey Commission Report, written by Dr. August Suelflow in 1959 indicated that in nine of the districts, the electoral and visitation circuits were usually identical. The other two thirds of the districts used a system which treated the two types of circuits independently in one degree or another. The report concluded that it is legitimate to question the degree to which the districts followed the encouragement of the 1917 resolution. Note the following from the 1960 *Handbook*, which sets the parameters, but makes no specific connection between electoral and visitation circuits:

1.51 Electoral Circuits of Member Congregations

An electoral circuit shall comprise from 10 to 15 member congregations. Each electoral circuit shall be represented by one pastor and one layman. Large congregations shall form small circuits, and small congregations shall form large circuits. A fractional portion remaining after the circuits have been formed shall be entitled to the same representation as a complete circuit (1960 *Handbook*).

The 1967 convention proposed a manner of electing delegates to conventions in a way which would ensure that there was some kind of an ongoing relationship between the congregations involved in the electoral circuits. It did this by both changing the parameters of an electoral circuit and tying visitation circuits to electoral circuits. It also proposed a means by which an electoral circuit, which did not meet the parameters, could request an exemption from the Office of the President. Note the following sections from the overture proposed in the 1967 *Workbook* (pp. 124–25):

To Revise *Handbook* Regulations Regarding Convention Delegates

Considerable confusion and dissatisfaction exist with reference to the election of delegates to the convention of the Synod and their accountability. For example:

1. *Electoral Circuits* (1.51). These have often been artificially created entities, with little cohesiveness, hindering effective postconvention action in implementing resolutions and even in transmitting information. We propose that representation be on the basis of the regular, permanent *visitation* circuits.

2. *Number of Congregations* (1.51). Present requirement: from 10 to 15 member congregations shall form an electoral circuit. Some visitation circuits have fewer than 10 congregations. If two visitation circuits are combined (we are proposing that provision be made for that possibility), the electoral circuit may well number more than 15 congregations. Furthermore, many have felt that representation should be based not on the number of congregations but on the number of communicant members involved. We propose a method based on *both* number of congregations and number of communicants, with a wide enough spread between minimum and maximum requirements in each category to take care of most situations and with a prescribed procedure which permits the President of the Synod to deal with those cases which still prove to be exceptional.

...

4. *Functions of the Delegate*. What does the delegate do? Presumably he attends the convention, studies, listens, dialogs, makes judgments, votes. And then, according to the present paragraph 1.55, he reports to the circuit the action of the Synod. And this is all? This delegate has just had the experience of a lifetime. He has been caught up in a great cause. He has gained fresh insights. He has grown tremendously in the faith. A fresh love for his Synod and for his Savior lives in his heart. And then he goes home. To what? We are of the opinion that the Synod should dignify this position and therefore recommend that the delegate be elected for a 2-year term, to serve until the next convention of the Synod. What a source of power this man can be for the mission of the church!

PROPOSED WORDING

1.51 Voting Delegates

Voting delegates shall consist of one pastor and one layman from each electoral circuit. An electoral circuit shall consist either of one or of two adjacent visitation circuits, as shall be determined by each district, on the basis of the following requirements: each pair of delegates shall represent from 7 to 20 member congregations, involving an aggregate communicant membership ranging from 1,500 to 10,000. Exceptions to these requirements and limitations can be made only by the President of the Synod upon the request of a district board of directors. Voting delegates shall serve a 2-year term, beginning with the convention; after the convention they shall function as resource persons in their circuit and assist in the dissemination and implementation of the synodical resolutions in their area.

...

The convention adopted the proposed wording for electoral circuits (1967 *Proceedings*, 121–22). The 2019 *Handbook* retains essentially the same wording with a slight change in structure and wording (Bylaw 3.1.2 [a–d]).

B. Current Trends

Due to demographic changes over the past several convention cycles, it has become necessary for more and more visitation circuits either to request an exemption from the President of the Synod or to be combined in order to qualify to meet the parameters

for an electoral circuit. The result has been a gradual decrease in the number of electoral circuits within the Synod and the number of delegates attending conventions.

The following table is compiled on the basis of the *Proceedings* from the various convention years and *The Lutheran Annual*. (Note the figures for 1967, 1969, and 1986 included the three Canadian districts and the Argentina/Brazil District*, which have since formed their own church body.) The 1967 convention was held prior to the adoption of the current parameters. The percentage in parenthesis for 1986, 2007, 2016, and 2019 states the percentage of visitation circuits which were also electoral circuits. The number of exemptions is unknown.

Year	Electoral Circuits	Delegates	Visitation Circuits	Congregations
1967	424 (441)*	882	?	5904
1969	478 (503)*	1006	?	5765
1986	558 (580)* (89%)	1160	624	5933 (6150)*
2007	639 (99%)	1278	643	6168
2016	568 (89%)	1136	633	5968
2019	551 (86%)	1102	636	5875
2023	?	?	625	5777

The current estimate for the 2023 convention is that approximately 20 percent of the visitation circuits currently do not qualify as electoral circuits, which would be about 125 of the 625 visitation circuits. This in turn would mean that if no exemptions to the parameters were granted by the President of the Synod, there would be about 500 electoral circuits sending delegates to the 2023 Synod convention and about 1,000 voting delegates.

What is unknown in the above table is the number of exceptions granted for each convention to visitation circuits that did not qualify as an electoral circuit and the number of visitation circuits that were joined together to form an electoral circuit.

These numbers indicate that a growing number of visitation circuits, because of demographic reasons, no longer qualify as electoral circuits. In addition, the current Bylaws provide no guidelines to the President of the Synod for determining whether or not to grant an exception, or the basis on which exemptions are to be considered. This ambiguity could result in questions being raised regarding why one visitation circuit is granted an exception while another is not. Another complicating factor involving circuits and voting, not covered by the Bylaws, is the fact that there are currently 13 multi-congregation parishes which cross district lines, as well as an additional 50 multi-congregation parishes within districts which are in different visitation circuits. This generates confusion in these situations regarding voting for a circuit visitor, eligibility to represent an electoral circuit, and voting at district conventions.

All of this points to the advisability for the Synod, due to demographic changes, to again consider the parameters for the electoral circuits which select delegates to conventions of the Synod to determine if they are adequate as they are or should be changed. In addition, it would be helpful for the Synod to clarify some of the

ambiguity in the Bylaws regarding multi-congregation parishes which cross district or circuit lines.

Therefore be it

Resolved, That the Southern Illinois District in convention memorialize the Synod in convention establish a task force to consider the parameters for electoral circuits, and to clarify any ambiguities in the Bylaws regarding exceptions to the electoral circuit parameters and to address situations of multi-congregation parishes which cross district and circuit lines.

Southern Illinois District

Ov. 9-12

To Re-evaluate Size Requirements for Electoral Circuits in the Synod

WHEREAS, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod had one million more members (35 percent more) during the time when our current electoral circuit minimum size requirements were set; and

WHEREAS, An increasingly large number of circuits ask for exceptions to the current rules due to changing demographics in order to make valid electoral circuits; and

WHEREAS, An increasingly large number of circuits are denied said exceptions and therefore a voice and vote; and

WHEREAS, Our Synod leaders have let it be known the number of exceptions has grown excessive and needs to change downward; and

WHEREAS, The recent COVID-19 pandemic has decreased attendance and membership in many congregations of Synod; and

WHEREAS, Realigning the circuits in the many districts throughout the Synod would potentially create less participation by pastors due to longer distances needing to be traveled; and

WHEREAS, A realignment of circuits to qualify for the current structure would result in fewer circuits and less representation of the unique areas within districts of the Synod; and

WHEREAS, Various districts throughout the Synod have experienced the increased need for exemptions over the past several Synod conventions; therefore be it

Resolved, That the number of communicant members for an electoral circuit be lowered after consultation by the Council of Presidents; and be it further

Resolved, That the required number of communicant members reflect the change in our Synod membership.

Florida-Georgia District

Ov. 9-13

To Memorialize Synod to Study Circuit Size Requirements

WHEREAS, Current Synod regulations concerning the size of electoral circuits (Bylaw 3.1.2 [a]) have made it challenging for some circuits and districts to achieve the minimum numerical requirements; and

WHEREAS, Prior to the last several Synod conventions, the Missouri District Board of Directors has requested exemptions for two electoral circuits each time that do not meet the minimum aggregate communicant membership; and

WHEREAS, It is the Synod's prerogative to set the requirements of electoral circuits in light of changing demographic and membership trends; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Missouri District in convention memorialize the Synod's Commission on Constitutional Matters and the Commission on Handbook to study the requirements of electoral circuits and provide a report to the Synod in advance of the 2026 Synod convention.

Missouri District

Ov. 9-14

To Amend Bylaw 3.1.2 to Reduce Electoral Circuit Confirmed Membership Requirement

WHEREAS, The declining membership of congregations has led to increased number of electoral circuits that fail to meet the minimum number of aggregate confirmed membership; and

WHEREAS, There has been an increase in electoral circuit exceptions requested prior to the 2023 Synod convention; and

WHEREAS, A significant number of the exceptions would not be necessary if the minimum number of aggregate confirmed membership were reduced slightly; therefore be it

Resolved, That Bylaw 3.1.2 be amended as follows:

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 ~~1,500~~ 1,250 to 10,000.

...

Board of Directors
Missouri District

Ov. 9-15

To Change Electoral Circuit Requirement

WHEREAS, Synod Bylaw 3.1.2 (a) states: "An electoral circuit shall consist either of one or two adjacent visitation circuits, as 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 1,500 to 10,000"; and

WHEREAS, The confirmed membership of many congregations in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod has been declining, thus also reducing the aggregate confirmed membership in circuits; and

WHEREAS, There is often change in the number of congregations within visitation circuits due to mergers or closures; and

WHEREAS, The necessity of making fewer electoral circuits due to visitation circuits barely missing the current minimum requirements of size to be an electoral circuit on their own creates fewer opportunities for these congregations and circuits to have direct representation at a Synod convention to both participate as

delegates in the convention and to bring back initiatives and resolutions of the Synod to the congregations of the circuit(s); and

WHEREAS, Districts from time to time realign visitation circuits in order to avoid the necessity of combining visitation circuits into electoral circuits; and

WHEREAS, Such realignment is sometimes necessary each triennium, despite the fact that, in the following triennium, aggregate confirmed membership may increase and additional member congregations may join circuits that are too small to be electoral circuits on their own currently; and

WHEREAS, Such realignment can adversely affect long-term relationships, which provide an important geographic connection for sister congregations and pastors to work collaboratively to more effectively carry out the Great Commission to make disciples of all people; therefore be it

Resolved, That Bylaw 3.1.2 (a) be amended as follows:

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 for the first Synod convention of each decade on the basis of the following requirements: each pair of delegates shall represent from ~~7~~ 5 to 20 member congregations, involving an aggregate confirmed membership ranging from ~~1,500~~ 1,000 to 10,000. Such electoral circuits shall remain valid for that decade, even if electoral circuit criteria is no longer met.

...

Michigan District

Ov. 9-16

To Change Size Requirements for Electoral Circuits

WHEREAS, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) had a million more members (35 percent more) during the time when our current electoral circuit minimum size requirements were set; and

WHEREAS, An increasingly large number of circuits ask for exceptions to the current rules for valid electoral circuits; and

WHEREAS, The recent COVID-19 pandemic has decreased attendance and membership in many congregations of the LCMS; and

WHEREAS, Many districts have experienced the increased need for exemptions; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Synod in convention lower the requirement for an electoral circuit to five churches and 750 communicants; and be it further

Resolved, That the required number of communicant members reflect the change in our LCMS membership.

Southeastern District

Ov. 9-17**To Eliminate Distinction between Electoral and Visitation Circuits and Communicant Membership Requirement of the Same**

WHEREAS, Synod Bylaw 3.1.2 (a) states: “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 1,500 to 10,000”; and

WHEREAS, Bylaw 3.1.2 (a) is the only place in the 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 (Augsburg Confession VIII; F. Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, III:409; Matt. 18:20); 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 priesthood and all church power, even if there are only two or three believers in them (*Church and Ministry*, Church Theses IV, VI, VII; Ministry/Office Thesis VII):

“As 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]” (idem, Church Thesis VII);

and

WHEREAS, All congregations, regardless of number of communicant members, are equally members of Synod and district, equally bound by the Constitution and Bylaws of Synod and district, equally obligated to fulfill the requirements of Synod membership, equally asked to financially support the work of Synod and district, equally called upon to uphold the confessional position of the Synod, and equally entitled to the benefits of Synod membership, nor are there any communicant membership requirements stated for member congregations in Synod (Constitution Articles V–VII; Bylaws 1.3.1, 1.3.4, 1.3.4.1, 1.3.5, 2.1.1–2, 2.2.1, 2.3.1–2, 2.4.1, etc.); and

WHEREAS, All member congregations of Synod, regardless of number of communicant members, are considered voting members of Synod (Const. Art. V; Bylaw 1.2.1 [y]); and

WHEREAS, The requirement of at least 1,500 communicant members in an electoral circuit is inconsistent with our doctrine of the Church (see third *whereas*, above); 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 where, due to population and membership trends, electoral circuits of ever-increasing and burdensome geographic size are required, as is acknowledged in Bylaw 3.1.2.1;

WHEREAS, The increasing geographic distances required to form electoral circuits of at least 1,500 communicant members is becoming an obstacle to efficient communication within such circuit, especially with the expectation that electors visit the congregations of the electoral circuit both to determine the sentiments of the congregations (Bylaw 3.1.2.2 [a]) and to report individually to each congregation represented at convention (Bylaw 3.1.2.2 [d]), which could require significant time and travel; and

WHEREAS, Close personal and congregational relationships are formed within circuits that greatly promote the stated goals of Bylaw 5.1.1 and these relationships are disrupted whenever there are changes to the formation of the circuit; therefore be it

Resolved, That the distinction between electoral and visitation circuits be eliminated and the Bylaws be amended to reflect this change by eliminating the words “electoral” and “visitation” in reference to the circuit; and be it further

Resolved, That the communicant membership requirement for circuits be eliminated; and be it finally

Resolved, That the South Dakota District in convention submit this resolution to the 2023 Synod convention for action.

South Dakota District

Ov. 9-18**To Allow Simpler Procedure for Circuit Elections**

WHEREAS, Every electoral circuit meets to elect voting delegates to the national convention of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS); and

WHEREAS, These circuits vary widely in size and composition of congregations; and

WHEREAS, There are circuits for whom there are five or fewer pastors eligible and willing to serve as voting delegates to the national convention of the LCMS; and

WHEREAS, Synod Bylaws 3.1.2.1 (d–f) mandate an unnecessarily complicated and confusing procedure of preliminary ballots and succeeding ballots; and

WHEREAS, In elections with few voters the possibility of tied votes is likely; and

WHEREAS, The electoral procedures in the Bylaws make no provision for dealing with tied votes; and

WHEREAS, Every congregation should be assured that elections are carried out in strict accordance with the Bylaws of the LCMS; therefore be it

Resolved, That Bylaw 3.1.2.1 be amended as follows:

~~PRESENT~~/PROPOSED WORDING

3.1.2.1 Elections of voting delegates shall take place in accordance with established policy and procedure.

...

(d) Each pastor who is called and installed to a congregation of the circuit in a non-assisting capacity and not a specific ministry pastor shall be eligible for election.

(1) ~~Each~~ When there are at most five such pastors willing to serve, they shall constitute the ballot. Otherwise, each voter may write in the names of two such 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.

...

(e) Prior to the meeting of the electoral circuit, each congregation may nominate one layperson (i.e., not a commissioned or ordained minister), 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. When there are at most five remaining lay nominees, they shall constitute the ballot. Otherwise, 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.

...

...

and be it further

Resolved, That the Secretary of Synod, in consultation with the Commission on Handbook, evaluate all the elections procedures in the Bylaws of the LCMS to ensure that they are clear, consistent, and fair procedures for all aspects of elections, including what to do about tied votes.

St. John
Holbrook, NY

Ov. 9-19

To Ensure Lay Voting Delegates at Synod Convention

WHEREAS, Per Bylaw 3.1.2.1 lay delegates cannot be nominated on the day of a circuit forum; and

WHEREAS, Per the aforementioned Bylaw and the ruling of the Commission on Constitutional Matters (CCM), the district president cannot appoint a substitute lay delegate unless both a delegate and alternate are elected at the circuit forum; and

WHEREAS, Lay representation at the Synod convention is a vital aspect of our polity; therefore be it

Resolved, That Bylaw 3.1.2.1 be amended as follows:

~~PRESENT~~/PROPOSED WORDING

3.1.2.1 Elections of voting delegates shall take place in accordance with established policy and procedure.

...

(k) In the event a circuit fails to elect an alternate lay delegate because only one individual was eligible to stand, the circuit is permitted to hold a second forum to elect an alternate lay delegate.

and be it further

Resolved, That if the CCM rules circuits already have this ability, this be noted in future pre-convention instructions and this overture be considered moot.

Holy Trinity
Walnut, IL

Ov. 9-20

To Strengthen Nonvoting Advisory Delegate Participation at Convention

WHEREAS, Currently, there are 12,010 ministers of religion—commissioned (Church Worker Update System, March 2021) who serve the mission and ministry of congregations, schools, child development centers, camps, compassion centers, and mission work throughout the national and global mission fields; and

WHEREAS, The current structure of the Synod does not allow for a third category of voting delegates at district and Synod conventions (Constitution Articles IX; XII 10 b); and

WHEREAS, The Synod highly values ministers of religion—commissioned for their eagerness to serve the Lord and His Church (2019 Resolution 9-17, “To Study Voting Privilege in the LCMS,” *Proceedings*, 201); and

WHEREAS, ministers of religion—commissioned are considered advisory members with representation, voice, but no vote at conventions of districts and Synod, along with “those ordained ministers not eligible for election as a voting delegate under Bylaw 3.1.2.1 (d) ...” (Bylaw 3.1.3) with representation, voice, but no vote at conventions of districts and Synod; and

WHEREAS, Some districts utilize the voice and guidance of their ministers of religion—commissioned in district conventions through a non-counted advisory member vote; and

WHEREAS, The Atlantic District has passed resolutions in previous conventions to study and garner the guidance of ministers of religion—commissioned; and

WHEREAS, This honors the bylaw and structure of the convention while allowing the nonvoting advisory delegate voice to be heard and their vote recognized; therefore be it

Resolved, That the district enable nonvoting advisory delegates to provide a preliminary non-binding poll of resolutions, not elections, during its regular conventions; and be it further

Resolved, That each circuit forum elect two advisory delegates, at most one of which is a minister of religion—ordained, who shall exercise the privilege of voting in polls at regular conventions of the district; and be it further

Resolved, That the results of the advisory poll be announced prior to the delegate vote; and be it further

Resolved, That this become effective with the next district convention in 2025; and be it finally

Resolved, That the district in convention memorialize Synod in convention to pass a like-minded resolution.

Atlantic District

Ov. 9-21

To Strengthen Nonvoting Advisory Delegate Participation at Convention

WHEREAS, Currently there are 12,010 ministers of religion—commissioned (Church Worker Update System, March 2021) who serve the mission and ministry of congregations, schools, child development centers, camps, compassion centers, and mission work throughout the national and global mission fields; and

WHEREAS, The current structure of the Synod does not allow for a third category of voting delegates at district and Synod conventions (Constitution Articles IX; XII 10 b); and

WHEREAS, The Synod highly values commissioned ministers for their eagerness to serve the Lord and His Church (2019 Resolution 9-17, “To Study Voting Privilege in the LCMS,” *Proceedings*, 201); and

WHEREAS, Ministers of religion—commissioned are considered advisory members with representation, voice, but no vote at conventions of districts and Synod, along with “those ordained ministers not eligible for election as a voting delegate under Bylaw 3.1.2.1 (d) ...” (Bylaw 3.1.3) with representation, voice, but no vote at conventions of districts and Synod; and

WHEREAS, Four districts—Northern Illinois, Nebraska, Mid-South, and Pacific Southwest—utilize the voice and guidance of their commissioned worker in district convention through a non-counted advisory member vote; and

WHEREAS, This honors the bylaws and structure of convention while allowing the nonvoting advisory delegate voice to be heard and their vote recognized; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Pacific Southwest District affirm the trial practice of the 2022 district convention—supported by the district board of directors—to enable nonvoting advisory commissioned minister delegates to provide a preliminary advisory vote on all non-election, convention actions; and be it further

Resolved, That a pre-vote model of commissioned ministers become a regular practice of the district starting with the next district convention in 2025; and be it further

Resolved, That each congregation will have the right to send one commissioned minister, non-voting advisory delegate to the district convention; and be it finally

Resolved, That the district in convention memorialize the 2023 Synod convention to pass a like-minded resolution, encouraging other districts to do the same, and implementing this practice at the 2026 Synod convention.

Pacific Southwest District

Ov. 9-22

To Strengthen Nonvoting Advisory Delegate Participation at Convention

WHEREAS, Currently, there are 12,010 ministers of religion—commissioned (Church Worker Update System, March 2021) who serve the mission and ministry of congregations, schools, child development centers, camps, compassion centers, and mission work throughout the national and global mission fields; and

WHEREAS, The current structure of the Synod does not allow for a third category of voting delegates at district and Synod conventions (Constitution Articles IX; XII 10 b); and

WHEREAS, The Synod highly values commissioned ministers for their eagerness to serve the Lord and His Church, as in 2019 Resolution 9-17, “To Study Voting Privilege in the LCMS” (*Proceedings*, 201); and

WHEREAS, The Synod recognizes the voices and wisdom of our commissioned ministers as gifts from the Lord, and appreciates and gives thanks to God for the unique vocations of ordained ministers, commissioned ministers, and lay people alike; and

WHEREAS, Ministers of religion—commissioned are considered advisory delegates with representation, voice, but no vote at conventions of districts and Synod, along with “those ordained ministers not eligible for election as a voting delegate under Bylaw

3.1.2.1 (d) ...” (Bylaw 3.1.3) with representation, voice, but no vote at conventions of districts and Synod; and

WHEREAS, At least one other district (Northern Illinois) utilizes the voice and guidance of their commissioned workers in district convention through a non-binding advisory member vote; and

WHEREAS, This honors the bylaw and structure of the convention while allowing the non-voting advisory delegate voice to be heard and their vote recognized; therefore be it

Resolved, That the SELC District enable non-voting advisory delegates to provide a preliminary, advisory vote on convention business excepting elections at the discretion of the chair during its regular convention; and be it further

Resolved, That the results of the advisory vote be published prior to the delegate vote; and be it further

Resolved, That this become effective with the next district convention in 2025; and be it finally

Resolved, That the SELC District in convention memorialize the Synod in convention to pass a like-minded resolution.

SELC District

Ov. 9-23

To Strengthen Nonvoting Advisory Delegate Participation at Convention

WHEREAS, Currently, there are 12,010 ministers of religion—commissioned (Church Worker Update System, March 2021) who serve the mission and ministry of congregations, schools, child development centers, camps, compassion centers, and mission work throughout the national and global mission fields; and

WHEREAS, The current structure of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) does not allow for a third category of voting delegates at district and Synod conventions (Constitution Articles IX; XII 10 b); and

WHEREAS, The LCMS highly values ministers of religion—commissioned for their eagerness to serve the Lord and His Church (2019 Resolution 9-17, “To Study Voting Privilege in the LCMS,” *Proceedings*, 201); and

WHEREAS, Ministers of religion—commissioned are considered advisory members with representation, voice, but no vote at conventions of districts and Synod, along with “those ordained ministers not eligible for election as a voting delegate under Bylaw 3.1.2.1 (d) ...” (Bylaw 3.1.3) with representation, voice, but no vote at conventions of districts and Synod; and

WHEREAS, This honors the bylaw and structure of the convention while allowing the nonvoting advisory delegate voice to be heard and their vote recognized; and

WHEREAS, At least one other district (Northern Illinois) utilizes the voice and guidance of their ministers of religion—commissioned in district convention through a non-counted advisory member vote; and

WHEREAS, The Southeastern District in its 2022 convention voted to forward this overture to the Synod convention for consideration; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Synod enable nonvoting advisory delegates to provide a preliminary non-binding vote during its regular convention; and be it further

Resolved, That the results of the advisory vote be published prior to the delegate vote; and be it finally

Resolved, That this become effective with the next Synod convention in 2026.

Southeastern District

Ov. 9-24

To Strengthen Nonvoting Advisory Delegate Participation at Conventions

WHEREAS, Currently, there are 12,010 ministers of religion—commissioned (Church Worker Update system, March 2021) who serve the mission and ministry of congregations, schools, child development centers, camps, compassion centers, and mission work throughout the national and global mission fields; and

WHEREAS, The current structure of the Synod does not allow for a third category of voting delegates at district and Synod conventions (Constitution Articles IX; XII 10 B); and

WHEREAS, The Synod highly values commissioned ministers for their eagerness to serve the Lord and His Church (2019 Resolution 9-17, “To Study Voting Privilege in the LCMS,” *Proceedings*, 201); and

WHEREAS, Ministers of religion—commissioned are considered advisory members with representation, voice, but no vote at conventions of districts and Synod, along with “those ordained ministers not eligible for election as a voting delegate under Bylaw 3.1.2.1 (d)” (Bylaw 3.1.3) with representation, voice, but no vote at conventions of districts and Synod; and

WHEREAS, At least one other district (Northern Illinois) utilizes the voice and guidance of their commissioned workers in district convention through a non-counted advisory member vote; and

WHEREAS, This honors the bylaw and structure of the convention while allowing the nonvoting advisory delegate voice to be heard and their vote recognized; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Board of Directors work with the district president to establish a procedure for the rostered ministers of religion of the California-Nevada-Hawaii District to provide a preliminary poll on the resolutions proposed for the district convention; and be it further

Resolved, That the results of that poll be provided to the delegates at the convention prior to the convention vote; and be it further

Resolved, That this procedure be ready in time and become effective with the next district convention in 2025; and be it finally

Resolved, That the California-Nevada-Hawaii District in convention memorialize the Synod in convention to pass a like-minded resolution.

California-Nevada-Hawaii District

Ov. 9-25

To Strengthen Advisory Delegate Participation at Synod Conventions

WHEREAS, Currently, there are 12,010 ministers of religion—commissioned (Church Worker Update system, March 2021) in our Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) who serve the mission and ministry of congregations, schools, child development centers,

camps, compassion centers, and mission work throughout the national and global mission fields; and

WHEREAS, The current structure of the Synod does not allow ministers of religion—commissioned to serve as voting delegates for their congregations or electoral circuits at district and Synod conventions (Constitution Articles IX; XII 10 B); and

WHEREAS, The Synod highly values commissioned ministers for their eagerness and effectiveness in serving the Lord and His Church (2019 Resolution 9-17, “To Study Voting Privilege in the LCMS,” *Proceedings*, 201); and

WHEREAS, Ministers of religion—commissioned are considered advisory members with representation, voice, but no vote at conventions of districts and are represented by advisory delegates (Bylaw 3.1.3) with representation, voice, but no vote at conventions of the Synod; and

WHEREAS, The limited time of debate and a quick call of the question on many resolutions doesn’t allow the advisory delegates to actually advise the convention; and

WHEREAS, At least two districts (Michigan and Northern Illinois) utilize the voice and guidance of their commissioned workers in district convention through an advisory poll; and

WHEREAS, This honors the bylaw and structure of the convention while allowing the advisory delegate voice to be heard and recognized; therefore be it

Resolved, That the LCMS enable advisory delegates to provide an advisory poll during its regular convention; and be it further

Resolved, That the results of the advisory poll be shared prior to the vote of the voting delegates.

Michigan District

Ov. 9-26

To Grant Ministers of Religion—Commissioned Power to Vote at District and Synodical Conventions

WHEREAS, Scripture allows the church militant to organize in a variety of ways; and

WHEREAS, There is therefore no theological prohibition to prohibit commissioned and non-ordained church workers from the right to vote; and

WHEREAS, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod takes great pains in the theological education of all ministers of religion, both ordained and commissioned; and

WHEREAS, It is not good, right, or salutary that these workers be disenfranchised thusly; therefore be it

Resolved, That ministers of religion—commissioned as defined by Article V of the Synod Constitution be given the same ability as pastors to represent congregations and vote on their behalf; and be it further

Resolved, That Constitution Article V B be amended as follows:
~~PRESENT~~ PROPOSED WORDING

B. Individual Members

Individual members of the Synod, who are non-voting except for those pastors or ministers of religion—commissioned exercising the vote of a member congregation or congregations, are the following:

...

and be it further

Resolved, That Constitution Article IX 1 be amended as follows:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

Article IX Representation

The synodical meetings are composed of regularly elected and delegated representatives and of certain individual persons, as specified in the Bylaws, to wit:

1. Representatives of congregations, entitled to vote. A number of congregations shall form a group which shall be represented by two voting delegates, one a pastor or minister of religion—commissioned and one a lay delegate.

2. ...

and be it further

Resolved, That Const. Art. XII 10 be amended as follows:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

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 Delegates

Every member congregation or multi-congregation parish is entitled to two votes, one of which is to be cast by its pastor or a minister of religion—commissioned and the other by the lay delegate elected and deputed by the congregation or parish.

b. ...

and be it further

Resolved, That Bylaw 3.1.2 be amended as follows:

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.

...

(c) Voting delegates shall consist of one pastor or minister of religion—commissioned and one layperson from each electoral circuit. These ~~pastoral~~ ministerial and lay delegates and their alternates shall be elected according to the regulations of the Synod (Bylaw 3.1.2.1).

...

and be it further

Resolved, That Bylaw 3.1.2.1 be amended 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~~ minister of religion (either ordained or commissioned) and one layperson from each member congregation or multi-congregation parish of the circuit, both of whom shall have been elected in the manner prescribed by the congregation or parish. Congregations of a multi-congregation parish not contributing a lay voter may send an advisory lay representative, with voice but no vote. A pastor serving a congregation in an assisting capacity (Bylaw 2.5.6) is not eligible to cast that congregation's pastoral vote.

(d) Each ~~pastor~~ minister of religion (ordained or commissioned) who is called and installed to a congregation of the circuit in a non-assisting capacity and not a specific ministry pastor shall be eligible for election.

(1) Each voter may write in the names of two such ~~pastors~~ ministers of religion (ordained or commissioned) on the initial ballot. The three ~~pastors~~ ministers of religion (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~~ minister of religion shall have received a simple majority of all votes cast, whereupon he shall be declared the pastoral delegate.

(3) The congregation or congregations served (in other than an assisting capacity) by the elected ~~pastoral~~ ministerial (ordained or commissioned) delegate shall be removed from consideration for supplying any other voting delegate or alternate for that particular convention.

...

(f) All other ~~pastors~~ ministers of religion (ordained or commissioned) 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.

(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~~ minister of religion shall have received a simple majority of all votes cast, whereupon he shall be declared the alternate ~~pastoral~~ ministerial delegate.

(3) The congregation or congregations served by him or her shall be removed from consideration for supplying the remaining lay alternate.

...

and be it finally

Resolved, That Bylaw 3.1.3 be amended as follows:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

Nonvoting Advisory Delegates

- 3.1.3 The advisory delegates of a district convention shall consist, unless they present a valid excuse, of all individual members of the Synod within the district, except those ~~pastors~~ ministers of religion (ordained or commissioned) representing member congregations as voting delegates. In a convention of the Synod, all commissioned ministers and those ordained ministers not eligible for election as a voting delegate under Bylaw 3.1.2.1 (d) shall be represented as follows:

...

Christ
Mustang, OK

Ov. 9-27

To Restrict Synod Convention on Sundays

WHEREAS, Our congregations hold services every Sunday morning; and

WHEREAS, God our Father encourages us to sanctify the holy day by hearing God's Word; and

WHEREAS, Synod conventions are a wonderful time for delegates to learn about the congregations in the vicinity of the convention

and for area congregations to learn more about the Synod and be supported by their fellow Missouri Synod Lutherans; therefore be it

Resolved, That Synod conventions not be scheduled in session on Sundays before 2:00 p.m.; and be it further

Resolved, That convention delegates be encouraged to visit The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod congregations in the region of the convention.

English District

Ov. 9-28

To Establish Procedures for Delay of Meetings of Synod

WHEREAS, The “delegate convention of the Synod is the legislative assembly...” (Bylaw 1.4.1); and

WHEREAS, The “Synod convenes every three years for its regular meeting” (Constitution Article VII A 1); and

WHEREAS, In extraordinary circumstances such conventions may be impossible or imprudent; and

WHEREAS, In such cases there is no specific provision in the Constitution of the Synod for delay; and

WHEREAS, In such cases necessity will force the officers of Synod to seek remedies which were not intended to be used in these circumstances; and

WHEREAS, This situation will invariably create confusion and conflict within Synod; and

WHEREAS, In other cases of “urgent necessity” a special meeting of the Synod may be convened (Const. Art. VIII B); and

WHEREAS, Circumstances may also cause necessary delay to the conventions of districts of the Synod which affect the whole Synod; and

WHEREAS, A very high standard of agreement among the officers of Synod should be established to delay the meeting of the legislative assembly of the Synod or districts thereof; therefore be it

Resolved, That Constitution Article VIII A be amended as follows:

~~PRESENT~~/PROPOSED WORDING

Article VIII Synodical Meetings

A. Time and Legality of Meetings

1. ...
2. ...
3. In extreme cases which prevent the effectual meeting of Synod according to the schedule set above, a delay in meeting may be enacted according to the bylaws of Synod. At the least, such a delay must be initiated by the President of Synod with unanimous approval of the vice-presidents of Synod, three-fourths approval of the Board of Directors, and three-fourths approval of the presidents of the districts of Synod. After such approvals have been obtained, the approval of the congregations of Synod shall be sought according to the bylaws.

and be it further

Resolved, That the Commission on Constitutional Matters (CCM) and Commission on Handbook (COH) be directed to propose bylaws for approval of the convention of Synod which take into consideration the publication of notices and the various

timeframes which may be necessary for the delay of the regular meeting of Synod; and be it finally

Resolved, That the CCM and COH be directed to propose bylaws which provide a procedure for the delay of district conventions including consideration of the effect such delay would have on the Synod as a whole.

St. John
Holbrook, NY

Ov. 9-29

To Provide for Elections if Conventions Cannot Be Held

WHEREAS, COVID-19 has demonstrated that it may not always be possible to hold conventions; and

WHEREAS, In his letter addressing congregations about the vote to extend the 2019–2022 triennium President Harrison noted, “Our Synod’s Commission on Constitution Matters recently noted that if a district cannot meet, elected officers and the like will remain in office until the next year a district convention is to be held. For such districts, this would, in effect, result in a six-year term for elected officials (unless a special session would be held to accomplish the delayed elections)”;

WHEREAS, The congregations of the Synod voted by over 90 percent to extend the triennium to ensure conventions took place; and

WHEREAS, It is conceivable that some future event could arise that would prevent conventions from happening or delay them more than a year; therefore be it

Resolved, That Bylaw 4.7.6 be added as follows:

~~PRESENT~~/PROPOSED WORDING

4.7 District Nominations, Elections, and Appointments

...

4.7.6 In the event that a district cannot hold a convention during a given triennium or it must be delayed for more than one year from the end of the regular convention cycle, electronic or other distance voting shall take place for all elected positions under the following procedures:

- (a) All procedures outlined in Bylaw 4.7.3 shall be followed and applied to the election of the district president and vice-presidents except as noted in this bylaw.
- (b) No additional candidates may be nominated after the regular nominations window is closed. All candidates running uncontested shall be deemed elected without a vote.
- (c) The circuit visitors selected by their circuits in accordance with Bylaw 5.2 shall be deemed ratified without a vote.

and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod convention give thanks to God for the entire Council of Presidents, the Secretary of Synod, the Commission on Constitutional Matters, and all who worked diligently and faithfully to ensure conventions were held and elections took place rather than permitting themselves to retain office without an election.

Holy Trinity
Walnut, IL

Ov. 9-30**To Have Next Available Convention
of the Synod in Detroit**

WHEREAS, Detroit, Mich., has not hosted a Convention of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) since 1965; and

WHEREAS, Since the Pittsburgh Convention in 1992, the LCMS has deemed it wise to move the triennial Synod Convention to various cities across the United States, assuming competitive rates for hotels, travel, and convention sites, and thus helping create a deeper appreciation for our Synod and her faithful, biblical, doctrinal stances, confession, and practices; and

WHEREAS, The Detroit metropolitan area has a historically large LCMS population and has notable historic congregations, cemeteries, and history, as well as nearby Concordia University Ann Arbor, and is a major international airport and a hub of Delta Air Lines; and

WHEREAS, Synod Bylaw 3.1.9 (j)(3) states that “A district may submit an invitation to host the convention. In such case, a host group shall determine the minimum requirements from the convention manager, agree to provide any needed local support, and submit a proposal to the Board of Directors of the Synod for evaluation and consideration”; and

WHEREAS, The Michigan District and English District have headquarters buildings in the nearby area, and our partner synod, The Lutheran Church—Canada, has a concentration of congregations in Ontario and just across the Detroit River in Windsor and nearby counties; and

WHEREAS, The Michigan District and English District could team together in hosting the convention; and

WHEREAS, Significant Lutheran heritage and sightseeing is available in relatively close Frankenmuth, Mich., as well as in Dearborn, Mich. (including the Henry Ford Museum and Greenfield Village) and other cultural and sports amenities; and

WHEREAS, The Detroit metro area is a huge mission field, a highly multi-ethnic milieu, and one of the largest Black concentrations in the nation at a time when it would be wise for the LCMS to show its support of the Black community, in particular; and

WHEREAS, The Detroit metro area is also home to a huge mission field of Arabic and Islamic peoples who need to hear the Gospel of life and salvation in Jesus Christ; and

WHEREAS, The Detroit area congregations, schools, pastors, and church workers have demonstrated a high level of confessional witness and missionary support (one of the OIM Regional Director families is from Windsor, ON, and a member of a Detroit congregation); therefore be it

Resolved, That the English District, together with the Michigan District, determine to act as host by determining the minimum requirements from the convention manager, agreeing to provide any needed local support, and submitting a proposal to the Synod Board of Directors; and be it further

Resolved, That upon consultation and approval from the Synod Board of Directors, the English District, together with the Michigan District, invite the next available Synod convention to Detroit after the 2023 Synod convention.

English District

Ov. 9-31**To Restore Direct Voting by Congregations
to All Changes in, and Amendments to, the Synod’s
Constitution and Bylaws****Preamble**

Self-governance by The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) congregations is a fundamental and historical principle of how we as congregations come together as a Synod and walk together. Over the years, our governing documents (Constitution and Bylaws) have changed from unanimous congregational consent by each individual congregation to a representative determination through convention. This change alters the role of the individual congregations and deprives them of a direct vote in the structure of their governance. Self-governance is more than control over what we do as individual congregations internally; it is how we as collective churches relate. This overture seeks to restore the right of all congregations to exercise self-governance over changes in Synod governance.

Rationale

The founders of the early LCMS, especially C.F.W. Walther, were very protective of the self-governance of the individual congregations, so much so that the Synod’s first Constitution could only be changed through the unanimous approval of all congregations.

The self-governance of our LCMS congregations is a fundamental and historical principal of how we as congregations come together as the Synod and how we are “walking together.”

Over the years, our governing documents have been changed to shift the self-governance by the individual congregations to representative determinations by the Synod in conventions.

- Constitution Article XV 2–3 requires a two-thirds vote of the convention to send any constitutional amendment to the congregations for ratification. Conversely, one-third of the convention delegates can deny any proposed amendment from reaching the congregations.
- Bylaw chapter 7, “Amendments to Bylaws” allows all changes and amendments to the bylaws to be solely decided by the convention, thereby completely circumventing congregational approval.

This governance is contrary to the Synod’s founders view of self-governance which is expressed in the first Synod Constitution of 1847 Article VII, “About changing the constitution”:

Changes in and additions to the constitution may be made if they are not contrary to the propositions set forth in the second article of the present constitution and if all members of Synod, at the order of their congregations, to whom the matters have been presented a year in advance, unanimously adopt them. All proposed changes must be presented one year in advance to all congregations, and the vote for the changes must be unanimous.

This expression by the Synod’s founders shows that self-governance is more than control over what is done as individual congregation; it is how the Synod as collective churches relate.

Therefore be it

Resolved, That henceforth all changes to the Synod’s Constitution and Bylaws will be decided by direct vote to all member congregations; and be it further

Resolved, That Const. Art. XV be amended as follows:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING**Article XV Changes in, and Amendments to, the Constitution**

1. ...
2. ~~All proposed changes and amendments must be submitted in writing to the Synod assembled in convention, and each proposed change shall be voted on separately. A two-thirds majority of all votes cast shall be necessary for adoption.~~
3. ~~After adoption by the convention such amendments shall be submitted to the congregations of the Synod by means of three announcements in the official periodical within three months after the close of the convention.~~

42....

and be it further

Resolved, That Bylaw chapter 7 be amended as follows:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING**7. AMENDMENTS TO BYLAWS**

7.1 ~~Amendments to the Bylaws may be made using one of two procedures, provided they are not contrary to the Constitution of the Synod of the Synod shall be submitted directly to each voting congregation of the Synod on an official ballot, and the congregations shall by official action express their affirmative or negative vote and indicate the same to the Secretary of the Synod on this official ballot. The proposed amendment shall become effective at the expiration of six months from the date on which the amendment is submitted for vote, provided a majority of the votes cast within that period shall have favored the amendment. At the end of the six-month period the Secretary of the Synod shall announce the outcome of the voting by districts in the official periodical of the Synod.~~

7.1.1 ~~Amendments may be made by conventions of the Synod.~~

- (a) ~~They shall be presented in writing to a convention of the Synod.~~
- (b) ~~They shall be specified as bylaw amendments and considered by a convention floor committee.~~
- (c) ~~They shall be examined by the Commission on Constitutional Matters prior to presentation to the convention to determine that they are not in conflict as to content with the Constitution and Bylaws of the Synod.~~
- (d) ~~They shall be examined by the Commission on Handbook prior to presentation to the convention to determine that they are in agreement in language (terminology) with the current Handbook.~~
- (e) ~~They shall be adopted by the affirmative vote of a majority of the delegates present and voting.~~

7.1.2 ~~In exceptional circumstances and upon the express direction of a convention of the Synod, amendments may be made by a two-thirds majority of the Board of Directors.~~

- (a) ~~Such amendments to the Bylaws shall be necessary to implement resolutions adopted by a convention of the Synod.~~
- (b) ~~Such amendments shall be drafted by the Secretary of the Synod and shall be reviewed by the Commission on Constitutional Matters and the Commission on Handbook.~~

and be it finally

Resolved, That the Secretary of the Synod shall be responsible for implementing this task.

Huntington Woods
Huntington Woods, MI

Ov. 9-32**To Require Ratification of Commission on Constitutional Matters Opinions**

WHEREAS, Bylaw 3.9.2 states the Commission on Constitutional Matters (CCM) exists to interpret the Constitution, Bylaws, and resolutions of the Synod and ensure that the governing instruments of the Synod and its agencies are in accord with the Constitution and Bylaws of the Synod; and

WHEREAS, The CCM is not required to present all of its opinions to members of Synod; and

WHEREAS, Bylaw 3.9.2.2 (c) states “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, In the 2016 and 2019 Synod conventions, eleven overtures representing eight district conventions (including the Texas District Convention), twenty-five congregations, and two district boards of directors were adopted and submitted to specifically overrule a CCM opinion; and

WHEREAS, The 2016 and 2019 Synod conventions received no “specific report” in *Convention Workbooks* or *Today’s Business*, similar to all other convention reports in the form of a “statement of work performed or contemplated by those charged with conducting the business of the Synod” (Bylaw 3.1.6.1); and

WHEREAS, In the absence of such a report, neither were there any “recommendations for appropriate action” regarding the overruling of the CCM opinion; and

WHEREAS, The 2019 convention Floor Committee Two’s presentation on Resolution 2-07, which referenced these overtures, spoke to concerns “related to Bylaw 3.8.3,” (2019 *Proceedings*, 49, 125) but did not speak to the CCM opinion itself or the specific concerns raised in the overtures about how that opinion was contrary to the Synod Constitution or other Bylaws; and

WHEREAS, Such practice makes it possible for the opinions of the CCM to become binding without members of the Synod having the ability to speak to them, discuss and debate them, and if necessary, overrule them; therefore be it

Resolved, That a summary of all CCM opinions be made immediately available upon such an opinion being rendered in an official periodical, and the full opinion be made immediately available on the Synod website and be included in each *Convention Workbook*, all under CCM headings and with proper reference numbers; and be it further

Resolved, That Bylaw 3.9.2.2 (c) be amended as follows:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

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, panel, or agency of the Synod.

...

(c) An opinion rendered by the commission shall not be considered binding on the members of Synod on the question

decided ~~beyond the next Synod convention~~ unless and until it is ~~overruled~~ ratified 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 be it finally

Resolved, That the Texas District in convention memorialize the Synod in convention with this resolution.

Texas District

Ov. 9-33

To Provide Additional Information about Nominees for Elected Positions of the Synod and Districts

WHEREAS, Synod and district conventions of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod afford the opportunity for the election of qualified individuals to positions within the Synod and her districts; and

WHEREAS, It is the duty of voting delegates at these conventions, after prayerful reflection, to vote for the candidates that they judge will best fulfill the positions for which they have been nominated, understanding that such positions can carry great influence within the Church; and

WHEREAS, It is often difficult for voting delegates to make such judgments with confidence based solely on the biographical information normally provided, leaving many either to guess blindly or to follow the recommendations of different interest groups; and

WHEREAS, The Synod has a longstanding practice of providing additional information to congregations about ordained and commissioned ministers (e.g., Pastor Information Form, Self-Evaluation Tool, and Commissioned Minister Information Form), and this information has proved helpful to congregations in their decision-making; and

WHEREAS, Caution should also be taken that candidates do not seem to be campaigning for elected positions within the Synod and her districts; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Council of Presidents craft a common questionnaire to be used for all elected positions (ordained, commissioned, and lay) within the Synod and her districts which will allow nominees to address briefly their theological positions as well as their personal qualifications; and be it further

Resolved, That care should be taken so that this questionnaire doesn't appear to promote campaigning for elected positions; and be it finally

Resolved, That this questionnaire be submitted to all nominees for elected positions of the Synod and her districts, and their answers (if received) be made available in writing to the appropriate voting bodies at least three weeks prior to voting, beginning with the 2025 district conventions.

Circuit 26 (Kensington)
Michigan District

Ov. 9-34

To Return to Nomination and Election Process in Which Synod Convention Delegates Elect President

WHEREAS, The previous process of electing the President of the Synod at convention served the Synod well; and

WHEREAS, The current process of congregations electing the President includes emails, complicated procedures, usernames, passwords, congregation "attesting officers," costly internet technology support, as well as letters sent out as reminders; and

WHEREAS, Not all congregations may be making use of this privilege, especially vacant congregations; and

WHEREAS, The delegates at convention are entrusted with the duty of electing the other Synod officers to fulfill their important roles; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Synod return to the previous process included in the 2007 *Handbook* by amending the current Bylaws, specifically by striking Bylaws 3.12.2.3, 3.12.2.4, 3.12.2.5, and 3.12.2.6 of the 2019 *Handbook* and replacing them with the content of Bylaws 3.12.1.3, 3.12.1.4, and 3.12.1.5 of the 2007 *Handbook*, to read as follows:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

Elections of President and First Vice-President

3.12.2.1 The candidates for the office of President shall be the five 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.

(a) The Secretary of the Synod shall notify each candidate and shall secure his approval in writing within ten days after receiving the results of the ballots for the inclusion of his name on the ballot.

(b) In the event of the death, declination, or unavailability of any candidate, the nominee having the next highest number of votes shall become a candidate. In the event of a tie for the final candidate position, all names involved in the tie shall be included as candidates.

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 five 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.

~~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 (assisting pastors are not eligible)~~

~~(2) a lay person from the 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.~~

~~(c) If one or both voters are unavailable, congregations shall be provided opportunity to select substitute voters up to a deadline designated by the Secretary.~~

~~(d) The registration status of congregations shall be made available to respective district presidents for the sole purpose of their encouraging registration for greater congregational participation. The registration status of congregations shall not be further disseminated.~~

~~3.12.2.4 Six weeks prior to the national convention, 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. The Secretary shall, with the approval of the Board of Directors of the Synod, obtain the assistance necessary to accomplish this task. If no candidate receives a majority of the votes cast, a second or succeeding ballots are required for a majority; the candidate receiving the fewest votes and all candidates receiving less than 15 percent of the votes cast shall be dropped from the ballot, unless only one candidate receives 15 percent or more of the votes cast, in which case the three highest candidates shall constitute the ballot, and another vote shall be taken in the same manner.~~

~~3.12.2.5 Following the completion of the election and at least two weeks prior to the convention, the Secretary shall notify the candidates of the results of the ballot(s). He shall thereafter also make the results known to the public. The candidate receiving a majority of the votes cast shall be declared elected.~~

~~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 two 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.~~

3.12.2.3 The convention shall have the right to alter each slate at the proper time by amendment.

(a) The amendment procedure shall include merely a motion, a second, and a vote on the amendment, deliberately excluding verbal characterizations and discussion of the motion (except for the chair to ascertain that the requirements have been met as to eligibility, consent, and the filing of the biographical form).

(b) Delegates making nominations from the floor shall have secured prior written consent of the candidates they wish to nominate.

(c) Such delegates shall immediately submit to the Secretary of the Synod this document and written pertinent information concerning their nominee(s) as detailed in Bylaw 3.12.2.2.

(d) After all such amendments have been voted on, the convention shall ratify the slate of candidates prior to each election.

3.12.2.4 Each voting delegate shall be entitled to vote for one of the candidates for President. The candidate receiving a majority of the votes cast shall be declared elected.

(a) If no candidate receives a majority of the votes cast, the four candidates receiving the highest number of votes shall be retained on the ballot, and another vote shall be taken.

(b) Thereafter, the candidate receiving the smallest number of votes shall be eliminated on each subsequent ballot until one candidate receives a majority of the votes cast.

3.12.2.5 After the results of the election of the President have been announced, the convention shall then elect the First Vice-President according to the procedures outlined for the election of President in Bylaws 3.12.2.3 and 3.12.2.4.

Circuit 10 (Middle Tennessee), Mid-South District;
Circuit 9 (Nashville), Mid-South District

Ov. 9-35

To Elect Synod President at Convention

WHEREAS, Prior to 2013, the President of the Synod was elected at the convention; and

WHEREAS, The current process of congregations electing the President includes emails, complicated procedures, usernames, passwords, congregation "attesting officers," internet technology support, as well as letters sent out as reminders; and

WHEREAS, The Synod could save on manpower hours as well as the financial outlay of the above; and

WHEREAS, The delegates at the Synod convention are entrusted with the duty of electing the other Synod officers; and

WHEREAS, It is beneficial to work toward the depoliticization of the election of the President of the Synod, and strive toward greater harmony in our Synod; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Synod return to the previous process included in the 2007 *Handbook* by amending the current Bylaws, specifically by striking Bylaws 3.12.2.3, 3.12.2.4, 3.12.2.5, and 3.12.2.6 of the 2019 *Handbook* and replacing them with the content of Bylaws 3.12.1.3, 3.12.1.4, and 3.12.1.5 of the 2007 *Handbook*, to read as follows:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

Elections of President and First Vice-President

3.12.2.1 The candidates for the office of President shall be the five 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.

(a) The Secretary of the Synod shall notify each candidate and shall secure his approval in writing within ten days after receiving the results of the ballots for the inclusion of his name on the ballot.

(b) In the event of the death, declination, or unavailability of any candidate, the nominee having the next highest number of votes shall become a candidate. In the event of a tie for the final candidate position, all names involved in the tie shall be included as candidates.

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 five 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.

~~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 (assisting pastors are not eligible)~~

~~(2) a lay person from the 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.~~

~~(c) If one or both voters are unavailable, congregations shall be provided opportunity to select substitute voters up to a deadline designated by the Secretary.~~

~~(d) The registration status of congregations shall be made available to respective district presidents for the sole purpose of their encouraging registration for greater congregational participation. The registration status of congregations shall not be further disseminated.~~

~~3.12.2.4 Six weeks prior to the national convention, 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. The Secretary shall, with the approval of the Board of Directors of the Synod, obtain the assistance necessary to accomplish this task. If no candidate receives a majority of the votes cast, a second or succeeding ballots are required for a majority; the candidate receiving the fewest votes and all candidates receiving less than 15 percent of the votes cast shall be dropped from the ballot, unless only one candidate receives 15 percent or more of the votes cast, in which case the three highest candidates shall constitute the ballot, and another vote shall be taken in the same manner.~~

~~3.12.2.5 Following the completion of the election and at least two weeks prior to the convention, the Secretary shall notify the candidates of the results of the ballot(s). He shall thereafter also make the results known to the public. The candidate receiving a majority of the votes cast shall be declared elected.~~

~~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 two 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.~~

~~3.12.2.3 The convention shall have the right to alter each slate at the proper time by amendment.~~

~~(a) The amendment procedure shall include merely a motion, a second, and a vote on the amendment, deliberately excluding verbal characterizations and discussion of the motion (except for the chair to ascertain that the requirements have been met as to eligibility, consent, and the filing of the biographical form).~~

~~(b) Delegates making nominations from the floor shall have secured prior written consent of the candidates they wish to nominate.~~

~~(c) Such delegates shall immediately submit to the Secretary of the Synod this document and written pertinent information concerning their nominee(s) as detailed in Bylaw 3.12.2.2.~~

(d) After all such amendments have been voted on, the convention shall ratify the slate of candidates prior to each election.

3.12.2.4 Each voting delegate shall be entitled to vote for one of the candidates for President. The candidate receiving a majority of the votes cast shall be declared elected.

(a) If no candidate receives a majority of the votes cast, the four candidates receiving the highest number of votes shall be retained on the ballot, and another vote shall be taken.

(b) Thereafter, the candidate receiving the smallest number of votes shall be eliminated on each subsequent ballot until one candidate receives a majority of the votes cast.

3.12.2.5 After the results of the election of the President have been announced, the convention shall then elect the First Vice-President according to the procedures outlined for the election of President in Bylaws 3.12.2.3 and 3.12.2.4.

Circuits 3 and 4
Southern Illinois District

Ov. 9-36

To Conform Election of Synod President to Longstanding Practice

WHEREAS, The President of Synod has extensive responsibility for supervision of doctrine and the administration of the Synod (Constitution Article XI B); and

WHEREAS, There are five candidates for President of Synod (Bylaw 3.12.2.1); and

WHEREAS, The number of candidates was changed from three to five at the previous Synod convention (2019 Resolution 9-07); and

WHEREAS, Current bylaws provide that "if no candidate receives a majority of the votes cast ... the candidate receiving the fewest votes and all candidates receiving less than 15 percent of the votes cast shall be dropped from the ballot ..." (Bylaw 3.12.2.4); and

WHEREAS, This practice is contrary to historical practice for the election of the President of Synod (2007 *Handbook*, Bylaw 3.12.1.4) and current practice for the election of First Vice-President (Bylaw 3.12.2.6 [b]); and

WHEREAS, This practice may promote electioneering; and

WHEREAS, Voter participation in the election of the President of Synod is of concern (2019 Res. 9-16); therefore be it

Resolved, That Bylaw 3.12.2.4 be amended as follows:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

3.12.2.4 Six weeks prior to the national convention, 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. The Secretary shall, with the approval of the Board of Directors of the Synod, obtain the assistance necessary to accomplish this task. If no candidate receives a majority of the votes cast, a second or succeeding ballots are required for a majority; the candidate receiving the fewest votes and all candidates receiving less than 15 percent of the votes cast shall be dropped from the ballot, unless only one candidate receives 15 percent or more of the votes cast, in which case the three highest candidates shall constitute the ballot, and another vote shall be taken in the same manner.

and be it further

Resolved, That the Secretary of Synod, in consultation with the Commission on Handbook, consider the possibility of implementing the online presidential election using one ranked-

choice ballot and include the results of this consideration in his report to the next regular Synod convention.

Atlantic District

Ov. 9-37

To Expedite Ranking of Regional Vice-Presidents

WHEREAS, The ranking of the regional vice-presidents of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod is a matter of significance to the entire church body; and

WHEREAS, There are five such regional vice-presidents; and

WHEREAS, These elections could require as many as ten ballots under Bylaw 3.12.2.7 (g); and

WHEREAS, The ranking of vice-presidents inherently requires each voter to conceive of a preferred ranking of the vice-presidents; and

WHEREAS, The ranking of the regional vice-presidents could be carried out by asking each voter to rank the five vice-presidents and then simulate the current election process; and

WHEREAS, This would accomplish the important task of ranking the regional vice-presidents while saving time at the Synod conventions; therefore be it

Resolved, That Bylaw 3.12.2.7 (g) be amended as follows:

~~PRESENT~~/PROPOSED WORDING

3.12.2.7 After the results of the first-vice-presidential election have been announced, the convention shall elect five regional vice-presidents according to the following nominations and elections process.

...

(g) Upon the election of the regional vice-presidents, a final election will take place ranking the vice-presidents ~~by separate ballots with a simple majority of voting delegates determining the second, third, fourth, fifth, and sixth vice presidents in line of succession.~~ Each voting delegate will provide his preferred ranking of the vice-presidents as a single ballot. The determination of the second vice-president will proceed by tabulating only the first choice of each ranked ballot. If no vice-president is listed as first choice on a majority of ranked ballots, the vice-president with the fewest first-choice votes will be eliminated from each ballot and the remaining first choices on each ballot shall be tabulated. After selecting the second vice-president, his name shall be eliminated from each ranked ballot and the third vice-president shall be determined using each voter's truncated ballot. The determination of fourth, fifth, and sixth vice-presidents is made similarly. A voter may leave names off his ranked ballot. If all his named choices are eliminated, this voter shall be considered to abstain from that choice. The secretary shall post the results of this process by stages as if each voter had cast a ballot for a single vice-president at each stage of the election.

and be it further

Resolved, That the Secretary of Synod, in consultation with the Commission on Handbook, consider the possibility of implementing other elections in which a large number of ballots may be required using a single ranked-choice ballot.

St. John
Holbrook, NY

Ov. 9-38

To Provide for Continuity of Service in Regional Positions

WHEREAS, Various boards for The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod require candidates elected by the Synod convention for some or all positions to be residents of specified regions of the Synod to be eligible for election and continued service; and

WHEREAS, Currently, if a board member elected to a position from a given region relocates outside that region, the seat held by such board member becomes vacant and must be filled by appointment between conventions, which has resulted in an increasing number of vacancies for such positions that are then filled by appointment; and

WHEREAS, The Committee for Convention Nominations for the 2023 Synod convention believes that, ideally, positions elected from the Synod convention should be filled by the persons elected by the Synod convention insofar as possible, for purposes of continuity of service on the related board and the benefit of the related expertise thereby provided to such board, and thus that it is appropriate to allow a person elected from a region to continue to serve until the elected term expires even if such person relocates residence; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Synod in convention amend appropriate bylaws to permit any person who is elected by the Synod convention to a board position requiring residence in a particular region to complete the term for which elected even if such person relocates outside the region from which elected; provided that no person may be elected or appointed to any position unless such person meets the residence requirement as of the time of election or appointment, and further provided that such change shall not apply to regional vice-presidents.

Committee for Convention Nominations

Ov. 9-39

To Have Synod Regional Representation Determined by Regional Constituency

WHEREAS, Regions are designated by The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod in order to take into consideration information regarding the numbers and geography of the congregations in the interest of fair representation (Bylaw 3.12.1 [a]); and

WHEREAS, Individuals are considered in a regional election solely on residency in said region (Bylaw 3.12.1 [b]); and

WHEREAS, Each member congregation within a geographic region shall have been given the opportunity to nominate two ministers of religion—ordained from the clergy roster of the Synod with residence within its designated geographic region (Bylaw 3.12.2.7 [a]); and

WHEREAS, The names of the five ministers of religion—ordained residing within the designated geographic region who receive the most votes shall form the slate for a region's vice-president (Bylaw 3.12.2.7 [c]); and

WHEREAS, The Synod is bound to the fair representation for a region's congregations and therefore its represented constituency to Synod (Bylaw 3.12.1 [a]); therefore be it

Resolved, That Bylaw 3.12.2.7 (c) be amended as follows:

~~PRESENT/PROPOSED~~ WORDING***Nominations and Elections of Regional Vice-Presidents***

3.12.2.7 After the results of the first-vice-presidential election have been announced, the convention shall elect five regional vice-presidents according to the following nominations and elections process.

...

(e) Voting delegates to the national convention shall be entitled to vote for one of the candidates from ~~each~~ ^{his/her} own region. If no candidate receives a majority of the votes cast, the three candidates receiving the highest number of votes shall be retained on the ballot.

...

and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod in convention would certify the election of the regional vice-presidents and then place in order the regional vice-presidents by the body in convention.

Florida-Georgia District

Ov. 9-40**To Implement Term Limits for 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 offices of President and First Vice-President in districts and the Synod are not biblically mandated, but rather a governance structure chosen by the districts and the Synod and therefore able to be modified by the same; and

WHEREAS, Many districts, including the Texas District, have term limits for district presidents and vice-presidents; and

WHEREAS, The Synod has already limited the tenure of those who serve in office by Bylaw 3.2.4.2, which limits elected board and commission members of Synod to two consecutive six-year terms; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Texas District memorialize the 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 three-year terms; and be it further

Resolved, That these term limits be applied commencing with the Synod President's and First Vice-President's terms beginning in 2023, thereby allowing the incumbents to serve four three-year terms after the 2023 convention of the Synod, should they be reelected; and be it finally

Resolved, That the Commission on Handbook be charged to make appropriate changes to the *Handbook* to implement this resolution.

Texas District

Ov. 9-41**To Establish Term Limits for Elected Officers of Synod**

WHEREAS, The Synod is and has been served by the multiple gifts and abilities of those who are elected by the Synod in

convention to serve it as officers, members of boards, and members of commissions; and

WHEREAS, Those elected by the Synod are, during their term of office, using their multiple gifts and abilities to the fullest extent in furtherance of the Synod's life together, such that the duties and obligations of said offices and positions by necessity require tremendous focus and dedication by those elected to same, often to the exclusion or diminishment of their vocations to family and neighbors; and

WHEREAS, The Synod has been abundantly blessed by God with faithful men and women throughout its member congregations and rosters of ordained and commissioned ministers with a multitude of varied gifts and abilities who would be capable of serving the Synod in the offices and positions elected by the Synod in convention, such that no officer, board member, or commission member is irreplaceable; and

WHEREAS, There is not uniformity of practice within the Synod with regard to term limits, as the offices of President, First Vice-President, regional vice-presidents, and Secretary of the Synod are without limitation; and

WHEREAS, Re-election of members of all boards and commissions of the Synod are subject to limitations; and

WHEREAS, Term limits facilitate good order and harmony with the Synod, requiring the intentional selection of perspectives, gifts, and abilities best suited to the furtherance of the Synod's life together in order to proclaim and witness to the nation and world at that time; and

WHEREAS, Term limits demonstrate and affirm care for those who serve the Synod in the offices and positions elected by the Synod in convention; and

WHEREAS, Term limits remind the members of Synod that our hope, confidence, and trust rests and resides in Christ and Christ alone, the head of the Church; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Nebraska District memorialize the Synod to establish limits on the terms of the officers elected by the Synod in convention to not exceed a total of four terms; and be it further

Resolved, That Bylaw 3.2.4.1 be amended as follows:

~~PRESENT/PROPOSED~~ WORDING***Terms of Office***

3.2.4.1 ~~Those holding the~~ ^{The} offices of President, the first Vice-President, regional vice-presidents, and Secretary shall be ineligible for re-election to the same office after serving a total of four successive three-year terms, unless otherwise provided in the Bylaw without limitation as to reelection.

(a) More than one-half of a term shall be regarded as a full term under limited tenure rules.

(b) Any officer who is ineligible for re-election may be elected or appointed to another office or position.

(ac) 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.

(bd) Such service and salary will cease at the time such person accepts another full-time position.

(ce) 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.

and be it finally

Resolved, That the limitations established by Bylaw 3.2.4.1 as amended shall be applied, imposed, and effective for all elections held on or after Sept. 2, 2023.

Nebraska District

Ov. 9-42

To Amend Synod Bylaw 3.2.4.1 to Limit Terms of Office for President, First Vice-President, Regional Vice-Presidents, and Secretary

WHEREAS, The Lord gifts all people with many and diverse gifts; and

WHEREAS, Paul acknowledges this truth in 1 Corinthians 12:28–31 with reference specifically to the Office of the Holy Ministry, where it is written, “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. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret? But earnestly desire the higher gifts”; and

WHEREAS, The Lord has gifted the Church with many faithful men who possess the gifts of leadership and administration; and

WHEREAS, We are discouraged from trusting in human princes—precisely because of their humanity—rather than in God who alone saves and endows all pastors with these various gifts, as it is written in Psalm 146:3, “Put not your trust in princes, in a son of man, in whom there is no salvation”; and

WHEREAS, All elected offices in the world and in the church, including the elected offices of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, are often very stressful and take their toll on any and all who hold them; and

WHEREAS, We should always be concerned for the physical, emotional, and spiritual welfare of all who hold office in our Synod, that they not become negatively impacted by their work and are encouraged to return to their lives after service, healthy at all levels; and

WHEREAS, One of the benefits of term limitation is that it focuses the office holder by helping him to see what limits there are to his time and the authority of his office; and

WHEREAS, The Synod has already seen the wisdom of limiting the tenure of board and commission members; therefore be it

Resolved, That Bylaw 3.2.4.1 be amended as follows:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

Terms of Office

...

3.2.4.1 As to reelection, the offices of President, the first Vice-President, regional vice-presidents, and Secretary shall be ~~without limitation as to reelection~~ limited to three consecutive terms for a maximum of 9 years lifetime in one particular office.

...

and be it further

Resolved, That this amendment take immediate effect regarding those elected at this convention, with the count of consecutive terms to begin with the convention at which the amendment is adopted.

Circuit 2 (Metro West)
South Wisconsin District

Ov. 9-43

To Establish Term Limits for Elected Officers in the Synod and Districts

WHEREAS, The Lord gifts all people with many and diverse gifts (1 Cor. 12:28–31); and

WHEREAS, The Lord has gifted the Church with many faithful men who possess the gifts of leadership and administration; and

WHEREAS, Scripture discourages us from trusting in human princes—precisely because of their humanity—rather than in God who alone saves (Psalm 146:3); and

WHEREAS, All elected offices in the world and in the Church are often very stressful and take their toll on those who hold them; and

WHEREAS, One of the benefits of term limitation is that it focuses the office holder and helps him to see what limits there are to his time and the authority of his office; and

WHEREAS, Both Synod and districts have already seen the wisdom of limiting the tenure of some elected offices (such as circuit visitors) and elected board and commission members; and

WHEREAS, More than half of the districts in Synod already have term limitations for some of their elected offices, although the specified offices vary widely as well as the precise term limits, and it is preferable for this to be standardized throughout the Synod; therefore be it

Resolved, That Bylaw 3.2.4.1 be amended as follows:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

Terms of Office

...

3.2.4.1 The offices of President, the first Vice-President, regional vice-presidents, and Secretary shall be ~~without limitation as to reelection~~ ineligible for reelection after serving a total of four successive three-year elected terms or 12 years total (successive or non-successive terms), unless otherwise provided in the Bylaws.

...

and be it further

Resolved, That this restriction take effect upon passage by the convention and is retroactive, meaning that those elected at this convention may not be elected again if the term limit has been reached at the end of this term or before the end of this term; and be it further

Resolved, That Bylaw 4.3.4 be added as follows:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

4.3 District Officers

...

4.3.4 The elected offices of President, the Vice-Presidents, and Secretary shall be ineligible for reelection after serving a total of four successive three-year elected terms or 12 years total (successive or non-successive terms). Term limits, if any, for other elected offices and board and commission members may be determined by the individual district.

and be it further

Resolved, That this restriction take effect upon passage by the convention and is retroactive, meaning that those who currently hold these offices may not be elected again if the term limit has been reached at the end of the current term or before the end of the current term; and be it finally

Resolved, That we thank Almighty God for the faithful service of those currently in office who will be affected by these changes and that we encourage them to continue their ministry through other avenues of service, healthy in all respects.

Benediction
Milwaukee, WI

Ov. 9-44

To Amend Bylaws regarding Permanency of District and Synod Presidents to Better Reflect Confessional Principles on Authority

Rationale

Bylaws 1.2.1 (j) and 2.12.1 acknowledge that the district and Synod Presidents are ecclesiastical supervisors. Bylaw 2.14.1 recognizes that ecclesiastical supervision includes the power to exclude congregations and certain individuals from fellowship. This description of ecclesiastical oversight conforms to the definition of ecclesiastical power found in the *Augustana's* 28th Article.

The *Augustana's* 28th Article, The *Apology to the Augustana's* 28th article, as well as the *Power and Jurisdiction of the Bishops* lay out that obedience is due to those who hold ecclesiastical authority so long as they do not become enemies of the Truth, nor be they tyrants. As a historical example of this desire for obedience, the *Apology to the Augustana's* 14th Article affirms the Lutheran church's desire to submit to the bishops, yet the bishops' cruelty and suppression of the truth hindered them from doing so. The district presidents, holding ecclesiastical authority over those rostered pastors and congregations of their districts, ought to be subject to the same desire by those under them. Likewise, should the district presidents seek to be in submission to the President of the Synod, who holds the very same authority over them as they do the parish presbyters, so long as he remains orthodox and does not hinder the faith.

Yet the current Bylaws of Synod militate against true obedience to orthodox presidents. Under the current Bylaws, every district and Synod President shall have his authority challenged every three years, even if he errs in not one iota of his writing nor in one moment of his actions. Orthodox presidents ought not have their authority revoked nor challenged. It has normalized challenging one's ecclesiastical overseer for his position, without a good and God-fearing reason. Attempts to unseat laudable presidents is rebellion against those who have been placed over us (Heb. 13:17).

As such, to combat the environment which has normalized frivolous challenges to good ecclesiastical overseers, district and Synod Presidents ought not be subjected to scheduled and reoccurring elections. Rather, they should remain in their office of ecclesiastical oversight until such a time comes when they ascend to the Lord, retire, or are removed for reason of persistent theological error, grave public sin, refusal to fulfill the duties of the office, or misuse of the authority of the office.

Therefore be it

Resolved, That Bylaw 3.2.4 be amended as follows:

~~PRESENT~~/PROPOSED WORDING

Terms of Office

3.2.4 The term of office of all elected officers of the Synod (Bylaw 3.2.1), excluding the district and Synod President, shall be three years; of district and Synod President's life, or until their

resignation, expulsion (Bylaws 2.15, 2.16), or deposal; 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.

...

and be it further

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 as to reelection.

(a) If the President resigns or is otherwise removed, or the 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.

...

and be it further

Resolved, That the 2023 Synod convention authorize the creation of a task force to create a proposal regarding the creation of a process allowing for the deposition of district and Synod Presidents; and be it further

Resolved, That the task force be made up of the following members:

- The Secretary of the Synod
- A representative of the Commission on Handbook elected by the commission
- A representative of the Commission on Constitutional Matters elected by the commission
- One district president selected by the President of Synod
- One representative from each LCMS seminary, elected by the faculty
- One representative chosen by the LCMS Board of Directors

and be it further

Resolved, That the proposal will only allow depositions to take place under one of the following situations:

- The Synod or district president is in grave public sin
- The Synod or district president is promoting a theological error condemned by the Synod
- The Synod or district president is refusing to exercise his office, letting theological error spread unopposed in his district
- The Synod or district president is attempting to enforce jurisdiction not given to him under the Constitution and Bylaws of the Synod
- The Synod or district president is abusing his position as ecclesiastical overseer

and be it further

Resolved, That the task force will seek and take into consideration the advice of those churches in altar and pulpit fellowship with The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod who do not currently elect their ecclesiastical supervisors to a set term; and be it further

Resolved, That the task force be encouraged to study and propose further changes to the Bylaws to increase compatibility with the

removal of the terms for the offices of district and Synod Presidents; and be it finally

Resolved, That all proposals made by the task force shall be released to the public for comment at least one year before the 2026 Synod convention for public input, with the final proposals being submitted in time for inclusion in the 2026 *Convention Workbook* and action by the 2026 Synod convention.

Mount Calvary
Englewood, OH

Ov. 9-45

To Amend Constitution to Grant Lay Vote to Every Congregation

WHEREAS, The Constitution of the Synod Article V A deals with voting members of the Synod and states: “All organized congregations that have joined the Synod hold voting membership”; and

WHEREAS, “Multi-congregation parishes” are allowed to send a single lay delegate to the district convention (Bylaw 3.1.2.1 [c]); and

WHEREAS, Each individual congregation is a member of the Synod and should be entitled to a lay vote; and

WHEREAS, The Southeastern District in its 2022 convention voted to forward this overture to the 2023 Synod convention for consideration; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Synod at its 2023 convention:

- give all organized congregations that hold membership in the Synod the opportunity to be represented by a lay delegate and a pastoral delegate at district conventions;
- retain a single vote for a pastor who represents more than one congregation;

and be it further

Resolved, That Bylaw 3.1.2.1 (c) be amended 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 or multi-congregation parish of the circuit, both of whom shall have been elected in the manner prescribed by the congregation or parish. Congregations of a multi-congregation parish not contributing a lay voter may send an advisory lay representative, with voice but no vote. A pastor serving a congregation in an assisting capacity (Bylaw 2.5.6) is not eligible to cast that congregation's pastoral vote. 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. In the case of a single pastor representing two or more congregations, no individual shall cast more than one vote.~~

...

Southeastern District;
Circuit 15 (Mecklenburg), Southeastern District

Ov. 9-46

To Consider Realignment of Constitution Article III Objectives 1 and 2

WHEREAS, In Scripture there is clear teaching about the mission and witness of the Church given by our Lord Himself (Matt. 28:18–20; Acts 1:8); and

WHEREAS, In Scripture there is no official structure for the Church or church bodies given; and

WHEREAS, The Church is blessed when the mission of God is first in the hearts of its people, and a primary focus on official structure providing defense against schism, sectarianism, and heresy is, while praise worthy (Rev. 2:3–4), a departure from our first love (Rev. 2:4–5); and

WHEREAS, Article III of the Constitution of the Synod states:

Article III Objectives

The Synod, under Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions, shall—

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;

...

and

WHEREAS, This is not the original order of our objectives but was shifted in 1917 when the Constitution of the Synod was rewritten, and the order was changed without specific convention attention to the order of Const. Art. III; and

WHEREAS, There has been a demonstrated deterioration in mission outreach for the past 50 years; and

WHEREAS, A priority of “bold witness” applies to both those already gathered in the worshipping church and those who are yet to come to faith in Christ and will not impede an emphasis on bringing this witness with sound and pure doctrine; therefore be it

Resolved, That the California-Nevada-Hawaii District in convention take note of and apply this priority in word and action; and be it further

Resolved, That the district memorialize the Synod in its 2023 convention to return the “bold witness” and the mission of God to its rightful place as the first objective of a church of Christ dedicated to unity of the true faith which proclaims the Gospel of Jesus Christ into all the world.

California-Nevada-Hawaii District

Ov. 9-47

To Create True Synod-Wide Dialogue and Study with Respect to Controverted Matters

Preamble

In the Preamble to the Constitution of the Synod, two reasons are given “for the forming of a Synodical Union: (1) the example of the apostolic church (Acts 15:1–31)” and “(2) our Lord’s will that the diversities of the gifts should be for the common profit (1 Cor. 12:4–31).” Clearly, the framers of the Synod’s Constitution were

convinced that unhindered, open discussion of controverted matters, leading to God-pleasing consensus, is an important basis for the existence of our church body. Further, they recognized that the Holy Spirit gives gifts to his people in diverse ways. Those diverse gifts are good for the church! Yet, such differences in giftedness may themselves lead to differences in perspectives in issues facing the church, necessitating the process recounted in Acts 15:1–31.

An analysis of the relatively recent history of the Synod shows at least three examples of the Synod engaging processes of discussion and consensus-building around controverted matters that proved wholesome to our life together in the Synod. In 1991, the Commission on Theology and Church Relations produced a document entitled “Inter-Christian Relationships: An Instrument for Study,” which sought widespread discussion of the concepts contained therein and provided forms for feedback to the Commission as it continued to consider the topic. In 2009, prior to the 2010 Synod convention where significant structural changes would be considered, the task force responsible to report to the convention held regional conferences where the concepts could be introduced, questions asked, the merit of the proposals discussed, and feedback given to the task force prior to proposals being set before a Synod convention. In the early years of the past decade, the Koinonia Project strove to gather pastors around theological issues for the purpose of discussion and agreement. In each case, members of the Synod were given ability to discuss matters of importance and potential controversy in an unfettered, non-threatening environment where no final decisions were being made. In many cases, this environment fostered greater understanding among participants and often greater consensus among them.

The reason for processes like these does not escape congregational leaders, ordained or lay. When, for instance, a church desires to embark on a building program, surveys are completed, forums are held, plans are floated and discussed, all in an attempt to build widespread consensus around the program before a vote is cast to begin the project. This sort of collaborative, collegial process is necessary to elicit broad-based support for the project from the congregation. No leader wants a project like this, or a vote of any significance for that matter, to be adopted by a slim majority. Strong super-majorities are required to prevent unnecessary division that could seriously impede the congregation’s mission.

So it is with the Synod. Resolutions dealing with controverted issues that are not agreed to by large super majorities of members of Synod are divisive. They prevent us from “walking together”—the very definition of a “synod.” Whichever side loses the vote may well be convinced that they have not been heard and that the resolution is being foisted upon them, potentially filling the constituents of that perspective with resentment and resistance. This resolution puts forward a process whereby members of the Synod can be involved in “much discussion” (Acts 15:7 NIV) of controverted matters. This discussion is designed to occur prior to those issues coming to a national convention, where historically relatively few individuals have the opportunity to debate the issue for relatively short, and sometimes non-existent, periods of time. Its objective is to help the Synod walk together in greater consensus and unity.

WHEREAS, The witness of Scripture and the early Christian Church was that “after there had been much debate” (Acts 15:7

ESV) on the controverted matter regarding the circumcision of Gentile converts, a decision was made; and

WHEREAS, Divergent views on a matter can both seek to faithfully draw upon Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions; and

WHEREAS, The Synod has historically recognized the need for collegial debate, collaborative decision-making, and consensus building, enshrining “[t]he example of the apostolic church (Acts 15:1–31)” in the Preamble of its Constitution and by adopting a process whereby those principles may be observed with respect to the adoption of doctrinal statements in Bylaw 1.6.2 (b); and

WHEREAS, The Synod in Bylaw 1.6.2 speaks about “seeking to clarify its witness or to settle doctrinal controversy, so that all who seek to participate in the relationships that exist within and through the Synod may benefit and may act to benefit others,” and thereby offers the possibilities of doctrinal resolutions and doctrinal statements; and

WHEREAS, Bylaw 1.6.2 (b)(2), with respect to doctrinal statements, calls for a process that allows for “study and suggestions” for as much as a year on such “controverted matters”; and

WHEREAS, Resolutions voted on at Synod conventions, including doctrinal resolutions, do not inherently allow for debate or discussion that is described in Acts 15:7 as πολλῆς—much, multitudinous, plenteous, numerous, a great amount—but instead are sometimes voted on with little or no debate, even on both significant and controverted matters; and

WHEREAS, The Synod in Bylaw 3.10.1.4 indicates that “The Council of Presidents shall carry out such assignments as the Synod in convention may give to the council from time to time”; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Council of Presidents (COP) identify controverted matters as those matters that do not have a two-thirds (2/3) majority consensus of the COP as determined through a vote on particular subjects brought up for discussion by any member of the COP in their meetings; and be it further

Resolved, That such matters that do not produce this two-thirds (2/3) majority of votes within the COP for any particular taken position would be placed into a Synod-wide process agreed upon by a two-thirds (2/3) vote of the COP of not less than a year that allows for fraternal discussion and edification with respect to the controverted matter; and be it further

Resolved, That this process would involve discussion face to face, preferably in-person, or if necessary, through electronic means, between leaders that reflect the divergent and diverse positions recognized by the COP’s vote on the matter; and be it further

Resolved, That these leaders produce a joint document which clearly states points of agreement as well as any unresolved matters along with the scriptural and confessional rationale for each position, presented in a manner that allows for appropriate theological reflection and study; and be it further

Resolved, That this joint document be disseminated throughout the Synod to the congregations, pastors, church workers, and people of the Synod for reflection and study; and be it further

Resolved, That the congregations, pastors, church workers, and people of the Synod have fraternal discussion using this document through a process agreed upon by a two-thirds (2/3) vote of the COP; and be it further

Resolved, That after such processes any doctrinal resolution, doctrinal statement, constitutional or bylaw revision, or any action that relates directly or indirectly to the controverted matter should be considered by the Synod in convention, provided that such proposed action is in accordance with the process established by the COP; and be it finally

Resolved, That the Texas District in convention memorialize the Synod in convention with this resolution.

St. Matthew, Grand Rapids, MI; Texas District;
Board of Directors, Michigan District; Board of Directors,
Pacific Southwest District

Ov. 9-48

To Establish Mission Board Responsibilities Regarding Mission Office Strategic Plan and Annual Budget Proposal

WHEREAS, Bylaw 1.2.1 (n) defines the duties of a mission board of the Synod; and

WHEREAS, Bylaw 1.2.1 (n) states that the mission boards of the Synod are charged with developing and determining policies that establish boundaries, parameters, and principals that guide the respective mission offices in determining present and future activities and programs; and

WHEREAS, Bylaw 1.2.1 (n) states “the mission board shall have oversight of the implementation of these policies”; and

WHEREAS, Bylaws 3.8.2 (Board for National Mission [BNM]) and 3.8.3 (Board for International Mission [BIM]) do not specify how each of the mission boards are to monitor and provide oversight of the implementation of mission board established policies; and

WHEREAS, The BNM and the BIM have thoughtfully reviewed the processes currently in place and recommend that, in order to carry out their duties of monitoring and oversight effectively, Bylaws 3.8.2 and 3.8.3 be amended to include a process for review and endorsement of the strategic plan and review and input on budget on an annual basis prior to the submission of the budget proposal to the Synod Board of Directors; therefore be it

Resolved, That Bylaw 3.8.2 be amended as follows:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

Board for National Mission

3.8.2 ...

3.8.2.1 The Board for National Mission shall have oversight of the implementation of policies adopted by the board and implemented by the Office of National Mission for the coordination of and in support of district ministries which support congregations and schools. The board shall annually review and endorse the Office of National Mission strategic plan and review and provide input on the Office of National Mission annual budget proposal prior to its submission for approval by the Board of Directors. The board shall be under the ecclesiastical supervision of the President of the Synod regarding doctrine and administration consistent with the President’s responsibility under Constitution Art. XI B 1–4 (also Constitution Art. XI B 7; Bylaws 3.3.1.1–3.3.1.3) between conventions of the Synod and ultimately shall be responsible to the Synod in convention (Constitution Art. XI A 1–2).

3.8.2.2 ...

and be it further

Resolved, That Bylaw 3.8.3 be amended as follows:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

Board for International Mission

3.8.3 ...

3.8.3.1 The Board for International Mission shall have oversight of the implementation of policies adopted by the board and implemented by the Office of International Mission for the coordination of and in support of ministries of the Synod in foreign countries. The board shall annually review and endorse the Office of International Mission strategic plan and review and provide input on the Office of International Mission annual budget proposal prior to its submission for approval by the Board of Directors. The board shall be under the ecclesiastical supervision of the President of the Synod regarding doctrine and administration consistent with the President’s responsibility under Constitution Art. XI B 1–4 (Constitution Art. XI B 7; Bylaws 3.3.1.1–3.3.1.3) between conventions of the Synod and ultimately shall be responsible to the Synod in convention (Constitution Art. XI A 1–2).

3.8.3.2 ...

Board for National Mission; Board for International Mission

Ov. 9-49

To Amend Bylaw 4.1.1.4 regarding Transfer of Congregations between Districts

Rationale

Bylaw 4.1.1.4 concerns the transfer of a congregation between districts. The bylaw mentions the “approval of the respective district boards of directors,” but gives no guidance as to when or why approval should be granted or withheld. This vagueness leaves open the possibility of actual or perceived arbitrariness on the part of district boards of directors.

Therefore be it

Resolved, That Bylaw 4.1.1.4 be amended as follows:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

4.1.1.4 Transfer of congregations between districts is completed upon approval of the respective district boards of directors at the request of the congregation. The approval of the respective district boards of directors shall be granted at the next regular meeting of said boards unless the congregation was already in the Consultation or Commencing an Action phase of expulsion as narrated in Bylaw 2.14.3 and Bylaw 2.14.4.

Circuits 3 and 4
Southern Illinois District

10. Ecclesiastical Supervision and Dispute Resolution

REPORTS

**R1, R2, R3–R4.1, R9, R21–R55,
R65, R66.6, R66.12–R66.13**

OVERTURES

Ov. 10-01

To Amend Dispute Resolution and Expulsion Bylaws to Address Practical Considerations and Clarity

Preamble

The Commission on Handbook (COH) has, in keeping with its responsibility to “respond to requests ... to propose new provisions to address specific *Handbook*-related issues that surface between conventions” (Bylaw 3.9.4.2 [e]), responded to suggestions for bylaw changes in the dispute resolution and expulsion bylaws of the Synod with the following. Areas for work and potential solutions were proposed by the Secretary of the Synod, assembled from his consultation with the Council of Presidents, the Commission on Constitutional Matters, and Ambassadors of Reconciliation, which provides training for Synod’s official roster of reconcilers and hearing facilitators. These fall in the following areas:

A. CLARIFY THAT HEARING FACILITATOR SERVICE SURVIVES DISTRICT TRANSFER (COH 19-009A)

Rationale

Hearing facilitators are drawn from the pool of district-based, trained reconcilers, onto a separate roster at the Synod level. A question has arisen about the sense of language in Bylaw 1.10.12 (a), which refers, nonetheless, to movement of hearing facilitators from district to district. The commission determined that the language should be clarified by incorporating the sense of existing Bylaw 1.10.12.2 into 1.10.12 (a).

Therefore be it

Resolved, That Bylaw 1.10.12 be amended as follows:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

Hearing Facilitators

1.10.12 After the training of the reconcilers and in consultation with the appropriate district presidents, the Secretary of the Synod shall maintain a roster of 25 hearing facilitators selected from the roster of trained reconcilers. They may be ordained ministers, commissioned ministers, or laypersons and shall exhibit skills in the proper conduct of a fair and impartial hearing. They shall receive training for such purpose.

(a) Their term of service, monitored by the Secretary of the Synod, shall be six years, renewable without limit. Once appointed, the district membership of hearing facilitators no longer pertains to their eligibility for service in this position. Within three months after even-numbered conventions of the Synod (e.g., 64th in 2010, 66th in 2016, 68th in 2023, etc.), the Secretary of the Synod shall contact all hearing facilitators to learn of their availability and willingness to continue for an additional term. Resulting vacancies on the roster of hearing facilitators shall be filled by the Secretary of the Synod from the

Synod roster of reconcilers after consultation with the appropriate district presidents in time for resulting vacancies on district rosters of reconcilers to be filled by appointment by district boards of directors.

(b) Any vacancy in an unexpired term shall be filled in the same manner as described above.

1.10.12.1 Limitations on holding multiple offices do not apply to hearing facilitators.

~~1.10.12.2 If a hearing facilitator moves from the district where nominated, such hearing facilitator may remain on the Synod’s roster of hearing facilitators.~~

1.10.12.3 A hearing facilitator shall not serve as a reconciler or as a voting member of a panel.

B. TIMING, APPOINTMENT OF RECONCILERS AND HEARING FACILITATORS (COH 19-003)

Rationale

2016 Resolution 12-09 adjusted the schedule and procedure for appointment of dispute resolution reconcilers and hearing facilitators, allowing district boards of directors to make such appointments before, rather than after, the Synod convention (after which terms of service begin). Reconcilers are trained once appointed but cannot serve without training.

Training occurs within six months following a national Synod convention (Bylaw 1.10.10). At that training it is determined which of the new reconcilers might be useful as hearing facilitators (Bylaw 1.10.12), and those, after consultation, are appointed such, as vacancies on the roster of hearing facilitators require. At that point, it is impossible for vacancies on the district rosters of reconcilers to be filled (meaningfully) as the training has already occurred and will not occur for another three years (Bylaw 1.10.10). The last portion of Res. 1.10.12 (a), added in 2016, is therefore problematic—unless one is to bar the present year’s trainees from becoming hearing facilitators, which would pose a practical problem.

It may be possible to fill some of the hearing facilitator vacancies with previously trained reconcilers—but not if the vacancies are only addressed three months after the Synod convention, with training being provided within the six months after the convention.

Therefore be it

Resolved, That Bylaw 1.10.12 be amended as follows:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

Hearing Facilitators

1.10.12 After the training of the reconcilers and in consultation with the appropriate district presidents, the Secretary of the Synod shall maintain a roster of 25 hearing facilitators selected from the roster of trained reconcilers. They may be ordained ministers, commissioned ministers, or laypersons and shall exhibit skills in the proper conduct of a fair and impartial hearing. They shall receive training for such purpose.

(a) Their term of service, monitored by the Secretary of the Synod, shall be six years, renewable without limit. ~~Within three months after~~ Beginning six months before even-numbered conventions of the Synod (e.g., 64th in 2010, 66th in 2016, 68th in 2023, etc.), the Secretary of the Synod shall contact all hearing facilitators to learn of their availability and willingness to continue for an additional term. Resulting vacancies on the roster of hearing facilitators shall be filled by the Secretary of the Synod from the Synod roster of reconcilers (whether already serving, before the convention, or, being newly appointed, after their post-convention training) after consultation with the appropriate

~~district presidents in time for resulting vacancies on district rosters of reconcilers to be filled by appointment by district boards of directors.~~

(b) Any vacancy in an unexpired term shall be filled in the same manner as described above.

C. REMOVAL OF HEARING FACILITATORS FOR CAUSE (COH 19-003)

Rationale

Bylaw 1.10.10.4, added by 2013 Res. 7-12A (part E) at the request of the COH and the Secretary of the Synod, who administers the dispute resolution process, allows for reconcilers to be removed for cause, should the need arise. As that resolution noted, “Strict adherence by reconcilers to the instructions provided in the Bylaws and *Standard Operating Procedures Manual* is essential for uniformity and good order as reconcilers do their important work.” This is equally true for the work of hearing facilitators, who are to exhibit specific skills “in the proper conduct of a fair and impartial hearing” (Bylaw 1.10.12). No provision currently exists for the removal for cause of a hearing facilitator. In the impression of the process administrator and commission, this is a need that could conceivably arise, and that should be provided for in the Bylaws.

Therefore be it

Resolved, That Bylaw 1.10.12.4 be added as follows:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

1.10.12.4 A hearing facilitator may be removed for cause from Synod’s roster of hearing facilitators by Synod’s Board of Directors upon report of the administrator of the dispute resolution process after consultation with the President of the Synod.

D. APPEAL PANEL DETERMINATIONS (COH 19-009C)

Rationale

In Bylaw sections 2.14–2.17, dealing with formal process for expulsion from the roster of the Synod, a suspended member (individual or congregation) may request a hearing of the matter by a Hearing Panel (Bylaw 2.14.7). Upon the issuance of a decision by that panel, *the suspended member, suspending ecclesiastical supervisor or, in some circumstances, the President of the Synod* may request an appeal (Bylaw 2.14.8). The appeal request is considered by an Appeal Panel, which determines on the basis of specific criteria (Bylaw 2.14.8 [d]) whether the decision of the Hearing Panel will stand, or whether the matter will be forwarded to a Final Hearing Panel. The language of Bylaws 2.14.8 (e), 2.15.8 (e), and 2.17.8 (e) seems to suggest only an appeal by the suspended member of a decision to uphold the suspension. This language should be clarified.

Therefore be it

Resolved, That Bylaw 2.14.8 (e) be amended as follows:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

Appeal Panel

2.14.8 The decision of the Hearing Panel may be appealed by the accused (if an active participant in the hearing before the Hearing Panel), by the suspending ecclesiastical supervisor, or by the President of the Synod if a question of doctrine or practice is involved (Constitution Art. XI B 1–3) within 15 days after receiving the decision. Such request for an appeal shall be submitted to the Secretary of the Synod with copies provided to the district president(s) of the accuser and the accused, the hearing facilitator of the Hearing Panel, the accuser, and the President of the Synod, and

shall be accompanied by a written memorandum stating the basis for the request.

...

(e) Within 30 days after its formation, the Appeal Panel shall issue its written decision in response to the request for reconsideration. If the Appeal Panel denies the request for reconsideration of the decision of the Hearing Panel ~~and upholds the suspension of the ecclesiastical supervisor~~, the decision of the Hearing Panel shall be regarded as final and shall

(1) be binding upon the parties to the matter and not be subject to further appeal;

(2) have no precedential value;

(3) be carried out by the district president or the President of the Synod; and

(4) shall be publicized as deemed appropriate under the circumstances by the district president or the President of the Synod.

(f) If the Appeal Panel grants the request for reconsideration of the decision of the Hearing Panel, a Final Hearing Panel shall be selected by the Secretary of the Synod.

and be it further

Resolved, That Bylaw 2.15.8 (e) be amended as follows:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

Appeal Panel

2.15.8 The decision of the Hearing Panel may be appealed by the accused (if an active participant in the hearing before the Hearing Panel), or by the President of the Synod if a question of doctrine or practice is involved (Constitution Art. XI B 1–3) within 15 days after receiving the decision. Such request for an appeal shall be submitted to the Secretary of the Synod with copies provided to the district president(s) of the accuser and the accused, the chairman of the Hearing Panel, the accuser, and the President of the Synod, and shall be accompanied by a written memorandum stating the basis for the request.

...

(e) Within 30 days after its formation, the Appeal Panel shall issue its written decision in response to the request for reconsideration. If the Appeal Panel denies the request for reconsideration of the decision of the Hearing Panel ~~and upholds the suspension of the ecclesiastical supervisor~~, the decision of the Hearing Panel shall be regarded as final and shall

(1) be binding upon the parties to the matter and not be subject to further appeal;

(2) have no precedential value;

(3) be carried out by the district president or the President of the Synod; and

(4) shall be publicized as deemed appropriate under the circumstances by the district president or the President of the Synod.

(f) If the Appeal Panel grants the request for reconsideration of the decision of the Hearing Panel, a Final Hearing Panel shall be selected by the Secretary of the Synod.

and be it finally

Resolved, That Bylaw 2.17.8 (e) be amended as follows:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

Appeal Panel

2.17.8 The decision of the Hearing Panel may be appealed by the accused (if an active participant in the hearing before the Hearing Panel), by the suspending ecclesiastical supervisor, or by the President of the Synod if a question of doctrine or practice is involved (Constitution Art. XI B 1–3) within 15 days after receiving

the decision. Such request for an appeal shall be submitted to the Secretary of the Synod with copies provided to the district president(s) of the accuser and the accused, the chairman of the Hearing Panel, the accuser, and the President of the Synod, and shall be accompanied by a written memorandum stating the basis for the request.

...

(e) Within 30 days after its formation, the Appeal Panel shall issue its written decision in response to the request for reconsideration. If the Appeal Panel denies the request for reconsideration of the decision of the Hearing Panel ~~and upholds the suspension of the ecclesiastical supervisor~~, the decision of the Hearing Panel shall be regarded as final and shall

- (1) be binding upon the parties to the matter and not be subject to further appeal;
- (2) have no precedential value;
- (3) be carried out by the district president or the President of the Synod; and
- (4) be publicized as deemed appropriate under the circumstances by the district president or the President of the Synod.

(f) If the Appeal Panel grants the request for reconsideration of the decision of the Hearing Panel, a Final Hearing Panel shall be selected by the Secretary of the Synod.

Commission on Handbook

Ov. 10-02

To Amend Bylaws to Clarify Application of Pre-Call Consultation and *Call and Be Served By* (Bylaws 2.5.2–3) beyond Member Congregations

Preamble

The 2019 convention of the Synod in its Resolution 10-02A (B) included in Bylaws 2.5.1–3, which required *congregations* of the Synod to consult district presidents in call processes and to call and be served by only such ordained and commissioned ministers or candidates therefor, also “association schools, agencies, auxiliaries, and recognized service organizations” (RSOs). The Commission on Constitutional Matters (CCM; Op. 20-2957, Minutes of Oct. 30–31, 2020) and Commission on Handbook (Item 19-005) have, in consultation with the Council of Presidents and the LCMS Recognized Service Organization Office, noted potential unclarity or unintended implications of this requirement being inserted as it is into paragraphs that ordinarily deal with congregations. At a minimum, the “association schools, agencies, auxiliaries, and recognized service organizations” to which the language now applies need to look in a “foreign” section of the *Handbook* to find a regulation that applies to them. In certain areas, because of the very different sort of work done by RSOs, in particular, the language may create a certain degree of confusion regarding how it applies to positions that are not involved directly in teaching or practice of doctrine.

With regard to the latter, the CCM has understood *served by* in Bylaw 2.5.2 to refer to “service in the sense of the distinctive functions of the pastoral office, not to *service* in some purely secular sense” (Op. 20-2957). The opinion goes on: “A divine call cannot be extended by any of the listed calling entities to any person not listed under Bylaw 2.5.2’s (1), (2), or (3). Furthermore, such a calling entity cannot be “served by,” in the sense of any exercise of distinctive functions of the pastoral office, any person not listed under Bylaw 2.5.2’s (1), (2), or (3).”

Agencies are by definition part of the Synod and would be precluded from calling an individual who is not a member of the Synod. This should be made explicit in Section 1.5, dealing with agencies. Requirements incumbent on auxiliaries and RSOs should be dealt with in the appropriate sections (Bylaw sections 6.1 and 6.2, respectively), not in Section 2.5, which deals with congregations and their association schools, which, by virtue of their governance strictly be member congregations, are subject to the same requirements as their constituent congregations.

The commission has proposed changes that will clarify the scope of “service by” (to refer, outside of congregations and their association schools, to exercise of distinctive functions of the pastoral office) and to place the provisions in their appropriate sections.

Therefore be it

Resolved, That Bylaw section 2.5 be amended as follows:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

2.5 Calling Ministers of Religion by Congregations

2.5.1 Congregations, ~~and their~~ association schools, ~~agencies, auxiliaries, and recognized service organizations of the Synod~~ shall seek the counsel of ~~the appropriate~~ their respective district president when calling ordained or commissioned ministers.

(a) ~~A congregation or association school 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 virtue of the call, 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, ~~as well as and their~~ 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, ~~as well as and their~~ 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 of LCMS colleges and universities 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.

...

and be it further

Resolved, That Bylaw 1.5.5.2 be added as follows:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

Agency Operations

...

1.5.5.2 When calling ordained or commissioned ministers, agencies shall seek the counsel of the district president who would, by virtue of the call, 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 agency is located or with which it is associated shall be sought.

and be it further

Resolved, That Bylaw 6.1.2.1 be amended as follows:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

6.1 Auxiliaries

...

6.1.2.1 An organization desiring to be recognized as an auxiliary of the Synod shall satisfy the following requirements:

...

(g) Seek, when calling an ordained or commissioned minister, the counsel of the district president who would, by virtue of the call, assume supervision of the minister (Bylaw section 2.12).

(1) 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.

(2) 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.

(h) Call and, in any sense involving distinctive function(s) of the pastoral office, be served by only those ordained ministers or candidates designated by Bylaw 2.5.2.

(i) Call only those commissioned ministers or candidates designated by Bylaw 2.5.3.

6.1.2.2 Auxiliaries shall continue to meet the above requirements for continued recognition.

...

and be it finally

Resolved, That Bylaws 6.2.1 and 6.2.2.2 be amended as follows:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

6.2 Recognized Service Organizations

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 Synod, and respects and does not act contrary to the doctrine and practice of the Synod.

...

(d) A recognized service organization shall call and, in any sense involving distinctive function(s) of the pastoral office, be served by only those ordained ministers or candidates designated by Bylaw 2.5.2.

(e) A recognized service organization shall call only those commissioned ministers or candidates designated by Bylaw 2.5.3.

(~~df~~) ... (etc.)

...

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~~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~~The appropriate district president who would, by virtue of the call, assume supervision of the minister (Bylaw section 2.12), is properly consulted in the call process; ~~and~~.

(1) 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.

(2) 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.

(c) ~~the~~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~~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.

Commission on Handbook

Ov. 10-03

To Amend Bylaw 2.14.5 (a–e) regarding Ecclesiastical Supervision

Preamble

In our life together as God's people, it is His will that we live in harmony with one another (Rom. 12:16) and that we forgive one another, just as He has forgiven us (Eph. 4:32; Col. 3:13). Consequently, the foremost ministry of ecclesiastical supervision is not to expel a member from the Synod but to foster repentance and reconciliation, to win and restore the brother and sister (Matt. 18:15–20).

This essential ministry of ecclesiastical supervision is best handled by an ecclesiastical supervisor who lives in the midst of those whom he has been elected to supervise since he knows the person who is being supervised. Moreover, he is the one who has been entrusted with this ministry task by the members of Synod when he was elected and installed as its district president.

Each district president, in accordance with the Constitution of the Synod, shall supervise the doctrine, life, and official administration of the ordained and commissioned ministers who are members of his district (Const. Art. XII 7; Bylaw 4.4.5).

It is the premise of this overture that Bylaw 2.14.5 (a–e), when it grants the power and authority to the President of the Synod to

suspend a member of Synod as a “suspending ecclesiastical supervisor,” contradicts Const. Arts. XI A 1; XI B 1–3; XII 7; XII 8 and Bylaw 3.3.1.1.1 (b) of the Synod.

WHEREAS, The Synod in convention “may adopt bylaws that are consistent with and do not contradict the Constitution of the Synod” (Constitution Article XIV); and

WHEREAS, The officers of the Synod “must assume only such rights as have been expressly conferred upon them” (Const. Art. XI A 1); and

WHEREAS, The scope of scope of ecclesiastical supervision granted to the President of the Synod is limited to Const. Art. XI B 1–3 and Bylaw 3.3.1. Consequently, the ecclesiastical supervision over the members of Synod has not been expressly conferred upon the President of the Synod and this right cannot be granted to him unless the Constitution of the Synod is amended by convention action as stated in Const. Art. XV 2–4; and

WHEREAS, *Only* the President of the Synod and district presidents possess the duties of ecclesiastical supervision and *only as specified*; in this regard, the President of the Synod does possess “supervision regarding the doctrine and administration of all 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 it is his “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” (Const. Art. XI B 2); and

WHEREAS, Only the district presidents “*especially* exercise supervision over the doctrine, life, and administration of office of the ordained and commissioned ministers of their district” (Const. Art. XII 7, emphasis added); and

WHEREAS, Only the district presidents are empowered to suspend from membership ordained and commissioned ministers, and then according to the bylaws of the Synod (Const. Art. XII 8); and

WHEREAS, The President of the Synod “has and always shall have the power to advise, admonish, and reprove, and to 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). However, since only the district presidents are “empowered to suspend from membership ordained and commissioned ministers” (Const. Art. XII 8), suspension cannot be one of the means available to the President of the Synod; and

WHEREAS, Bylaw 2.14.5, when it grants the power and authority to the President of the Synod to suspend a member of Synod as a “suspending ecclesiastical supervisor,” contradicts the Constitution and Bylaws of the Synod (Const. Art. XIV) for the following reasons: The President of the Synod would thereby...

- be exercising rights not expressly conferred upon him, contradicting the provisions stated in Const. Art. XI A 1;
- be granted the authority to supervise an individual member of Synod not listed in his scope of ecclesiastical supervision, contradicting the provisions stated in Const. Art. XI B 1;
- be doing more than reporting the matter to Synod in convention, contradicting the provisions stated in Const. Art. XI B 2;

- be granted a power greater than to advise, admonish, and reprove, contradicting the provisions stated in Const. Art. XI B 3;
- be directly supervising an individual member of Synod, contradicting the provisions stated in Const. Art. XII 7;
- be placing an individual member of Synod under suspension thereby exercising a power and authority granted *only* to a district president, contradicting the provisions stated in Const. Art. XII 8;
- no longer be carrying out his ecclesiastical duties *through* the district president in the districts of the Synod but rather he would be dealing directly with an individual member, contradicting the provisions stated in Bylaw 3.3.1.1.1 (b);

therefore be it

Resolved, That Bylaw 2.14.5 be amended as follows:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

2.14.5 If the district president determines not to initiate formal proceedings, he shall in writing so inform the accuser, any other district president involved, and the involved member, which shall terminate the matter, ~~subject to the following:~~

~~(a) If a matter of doctrine or practice is involved, the accuser may, within 15 days after receipt of such notice, appeal for action by the President of the Synod (Constitution Art. XI B 1–3). The accuser shall so notify the district president, who shall within 15 days:~~

~~(1) notify the accused and any other district president involved that an appeal for action is underway; and~~

~~(2) forward the appeal for action, with the record of his investigation and determination and the accuser’s formal written accusation, to the President of the Synod.~~

~~(b) The President of the Synod shall, within 15 days of receipt of such appeal for action, consult with the district president.~~

~~(c) The President of the Synod may consult with the accuser, the accused, and others involved. He may appoint an investigative committee and / or ask an opinion of the CCM or CTCR, which opinion shall be followed. He shall consult with the vice-presidents of the Synod.~~

~~(d) The President of the Synod may, in a matter of doctrine and practice, and within 120 days of receipt of notice, suspend the member as provided in Bylaw 2.14.6 and then, as the “suspending ecclesiastical supervisor,” carry out the formal proceedings of Bylaw 2.14.7 and following.~~

~~(e) If the determination is made not to initiate formal proceedings, the President of the Synod shall in writing so inform the accuser, any district president involved, and the involved member.~~

New Jersey District

Ov. 10-04

To Realign Adjudication Process with Walther’s Church and Ministry

Rationale

The history of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) demonstrates that the ecclesiastical authority of adjudication in the Synod has drastically changed throughout the last 30 years.

- Judicial cases were decided by district or Synod conventions with ad hoc committees, which included laity, from 1847 to 1941.

- Judicial cases were decided by independent judicial boards of adjudication and appeal, the membership of which included laity, from 1941 to 1992.
- Judicial cases were decided by dispute resolution panels appointed by district board of directors from 1992 to 2004.
- Judicial cases have been decided by district presidents and reconcilers since 2004.

These changes and official opinions of the Commission on Constitutional Matters (CCM) have given district presidents ever growing authority in the adjudication process. Examples include:

- Prior to 1992 the process of restricting, suspending, and expelling required thorough investigation by a district president before proceeding in adjudication. Since 1992 the process of restricted status is treated as the investigation stage (see CCM Opinion 18-2871A, “Further Questions Regarding Restricted Status”).
- Prior to 1992 the process of adjudication required a district president to present the case before a board of adjudication and/or board of appeal. Since 1992 a case of restricted status or suspended status is not heard unless the accused makes an appeal for it to be heard.
- Since 2004, removal from restricted status has been solely the decision of district presidents.

In 2001 Resolution 7-17A, the Synod affirmed and reaffirmed the decision of the 1851 convention recognizing the theses on church and ministry by Dr. C.F.W. Walther published in the book *The Voice of Our Church on the Question of Church and Ministry* as the official position of the LCMS.

- Thesis X reads: “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 a vote together with the preachers.”
- It has been argued by many within the LCMS that the current adjudication process in the LCMS is no longer in accord with this official position of the LCMS.

Therefore be it

Resolved, That the convention declare the process of restricted status as punitive and no longer part of the investigative process; and be it further

Resolved, That as such the convention declare that our present system of adjudication is in conflict with Thesis X of Walther’s Theses on the Church, thus invalidating CCM Opinion 18-2871A; and be it further

Resolved, That the President of the Synod appoint a task force to revise the LCMS adjudication process so that our practice is aligned with our public teaching; and be it further

Resolved, That any recommendations for change focus on the following: including laypersons, ministers of religion—ordained, and ministers of religion—commissioned in deciding adjudicatory cases from start to finish; requiring thorough investigation before placing members of the Synod on restricted status; more clearly defining “offensive conduct” from a biblical perspective; and including laypersons in decisions to reinstate individual members into membership rather than such decisions being the sole prerogative of district presidents; and be it finally

Resolved, That the recommendations of the task force be completed in time for presentation and study at the immediately next cycle of district conventions.

Benediction
Milwaukee, WI

Ov. 10-05

To Affirm and Commend CCM Opinion 22-2980

WHEREAS, “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” (Constitution Article VII I); and

WHEREAS, “Congregations that are members of the Synod, as well as 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 ...” (Bylaw 2.5.2 [1]); and

WHEREAS, On May 2, 2022 the Commission on Constitutional Matters (CCM) issued Opinion 22-2980 (as published in the CCM report), which not only clearly articulated the relationship between a district president and a calling congregation, but also reaffirmed the previous CCM Opinion 2069 (March 2, 1997) by stating, “The opinion (2069) specifically states that a district president does not have the authority ‘to edit a vacant congregation’s call list by refusing to provide personal information on some individuals, even when that information is specifically requested by the congregation’”; therefore be it

Resolved, That the 2023 Synod convention affirm this opinion as being an accurate interpretation of the Constitution and Bylaws of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod; and be it further

Resolved, That the 2023 Synod convention commend this opinion to all member congregations, association schools, agencies, auxiliaries, and recognized services organizations for study and consideration during any current or future call process; and be it finally

Resolved, That when “a (calling) congregation or association school shall seek the counsel of its own district president” pursuant to Bylaw 2.5.1 (a), the district president shall provide a copy of this opinion as part of his counsel according to his advisory role.

First
Hanna, IN

Ov. 10-06

To Amend Bylaw 2.11.2.2 re Candidate Status

WHEREAS, Candidates are valuable members of the Synod, and having such members automatically removed from the roster would be a detriment both to the members and to the Synod, especially when there are more congregations requesting a candidate from the seminary than there are seminary candidates available; and

WHEREAS, The Synod has a duty out of Christian love and charity to care for and support these valued members; and

WHEREAS, Candidates are currently required to file an annual report with their district president by Jan. 31, which leads to inactive—candidate status letters being exchanged around

Christmas, a busy time for members and district presidents alike; while a summertime reporting period will provide more time for a thoughtful exchange; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Indiana District in convention memorialize the 2023 Synod convention to amend Bylaw 2.11.2.2 as follows:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

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) While a member is a candidate, the district president shall minister to that member either directly or through others, concern himself with the spiritual well-being of that member, and continue efforts to return that member to active service.

~~(c)~~ The candidate shall, by ~~January~~ July 31, make an annual report to the district president who shall determine the member’s eligibility to remain on candidate status. The candidate’s report shall include current contact information and address the criteria for remaining on candidate status.

~~(e)~~ The district president shall determine whether or not to grant or, upon annual review, continue candidate status based on the following criteria:

- (1) The member’s health;
- (2) The member’s efforts to address any unresolved issues involving fitness for ministry;
- (3) The member’s current involvement in ministry; and
- (4) 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
- (5) The member’s cooperation in keeping personnel documents up to date.

Indiana District

Ov. 10-07

To Establish Common Procedures for Sake of Unity and Avoiding Unnecessary Offense

WHEREAS, The psalmist says, “Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity!” (Psalm 133:1); and

WHEREAS, It is beneficial to that unity to avoid unnecessary offense; and

WHEREAS, It is useful to that end to have known and agreed upon procedures for interacting with one another in a spirit of Christian love; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Council of Presidents be directed to produce and make available on the Synod and district websites a handbook of recommended procedures for those aspects of our life together where offense may easily be caused unintentionally, such as receiving and accepting or declining calls, joint endeavors with pastors or officials in other districts, the establishment of mission sites, officiating weddings or funerals of other pastors’ members, notification when members of another congregation visit repeatedly, etc.

Holy Trinity
Walnut, IL

Ov. 10-08

To Provide All Standards of Accountability to Members of Synod

WHEREAS, The members of the Synod are bound by the Constitution and Bylaws of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, and the policies and procedures drawn up by those prescribed by said documents (including but not limited to the Praesidium, the Council of Presidents Manual, Commission on Constitutional Matters, etc.); and

WHEREAS, The members of the Synod desire to comply with these governing documents as well as all policies, regulations, and standards to which they may be held accountable; and

WHEREAS, The district president represents the Synod in his district to serve as liaison between congregations, district, and the Synod (Bylaw 4.4.2); therefore be it

Resolved, That upon written request of a member of the Synod to their district president, he shall immediately make available to them for review all current policies, regulations, standards, governing documents, including the Council of Presidents Manual, or any other such materials to which the member may be held accountable.

Ohio District

Ov. 10-09

To Amend Bylaw 3.10.1.3 re Placement

WHEREAS, Bylaw 2.9.1 states:

The Council of Presidents, acting as the Board of Assignments, shall regularly assign to qualified graduates of educational institutions of the Synod and workers available from colloquy programs as “first calls” those calls that have been duly extended to fill active member positions as identified in Bylaw 2.11.1 for ordained and commissioned ministers if positions for which candidates are qualified are available.

(a) The placement officers of the respective institutions shall be consulted before assignments are made.

(b) The president of the district in which a candidate is to be placed shall be consulted, and his concurrence shall be an essential part of the final recommendation to the Board of Assignments.

and

WHEREAS, Bylaw 3.10.1.3 states:

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. The Council of Presidents 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.

and

WHEREAS, With the advent of modern communications technology, the Council of Presidents (COP) is able to conduct meetings electronically easily and economically; and

WHEREAS, The COP, acting as the Board of Assignments of the Synod, has a crucial role in the Divine Call and placement of candidates in our Synod, and such role should be carried out with the prayerful deliberation and discussion of the entire body; and

WHEREAS, Bylaw 3.10.1.3 currently allows the responsibility of interim placement of candidates to rest in the hands of one man alone, or to the placement committee of the COP; and

WHEREAS, The COP is able to meet electronically between its regular meetings to conduct the important work of placements of candidates and vicars in our Synod; 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 of Presidents 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.~~

Circuit 3
Southern Illinois District

Ov. 10-10

**To Appoint Task Force to Review
and Recommend Revisions to Bylaw Section 2.17**

WHEREAS, Sexual misconduct by clergy is a serious and unique problem facing the church today, requiring investigation of charges, discipline of those who fail to live a life “above reproach” (1 Tim. 3:2–3), as well as pastoral care for victims, abusers, their families, and congregations; and

WHEREAS, Sexual misconduct by clergy is a betrayal of the trust expected from our Lord’s under-shepherds and an abuse of power (“But it shall not be so among you.” [Mark 10:41–45]), causing spiritual harm to victims; and

WHEREAS, The lack of transparency in and mishandling of cases of clergy sexual misconduct by various church groups and institutions has compromised the church’s witness to the saving message of Jesus Christ in the world; and

WHEREAS, Some of the language and processes governing Synod’s approach to such matters merit review and revision, such as:

- the current bylaw governing sexual misconduct and criminal behavior of individual members of Synod (Bylaw section 2.17), mirrors closely Bylaw section 2.14 (“Expulsion of Congregations or Individuals from Membership in the Synod”) when in practice these issues require radically different approaches;
- the motive and state of mind of “the accuser” (often the victim) in cases governed by Bylaw section 2.17 are vastly different from that of the “accuser” in cases governed by Bylaw section 2.14;
- Bylaw section 2.17 provides no right of appeal to victims of sexual misconduct if formal proceedings are not initiated, when Bylaw section 2.14 provides for the “accuser” to appeal to the President of Synod; and
- the *Standard Operating Procedures Manual (SOPM)* for Bylaw section 2.17 (more than 50 pages) is more about

processes and procedures than ensuring pastoral concern for victims, which can cause further trauma and spiritual harm to a victim when no advocate is designated to assist them in navigating the process or manual. For example, item 1.1 on the flowchart for Bylaw section 2.17 requires that the accuser simply be provided with a copy of the *SOPM* at the initial consultation with the district president;

and

WHEREAS, Periodic review and revision of the process for addressing sexual misconduct of clergy assures the victim, the perpetrator, the church, and the wider public, that our Synod takes these matters seriously, even as we modify and improve our process amid difficult circumstances, and work to provide substantive care, support, and discipline to those involved, all as part of our faithful witness to Christ; therefore, be it

Resolved, That the President of Synod, in consultation with the Council of Presidents (COP) appoint a task force to review our current bylaws, manuals, Commission on Constitutional Matters (CCM) guidelines, and procedures for addressing sexual misconduct of clergy; and be it further

Resolved, That the task force include a minimum of two women as members so that all potential victims will be represented throughout the review and revision process; and be it further

Resolved, That the task force report its recommendations to the President, COP, and CCM; and be it finally

Resolved, That the task force, if deemed appropriate, revise Bylaw section 2.17 in consultation with the Secretary of Synod, Commission on Handbook, and CCM, in order to make the process more transparent for both the victim and the accused, and to emphasize the need for pastoral care of victims, their families, and congregations impacted by sexual misconduct.

Board of Directors
Minnesota South District

11. Church and Culture

REPORTS

R1, R1.2.5, R1.3, R12, R16, R20, R66.1–R66.4

OVERTURES

Ov. 11-01

To Be Cautious with the World's Moral Imperatives

WHEREAS, We live in a post-Christian world in which our Christian faith does not drive the shaping of culture; and

WHEREAS, The world has its own vocabulary of moral imperatives, often skewing those our Lord has given, sometimes even contradicting them directly, thereby making evil seem good and good seem evil (Isaiah 5:20); and

WHEREAS, The world's moral imperatives migrate according to who has the most power to shape them; and

WHEREAS, "The world will seek to domesticate [us] to its ways," (Norman Nagel, *Selected Sermons of Norman Nagel* [St. Louis: CPH, 2004], 151); and

WHEREAS, St. Peter has called us to be sober and vigilant because the adversary is always looking for an opportunity to pounce (1 Peter 5:8); and

WHEREAS, This often occurs by means of language and ideology that is untruthful according to Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions; and

WHEREAS, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick" (Jer. 17:9); and

WHEREAS, The human sciences, such as sociology, anthropology, and psychology, are doubly vulnerable to the deceitfulness and sickness of the heart since practitioners bring the above heart sickness and deceitfulness to bear, and the subjects contributing data to research share the same above mentioned heart sickness and deceitfulness, giving both experimenter and subject a false sense of objectivity and moral neutrality; and

WHEREAS, Ideas and conclusions drawn from the above-mentioned human sciences find their way into other disciplines such as arts and humanities, economics, political science, and most especially, journalism, howbeit, even the practitioners of the hard sciences are not immune; therefore be it

Resolved, That pastors, church workers, and lay people be encouraged to use the language of the world's moral imperatives sparingly, to wit, on occasions when the users of those terms overtly explain what they mean by their usage; and be it further

Resolved, That pastors, church workers, and lay people be encouraged to refrain from using the world's moral imperatives when a) the speaker does not have occasion to explain his or her usage, or b) the hearer does not have the opportunity to seek an explanation of the usage; and be it further

Resolved, That pastors, church workers, and lay people, in the interest of vigilance, be encouraged to investigate the world's moral imperatives, holding them up to the light of the Holy Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions; and be it further

Resolved, That pastors, church workers, and lay people be encouraged to intensify their own biblical and confessional literacy so that they may be able to rightly divide whatever they are hearing, affirming what is honorable, just, pure, lovely, and commendable while shining the painful light of truth upon what is false and evil; and be it further

Resolved, That we cultivate a robust use of the Holy Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions to direct conversations away from the world's moral imperatives and into truth, life, and health; and be it finally

Resolved, That pastors, church workers, and lay people be encouraged to a vigorous exercise of the Eighth Commandment among ourselves as we speak of the world's moral imperatives, always presuming best intentions on the part of the other person while at the same time aiming to speak and live in truth together, truth whose boundaries are given by the Holy Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions; and that this resolution be forwarded to the 2023 Synod convention.

Pastors' Conference (Eastern Region)
Northern Illinois District

Ov. 11-02

To Reject Racism and Advance the Gospel

WHEREAS, God has created all people and they are blood-related going back to our mutual fathers, Adam and Noah, and all are subject to the stain of original sin, but now also have been equally redeemed by the blood of Christ in order to be reconciled to God and to each other; and

WHEREAS, God's Word says, "If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself,' you are doing well. But if you show partiality, you are committing sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors" (James 2:8–9); and

WHEREAS, Racism (the sinful notion that some races are inherently superior to others), misunderstanding, and strife are present in the world and experienced in congregations due to our sin; and

WHEREAS, The Synod abhors racism, and in convention has passed resolutions repudiating all racism (1992 Resolution 3-03; 2019 Res. 11-04A); and

WHEREAS, Critical Race Theory (CRT) has become a common, multifaceted, and controversial theory for discussion of contemporary race relations; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Synod in convention reject the worldview of CRT, as it is contrary to Scripture and counterproductive to true racial conversation and reconciliation, for it pursues equality of outcome—equity—between racial groups, which requires treating individuals unequally based on race, and also reject all organizations, movements, petitions, and theological language that support this worldview in a positive manner; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod reject any doctrine that teaches:

- one's race, ancestry, or nationality is inherently superior to the race, ancestry, or nationality of another;
- any individual is inherently racist, or oppressive, whether consciously or unconsciously, because of his or her race, ancestry, or nationality;

and be it further

Resolved, That the districts and circuits of the Synod develop an objective mission and ministry action plan for outreach to diverse communities among us; and be it further

Resolved, That the congregations of the Synod be encouraged to conduct conversations on race and diversity, to strengthen unity within the congregations; and be it further

Resolved, That the congregations of the Synod be encouraged to engage members of their communities in these conversations, in light of Christ's Gospel; and be it further

Resolved, That we commend those within the Synod who intentionally proclaim and work to reach out with the Gospel of Jesus Christ to those who are different from themselves in the light of the Great Commission; and be it finally

Resolved, That the Mid-South District send this resolution to the Synod as it gathers at its 2023 convention to do similarly.

Mid-South District

Ov. 11-03

To Reject Bigotry and Advance the Gospel

WHEREAS, God has created one human race in His own image (Gen. 1:26), and we are all blood-related going back to our mutual fathers, Adam and Noah, and all are subject to the stain of original sin, but now also have been equally redeemed by the blood of Christ in order to be reconciled to God and to each other; and

WHEREAS, Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ desires that the Gospel be preached to all who live on earth (Rev. 14:6); and

WHEREAS, God's Word says, "If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself,' you are doing well. But if you show partiality, you are committing sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors" (James 2:8-9); and

WHEREAS, Bigotry—the sinful notion that some ethnic groups are inherently superior to others—misunderstanding, and strife are present in the world and experienced in congregations due to our sin; and

WHEREAS, The Synod abhors bigotry and in convention has passed resolutions repudiating all forms of bigotry, prejudice, and discrimination based on ethnicity (1992 Res. 3-03; 2019 Res. 11-04A); and

WHEREAS, Nihilism and other similar theories including Critical Race Theory (CRT) have become common and controversial suppositions in today's world; and

WHEREAS, The Eighth Commandment forbids us to speak falsely of our neighbor and exhorts us to explain everything in the kindest way, and our Lord Jesus teaches us to love our neighbors; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Kansas District and its members reject any doctrine that teaches:

- One's ethnicity, ancestry, or nationality are inherently superior to the ethnicity, ancestry, or nationality of another;
- Any individual is inherently racist, or oppressive, whether consciously or unconsciously, because of his or her ethnicity, ancestry, or nationality;

and be it further

Resolved, That the circuits of the district develop an objective mission and ministry action plan for outreach to diverse communities among us; and be it further

Resolved, That the congregations of the district be encouraged to conduct conversations on ethnicity and diversity to strengthen unity within the congregation; and be it further

Resolved, That the congregations of the district be encouraged to engage members of their communities in these conversations in light of Christ's Gospel; and be it further

Resolved, That the district in convention commend those within the district who intentionally proclaim and work to reach out with the Gospel of Jesus to those who are different from themselves in the light of the Great Commission; and be it further

Resolved, That the district in convention promote Christ's teaching that we love our neighbors and reject the world view presented by nihilism, CRT, and similar theories that are contrary to Scripture and counterproductive to true reconciliation of the one human race created in God's image; and be it finally

Resolved, That the district memorialize the Synod as it gathers at its 2023 convention to do similarly.

Kansas District

Ov. 11-04

To Speak Gospel Clearly in Cultural Context of Critical Race Theory

WHEREAS, God has created all people and they are blood-related going back to our mutual fathers, Adam and Noah, and therefore there is only one race, the human race, and all are subject to the stain of original sin, but even now also have been equally redeemed by the blood of Christ in order to be reconciled to God and each other; (Gen. 1:26-28, Gen. 10, Rom. 5:12-21, I Cor. 15: 20-23, Acts 17:26); and

WHEREAS, As Critical Race Theory (CRT) asserts that racism is present in all aspects of life, in every relationship and every interaction—and its advocates urge their followers to look for, and expect to find, racism everywhere—it is clear that the goal and effect of CRT is to cause deep and irreconcilable divisions within society; and

WHEREAS, Society has, in recent years, been deeply convulsed by the efforts of some to eliminate historic racism through the introduction of a new, more toxic form of racism which adds elements of Marxist and post-modern thought to the historic form; and

WHEREAS, The academic discipline of critical theory and its progeny, such as CRT, is inconsistent with the Christian worldview and also irreconcilable with Holy Scripture; and

WHEREAS, Critical theory, when applied to theology, frequently denies the sufficiency of Christ's death to forgive all people by claiming that forgiveness is impossible for certain people based on their race; and by heretically confusing the righteousness we have before God for Jesus' sake with the civil righteousness of the "social gospel"; and

WHEREAS, The "solutions" proffered by CRT to racial inequities do not come from Christ but rather from a theory of grievance and retribution (and can produce only more of the same); and

WHEREAS, God's Word says, "If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, 'You shall love your neighbor as

yourself,' you are doing well. But, if you show partiality, you are committing sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors" (James 2:8–9); and

WHEREAS, We still recognize that racism, misunderstanding, and strife are and will continue to be present in the world and in the Church; and

WHEREAS, The Synod in convention has passed resolutions repudiating all racism, for example, 1992 Res.3-03; and 2019 Res. 11-04A; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Minnesota South District in convention reaffirm the Synod's repudiation of racism in all its forms; and be it further

Resolved, That the district call upon her members to love their neighbors as themselves, and seek to live in peace and harmony with all people by proclaiming that Jesus is Lord, and by bringing forth the fruits of the faith in serving the neighbor; and be it further

Resolved, That the district reject the worldview of CRT, because it is contrary to Scripture and counterproductive to true racial conversation and reconciliation, since it pursues equality of outcome ("equity") between ethnic or cultural groups, while cynically insisting that we treat individuals unequally based on skin color, ethnicity, ancestry, or nationality; and be it further

Resolved, That the district reject any doctrine, such as that proposed by CRT, that teaches that an individual or organization is inherently racist, or oppressive, whether consciously or unconsciously, solely on account of skin color, ethnicity, ancestry, nationality, or history; and be it further

Resolved, That the district reject the teaching of all organizations, movements, and petitions which attempt to advance the language and/or concepts of Critical Theory including CRT; and be it finally

Resolved, That the district in convention memorialize The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod to also reject the worldview, language and concepts of CRT at its 2023 convention.

Minnesota South District

Ov. 11-05

To Affirm Biblical Doctrines of Creation, Original Sin, and Redemption and to Reject Critical Theory

WHEREAS, God "... 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" (Acts 17:26), and they are blood related going back to our mutual fathers, Adam and Noah, and all are subject to the stain of original sin, but now also have been equally redeemed by the blood of Christ in order to be reconciled to God and to each other; and

WHEREAS, God's Word says, "If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself,' you are doing well. But if you show partiality, you are committing sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors" (James 2:8–9); and

WHEREAS, The academic discipline of Critical Theory (see Paul Dare, *Christians in a Woke World*, self-pub., 2021) and its progeny, such as Critical Race Theory, "wokeism," social justice, equity, et al., undermine a biblical understanding of creation and original sin by denying such divine institutions as family and government, maliciously dividing rather than uniting Christians on the basis of

genealogical heritage, sexuality, socio-economic status, interpretation of history, and other criteria, and thus seeking to destroy the true unity Christ grants to the Church through His blood (Eph. 2:11–16) and subvert the unity of the communion of saints in the forgiveness of sins as expressed in the Third Article of the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds; and

WHEREAS, Critical Theory is heretical, for example in the following: striving for and promising heaven on earth (utopia), frequently denying the sufficiency of Christ's death, presenting the teachings of Jesus as social gospel (i.e. merit-based salvation) and the divine remedy for strife in human society, and confusing the doctrine of two kingdoms; and

WHEREAS, The Mid-South District of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) in convention adopted Res. 03-04-21A, "To Reject Racism and Advance the Gospel"; therefore be it

Resolved, That the district in convention affirm the biblical doctrines of creation, original sin, and redemption, especially concerning the universal need for and availability of God's redemption by grace through faith on account of Christ Jesus that we may not make "shipwreck of the faith" delivered to us (1 Tim. 1:3, 19); and be it further

Resolved, That the district in convention encourage and assist the members of our district congregations, pastors, and teachers to faithfully learn, witness, and teach the Christian faith, especially the doctrines of creation, original sin, and redemption, in truth and purity, in the language of Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions for the sake of the advance of the Gospel as revealed in Scripture and nowhere else (Jude 3); and be it further

Resolved, That we commend the schools, universities, and seminaries of the LCMS for their faithful witness to God's design and intent for human life and encourage each to strive to confess the Christian faith in a hostile world and to promote excellence in place of Critical Theory's definition of diversity, inclusivity, and equity outcomes, for they have no place in Christian education or administrative policies, as they are diametrically opposed to the Gospel of Jesus Christ; and be it further

Resolved, That we reject Critical Theory since it denies Scripture and sidelines the authority and usefulness of the Lutheran Confessions, denouncing the sufficiency of Christ's blessed suffering and death for the forgiveness of all our sins; and be it further

Resolved, That we look for opportunities to dialog with groups who hold this philosophy in order to listen, confess, and bear witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ; and be it further

Resolved, That the Minnesota North District join the Mid-South District in rejecting racism and work toward advancing the Gospel; and be it finally

Resolved, That the Minnesota North District in convention send this resolution to serve the Synod in convention in 2023, according to Bylaw 1.6.2 (b)(4).

Minnesota North District

Ov. 11-06

To Love Our Neighbor by Rebuking False Doctrine

WHEREAS, Our Lord Jesus Christ, who has all authority in heaven and on earth, commands us to make disciples by baptizing

in the triune name and by teaching all that He has commanded (Matt. 28:18–20); and

WHEREAS, The Lutheran Confessions, because they are a right exposition of God's Word stand as the doctrinal standard for our congregations, church body, and its institutions, confess that "the sole rule and standard according to which all dogmas together with [all] teachers should be *evaluated* and judged are the prophetic and apostolic Scriptures of the Old and of the New Testament alone" (Formula of Concord Epitome [FC Ep.] Summary, Rule, and Norm 1); and

WHEREAS, In our times ideologies by various names have arisen which reject both the authority and truth of God's Word, claiming as authoritative standard for judgment each person's individual self-determination, as shaped by categories including class, race, sex, perceived gender identity, sexual preference, economic condition, and/or the intersection of any perceived grievances; and

WHEREAS, After the fall into sin humankind has done injustice and suffered evils that perpetuate our poor, miserable condition, which evokes in the Christian the compassionate, loving desire for prudent works of mercy as ordered by God's Word, and the commitment to give bold, clear and steadfast witness to Jesus as the One who is our true peace and who alone breaks down dividing walls of hostility, reconciling us to God and each other through His blood shed on the cross (Eph. 2:13–22); and

WHEREAS, Some prevailing ideologies confuse belief in and commitment to "diversity," "equity," and "inclusion" (as popularly understood) as constitutive of "righteousness," prescribing social policies as the means by which the human condition will be made right; and

WHEREAS, Belief in false doctrine and participation in its practices are fatal to Christian faith and discipleship, and yet many of our children and institutions may be led into error through ignorance of these false doctrines, or lack of preparation in how best to love our suffering neighbors as Christians, as the Lord says, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge" (Hosea 4:6a); therefore be it

Resolved, That the members of the congregations of the Indiana District examine themselves and repent where they have failed to love their neighbors by *not* rebuking false doctrine (2 Tim. 4:1–7; Eph. 4:14–15; Gal. 6:1); and be it further

Resolved, That the pastors and congregations of the district affirm their confession of the authority of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, as well as affirm their confession that "the sole rule and standard according to which all dogmas together with [all] teachers should be *evaluated* and judged are the prophetic and apostolic Scriptures of the Old and of the New Testament alone" (FC Ep. Summary, Rule, and Norm 1); and be it further

Resolved, That the pastors and congregations of the district identify as false doctrine and condemn any ideology, doctrine, teaching, or movement which claims the authority of an individual's self-determination over and above the Lord God speaking in His Word (Deut. 12:8; Prov. 12:15; Jer. 23:28), by whatever diversity of name(s) these ideologies may clearly be known; and be it further

Resolved, That the pastors and congregations of the district reject any organization, trainings, movement, or ethic, by whatever diversity of name(s) they may clearly be known, which promise righteousness through social action, perpetuates discontent through grievance, reduces the human person's essence to such categories

like those listed above, or contradicts the Word and thereby the unity Christians have in it (2 Cor. 6:14–16; FC Ep. Summary, Rule, and Norm 1; Eph. 4:1–16; Gal. 1:6–10); and be it further

Resolved, That the pastors and congregations of the district call on their members to love their neighbors as Christians, rejecting policy and language which come from worldly presuppositions, but instead discovering ways to show mercy to their neighbors within the framework of Holy Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions for what constitutes righteousness, just action for the love of neighbor, and unity through repentant faith in Christ Jesus (Matt. 12:30; John 14:6); and be it further

Resolved, That the Indiana District President, on behalf of the district, exhort, encourage, and assist the education institutions of the district (which are under direct assault from these false teachings and social actions) to remain steadfast in believing, teaching, and confessing the authority of God in His Word, and not to use "commitment to and belief in diversity, equity, and inclusion" as a rule or standard to evaluate those serving in them; and be it finally

Resolved, That the district in convention memorialize the 2023 Synod convention to exhort, encourage, and assist the educational institutions of our church body (which are under direct assault from these false teachings and social actions) to remain steadfast in believing, teaching, and confessing the authority of God in His Word, and not to use "commitment to and belief in diversity, equity, and inclusion" as a rule or standard to evaluate those serving in them.

Indiana District

Ov. 11-07

To Reject and Condemn Critical Theory, Its Theologies and Ideologies, and to Rebuke Its Proponents

WHEREAS, God has created all people and they are blood related going back to our mutual fathers, Adam and Noah, and all are subject to the stain of original sin, but now also have been equally redeemed by the blood of Christ in order to be reconciled to God and to each other; and

WHEREAS, God's Word says, "for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise" (Gal. 3:26–29); and

WHEREAS, God's Word further says, "If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself,' you are doing well. But if you show partiality, you are committing sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors" (James 2:8–9); and

WHEREAS, Racism (the sinful notion that some races are inherently superior to others), misunderstandings, and strife are present in the world and experienced in congregations due to our sin; and

WHEREAS, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod abhors racism and has passed resolutions repudiating all racism (see 1992 Res. 3-03 and 2019 Res. 11-04A); and

WHEREAS, Critical Theory (CT) and its application to race, Critical Race Theory (CRT) as popularized by Ibram Kendi and

Black Lives Matter outside of the Church, and by Lutherans for Racial Justice within the Church, categorizes people into groups and shows partiality to some over and against others, thereby defining, dehumanizing, and dividing people into various categories of perceived and real differences; and

WHEREAS, CT has become a commonplace, multifaceted, and controversial ideology in the discussion of contemporary relations between groups of people based on race, religion, socioeconomic status, sexuality, and other perceived or real differences; and

WHEREAS, CT teaches a theology that is contrary to Scripture, denies God-given differences between people, and is counterproductive to true confession, forgiveness, and reconciliation, in that it pursues equality of outcome (“equity”) between groups which requires treating individuals unequally, rather than pursuing the grace of God in Christ; therefore be it

Resolved, That the 2023 Synod convention reject and condemn the graceless, Christless ideology and theology of CT; and be it further

Resolved, That the 2023 Synod convention also rebuke all organizations, movements, petitions, theological language, and the like that support the ideology and theology of CT; and be it further

Resolved, That the 2023 Synod convention reject and condemn any doctrines teaching that one’s differences make one inherently superior to another or that any individual is inherently oppressive (whether consciously or unconsciously) because of his or her differences; and be it further

Resolved, That the ecclesiastical supervisors of any individual or group within the Synod that supports CT or CRT be directed to address them according to the standards of this resolution under the biblical principles of church discipline; and be it finally

Resolved, That the 2023 Synod convention direct the Commission on Theology and Church Relations to produce a document exposing the dangers of Critical Theory and Critical Race Theory.

Circuit 1 (Southern)
Montana District

Ov. 11-08

To Reject Critical Theory and Its Proponents, Theologies, Ideologies, and Worldviews

WHEREAS, God has created all people and they are blood related going back to our mutual fathers, Adam and Noah, and all are subject to the stain of original sin, but now also have been equally redeemed by the blood of Christ in order to be reconciled to God and to each other; and

WHEREAS, God’s Word says, “for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s offspring, heirs according to promise” (Gal. 3:26–29); and

WHEREAS, God’s Word further says, “If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself,’ you are doing well. But if you show partiality, you are committing sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors” (James 2:8–9); and

WHEREAS, Racism (the sinful notion that some races are inherently superior to others) is present in the world and experienced in congregations due to our sin; and

WHEREAS, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod abhors racism and, in convention, has passed resolutions repudiating all racism, (1992 Resolution 3-03; 2019 Res. 11-04A); and

WHEREAS, Critical Theory (CT) and its application to race, Critical Race Theory (CRT) as popularized by Ibram Kendi and Black Lives Matter outside of the Church and by Lutherans for Racial Justice within the Church, categorizes people into groups and shows partiality to some over and against others, thereby defining, dehumanizing, and dividing people into various categories of perceived and real differences; and

WHEREAS, CT teaches that whole systems of governing or worshipping religions are inherently biased and prejudiced because they were originated among and/or promulgated by a particular class, sex, culture, or color of people and that anyone belonging to said systems is thereby guilty of the sin of oppression in complete conflict to Scriptural teaching (cf. Ezek. 33) that God holds people accountable for their own sin and not the sins of others they may be related to or associated with; and

WHEREAS, CT has become a commonplace, multifaceted, and controversial ideology in the discussion of contemporary relations between groups of people on the basis of race, religion, socioeconomic status, sexuality, and other perceived or real differences; and

WHEREAS, CT teaches a theology that is contrary to Scripture, denies God-given differences between people, and is counterproductive to true confession, forgiveness, and reconciliation in that it pursues equality of outcome (“equity”) between groups, which requires treating individuals unequally, rather than pursuing the grace of God in Christ; therefore be it

Resolved, That the 2023 Synod convention reject the graceless, Christless ideology, theology, and worldview of CT; and be it further

Resolved, That the 2023 Synod convention also reject all organizations, movements, petitions, theological language, and the like that support the ideology, theology, and worldview of CT; and be it further

Resolved, That the 2023 Synod convention reject any doctrines which teach that one’s differences makes one inherently superior to another or that any individual is inherently oppressive (whether consciously or unconsciously) because of his or her differences; and be it finally

Resolved, That the 2023 Synod convention direct the Commission on Theology and Church Relations to produce a document exposing the dangers of CT and CRT.

Circuits 3 and 4 (Eastern and Central)
Montana District

Ov. 11-09

To Reject Critical Race Theory and Its Worldview in the Church

WHEREAS, God has created all people and they are blood related going back to our mutual fathers, Adam and Noah, and all are subject to the stain of original sin, but now also have been equally redeemed by the blood of Christ in order to be reconciled to God

and to each other (Gen. 1:26–28, Genesis 10, Rom. 5:12–21, 1 Cor. 15:20–23); and

WHEREAS, God desires that all people of every nation and ethnicity be baptized, believe in Him, and be saved (Matt. 28:18–20, Mark 16:16–17, John 3:16–17, 1 Tim. 2:3–6); and

WHEREAS, God's Word says, "If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself,' you are doing well. But if you show partiality, you are committing sin and are convicted by the law of the transgressors" (James 2:8–9); and

WHEREAS, The Synod in convention has passed resolutions in past conventions repudiating all racism, for example, 1992 Resolution 3-03, "To Combat All Racism" (*Proceedings*, 113–114), and 2019 Res. 11-04A, "To Affirm the Common Humanity of All People and Ethnicities" (*Proceedings*, 216–218); and

WHEREAS, Critical Race Theory (CRT) has become a common, multifaceted, and controversial theory for discussion of contemporary race relations; therefore be it

Resolved, that the Southern Illinois District confess that there is one human family, descended from Adam and Noah, and that God's desire is for all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth; and be it further

Resolved, That the district call upon all her members to love their neighbors as themselves, and to seek to live in peace and harmony with all people by proclaiming that Jesus is Lord, and bringing forth the fruits of faith in serving the neighbor; and be it further

Resolved, That the district reject the worldview of CRT, as it is contrary to Scripture and counterproductive to true racial conversation and reconciliation, for it pursues equality of outcome ("equity") between racial groups, which requires treating individuals unequally based on race; and be it further

Resolved, That the district reject all organizations, movements, petitions, and theological language that support the worldview of CRT in a positive manner; and be it further

Resolved, That the district reject any doctrine, such as that proposed by CRT, that teaches that an individual is inherently racist, or oppressive, whether consciously or unconsciously, because of his or her race, ancestry, or nationality; and be it finally

Resolved, That the district submit this resolution as an overture to the 2023 Synod convention.

Southern Illinois District

Ov. 11-10

To Exhort Those in Authority to Identify and Eliminate Social Justice (Woke) Ideology

WHEREAS, Social justice (woke) ideology has become pervasive in American culture, particularly at institutions of higher education; and

WHEREAS, Social justice (woke) ideology is premised upon and seeks solutions to racial or social discrimination and injustice that are shaped by a communistic or Marxist worldview, such as critical race theory, DEI (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion) initiatives, and other social justice activism (Rev. Dr. Lucas C. Woodford, *Doxology What Does this Mean?: Responding to Social Justice and Critical Race Theory*, October 2020 [Minnesota South District]); and

WHEREAS, Social justice (woke) ideology has been observed to be promoted within the Concordia University System (CUS) (see Synod President Mathew Harrison's "Letter to the members of the CUWAA Board of Regents," May 2022 [Office of the President, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod]); and

WHEREAS, The CUS has been a great blessing to the Synod and is a treasure that ought to be protected and preserved for our posterity; therefore be it

Resolved, That the President of the Synod and district presidents whose oversight involves a Concordia, and the CUS Board identify and eliminate the promotion of social justice (woke) ideology from the CUS; and be it further

Resolved, That the South Wisconsin District in convention refer this matter to the 2023 Synod convention for consideration and adoption.

South Wisconsin District

Ov. 11-11

To Prevent Harmful Philosophies, Ideologies, and Contemporary Movements Contrary to the Christian Faith from Damaging Our Congregations, Schools, Colleges, and Seminaries

WHEREAS, God created all people equal, but not interchangeable (Gen. 1:26–27); and

WHEREAS, God created male and female, and no other gender (Gen. 1:27); and

WHEREAS, The fall into sin ruined and perverted the creation (Gen. 3:14–19), which was once very good (Gen. 1:31), hence an order was instituted by God for the relationship between man and woman (Gen. 3:16); and

WHEREAS, After the fall into sin, man and woman remained equal but not interchangeable (Gen. 3:20); and

WHEREAS, All people are subject to the stain of original sin, but now also have been equally redeemed by the blood of Christ as the only way to be reconciled to God and to each other (Rom. 3:23–26); and

WHEREAS, Because of sin, racism—the sinful notion that some races are inherently superior or inferior to others—misunderstanding, and strife are present in the world and experienced in our congregations and communities; and

WHEREAS, Christ teaches us to love all peoples and nations, and consequently the Synod abhors racism, and in convention has passed resolutions repudiating all racism, (1992 Resolution 3-03; 2019 Res. 11-04A); and

WHEREAS, Contemporary ideologies and movements such as Black Lives Matter (BLM), Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI), and Critical Race Theory (CRT) have become common, multifaceted, and controversial theories, based in non-Christian and anti-Christian tenets, which divide people based solely on the basis of *sexual orientation* or race; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Synod reject any doctrine that teaches:

- that one's race, ancestry, or nationality are inherently superior to the race, ancestry, or nationality of another;
- that any individual is inherently racist, or oppressive, whether consciously or unconsciously, based solely on his or her race, ancestry, or nationality;

and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod reject any doctrine that assumes or allows for any categories of gender other than those intrinsic to God's created order, viz., "male and female" (Gen. 1:27); and be it further

Resolved, That the English District in convention reject BLM, DEI, CRT, and similar ideologies and world views, as they are contrary to Scripture and counterproductive to true racial conversation and reconciliation, for they pursue equality of outcome—equity—between racial groups, which requires treating individuals unequally based on race; and be it further

Resolved, That the district, together with all our congregations, schools, universities, and seminaries, also reject all organizations, ideologies, philosophies, movements, petitions, and doctrines that present the BLM, DEI, or CRT world views, or related anti-Scriptural world views or doctrines in a positive manner; and be it further

Resolved, That the congregations of the district be encouraged to engage members of their communities in conversations that build unity among all men in light of the saving Gospel of Jesus Christ; and be it further

Resolved, That we commend those within the district who, in the light of our Lord's charge known as the "Great Commission," intentionally proclaim and work to reach out with the Gospel of Jesus to all peoples regardless of race, gender, nationality, or ethnicity with the goal of bringing them into the blessed unity we have in Christ our Head (Rom. 12:5; 1 Cor. 12:27; Eph. 2:19–22, 4:25); and be it finally

Resolved, That the district memorialize the Synod as it gathers at its 2023 convention to do the same.

English District

Ov. 11-12

To Advance Racial Equality and Great Commission

WHEREAS, The sin of racism being an obstacle to the Great Commission, it would be irresponsible of us not to examine our human failings with respect both to the great commandment of love and the Great Commission to make disciples of all tribes, languages, and nations through the Gospel and drawing them into the body of Christ (2 Cor. 19:7; Rom. 2:4; Gal. 2:6; Eph. 6:9; Col. 3:25; 1 Peter 1:17; Matt. 28:19–20; Mark 16:15–16; Luke 24:47; Acts 1:8); and

WHEREAS, Martin Luther taught, and we confess, that the Fifth Commandment, You shall not murder, means we should fear and love God so that we do not hurt or harm our neighbors, but help and defend them in every physical need, which many have shamefully failed to do especially regarding our fellow Americans who are black and people of other ethnic minority groups (Luke 10:25–37; Prov. 24:1–2; Eph. 4: 31–32; Matt. 25:42–43; Matt. 5:22; 1 John 4: 19–21; Prov. 31:8–9); and

WHEREAS, We lament the silence of Christians in the face of slavery in the past and other racial injustices that continue to this day, such as discrimination in jobs, housing, education, and other areas, past and present, which cause great suffering to many Americans and harm our entire nation, which leaves in place economic and social liabilities that would persist even if racial prejudice suddenly disappeared; and

WHEREAS, Justice, which goes beyond kindness toward others, is based on laws, institutions, and practices that are fair and just to all; and

WHEREAS, Many Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) convention resolutions on the issue of race have asserted the clear biblical teaching that all humans, whatever the color of their skin, have been created in the image of God and redeemed through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus; yet we continue to lag in mission outreach that crosses racial lines, and in addressing racial injustices—offenses that put us in need of God's mercy and call us to action (Matthew E. Borrasso, "Repentance and Hope: A Missional Appreciation and Appraisal of LCMS Educational Institutions for the Training Black Church Workers," *Lutheran Mission Matters* 2(57) [November 2020]: 221–39; Matthew E. Borrasso, *Concordia Selma Closes: Putting the Demise of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod's Educational Institutions for Black Ministry in Historical Perspective.*); and

WHEREAS, The report of Synod's Commission on Theology and Church Relations (*Racism and the Church: Overcoming the Idolatry*, Feb. 1994) documents a disturbing pattern in the LCMS of following the path of our surrounding culture regarding slavery and other racial injustices, thus conforming to the world rather than being transformed in Christ (Rom. 12:2); and

WHEREAS, Our former policy of having racially segregated churches and schools resulted in turning people of color and other ethnic groups away from our church doors and in fewer new members of color, yet these habits and attitudes of old sins persist, making our outreach across racial lines more difficult now than it should be; and

WHEREAS, We give thanks to God for courageous leaders among us who over the years have overcome racial barriers and do so even today, we still have much to learn about how to be racially inclusive; for all of which we seek the grace of God to find more faithful ways of reflecting God's love and our unity in Christ; and

WHEREAS, To reach deeply into the life of our congregations, a church-wide campaign that is truly filled with the love and joy of the Holy Spirit cries out for our response; and

WHEREAS, A Day of Repentance and Prayer for Racial Justice and Healing could be enhanced with simple but starkly honest background material, highlighting sins of racism in our nation's history, and even in its Christian churches, including our own LCMS; and

WHEREAS, Such an event should be held Synod-wide urging all LCMS pastors, congregations, and other affiliates of Synod to participate perhaps on Life Sunday or another specified date; and

WHEREAS, This event should be a joyous, Spirit-filled day that can deepen our faith in Christ, empower us to seek justice, and help us eagerly to welcome people across all racial and ethnic groups into fellowship with us through our Lord and Savior; therefore be it

Resolved, That by the next LCMS convention, we respectfully urge the President of Synod and its district presidents to incorporate within our annual celebration of life an encouraging call to repent of all sins against the equal value of life created in God's image, including, but not limited to, all sins devaluing people due to their tribe, language, skin color, or people group, urging all LCMS pastors and congregations and other affiliates of the LCMS to participate; and be it further

Resolved, That we see this day of repentance and prayer as a long-overdue confession of sins of commission and omission against people of color, for which we truly repent, and seek God's forgiveness and great mercy in Christ, that sets all of us free to be reconciled with all people regardless of race or color; and be it finally

Resolved, That we become known as a church body that eagerly welcomes people across all racial and ethnic groups into fellowship with us through our Lord and Savior.

Southeastern District

Ov. 11-13

To Support Racial Equality and Great Commission

WHEREAS, As the sin of racism is an obstacle to the Great Commission, it would be irresponsible of us not to examine our human failings with respect both to the Great Commandment of love and the Great Commission to make disciples of all tribes, languages, and nations through the Gospel and drawing them into the body of Christ (2 Cor. 19:7; Rom. 2:4; Gal. 2:6; Eph. 6:9; Col. 3:25; 1 Peter 1:17; Matt. 28:19–20; Mark 16:15–16; Luke 24:47; Acts 1:8); and

WHEREAS, Martin Luther taught, and we confess, that the Fifth Commandment, “You shall not murder,” means we should fear and love God so that we do not hurt or harm our neighbors, but help and defend them in every physical need, which many have shamefully failed to do especially regarding our fellow Americans who are Black and people of other ethnic minority groups (Luke 10:25–37; Prov. 24:1–2; Eph. 4: 31–32; Matt. 5:22; 25:42–43; 1 John 4:19–21, Prov. 31:8–9); and

WHEREAS, Many Synod convention resolutions on the issue of race have asserted the clear biblical teaching that all humans, whatever the color of their skin, have been created in the image of God and redeemed through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus; yet we continue to lag in mission outreach that crosses racial lines, and in addressing racial injustices—offenses that put us in need of God's mercy and call us to action (Matthew E. Borrasso, “Repentance and Hope: A Missional Appreciation and Appraisal of LCMS Educational Institutions for the Training Black Church Workers,” *Lutheran Mission Matters* [Nov. 2020], lcfm.global/uploads/Nov%202020/LMM%2011-20_Borrasso.pdf; Matthew E. Borrasso, “Concordia Selma Closes: Putting the Demise of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod's Educational Institutions for Black Ministry in Historical Perspective,” *Journal of the Lutheran Historical Conference* [2019]: 214–30.); and

WHEREAS, The report of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) Commission on Theology and Church Relations (Commission on Theology and Church Relations, *Racism and the Church* [St. Louis: The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 1994]) documents a disturbing pattern in the LCMS of following the path of our surrounding culture regarding slavery and other racial injustices, thus conforming to the world rather than being transformed in Christ (Rom. 12:2); and

WHEREAS, We give thanks to God for courageous leaders among us who over the years have overcome racial barriers and do so even today, we still have much to learn about how to be racially inclusive; for all of which we seek the grace of God to find more faithful ways of reflecting God's love and our unity in Christ; and

WHEREAS, To reach deeply into the life of our congregations, a church-wide campaign that is truly filled with the love and joy of the Holy Spirit cries out for our response; and

WHEREAS, A Day of Repentance and Prayer for Racial Equality could be enhanced with simple but starkly honest background material, highlighting sins of racism in our nation's history, and even in its Christian churches, including our own Synod; and

WHEREAS, Such an event should be held synodwide urging all LCMS pastors, congregations, and other affiliates of Synod to participate on the Sunday in conjunction with Juneteenth celebrations; and

WHEREAS, This event should be a joyous, Spirit-filled day that can deepen our faith in Christ, empower us to seek justice, and help us eagerly to welcome people across all racial and ethnic groups into fellowship with us through our Lord and Savior; therefore be it

Resolved, That we respectfully ask the 2023 Synod convention to issue an encouraging call to repent of all sins against the equal value of life created in God's image, including, but not limited to, all sins devaluing people due to their tribe, language, skin color, or people group, urging all LCMS pastors and congregations and other affiliates of Synod to participate; and be it further

Resolved, That we set this Day of Repentance and Prayer for Racial Healing as a long-overdue confession of sins of commission and omission against people of color, for which we truly repent, and seek God's forgiveness and great mercy in Christ, that sets all of us free to be reconciled with all people regardless of race or color; and be it finally

Resolved, That we become known as a church body that eagerly welcomes people across all racial and ethnic groups into fellowship with us through our Lord and Savior.

Circuit 15 (Mecklenburg)
Southeastern District

Ov. 11-14

To Build Diverse Synod United in Christ

WHEREAS, The Scriptures teach that all Christians are brothers and sisters in Christ, no matter how different we might be, for example:

- Isaiah 11:10 (NIV), “In that day the Root of Jesse will stand as a banner for the peoples; the nations will rally to him, and his place of rest will be glorious”;
- Galatians 3:26–29 (NIV), “You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise”;
- Revelation 7:9 (NIV), “After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb”;

and

WHEREAS, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS), our districts, our congregations, and other partner ministries have embraced this unity in Christ by reaching out to new neighbors, people of many ethnicities and races, children, youth, expectant mothers, those with physical and developmental challenges, those

suffering from debilitation of age, those coming out of incarceration, and many other challenges throughout the years; and

WHEREAS, We have not been perfect. In far too many ways we have failed to embrace all of God's children in Christ; therefore be it

Resolved, That the members of the LCMS give God thanks for the ways that God has used our hands to minister to such a diverse group of people, especially in the ways that God has used us to serve the weakest and most vulnerable among us; and be it further

Resolved, That we repent of the ways that we have been unwelcoming or brought division with those who are different from us in some way or turned our back on those in need; and be it further

Resolved, That we rejoice in the forgiveness of Christ and the opportunities that God continues to give to us; and be it further

Resolved, That we encourage our congregations and entities to be places where all Christians are honored as brothers and sisters in Christ, no matter the outward differences; and be it further

Resolved, That we celebrate the variety of cultural expressions of the Gospel among the congregations and ministries of our Synod; and be it further

Resolved, That we support our ethnic and urban congregations and ministries in their work; and be it further

Resolved, That we give our support to those specialized ministries that support the vulnerable among us; and be it further

Resolved, That we diligently prepare both pastoral and lay leaders for a variety of settings with our full support and encouragement of the traditional, Ethnic Immigrant Institute of Theology (EIIT), Center for Hispanic Studies, and Specific Ministry Pastor seminary programs and the programs of our universities; and be it further

Resolved, That we seek out every opportunity that God gives to us to share the Gospel with people of every nation, tribe, people and language among us; and be it further

Resolved, That we give thanks to God for His forgiveness in Christ, and that He continues to use our weak, trembling hands in His service (Psalm 90:17); and be it finally

Resolved, That this resolution be passed to the glory of God and in loving tribute to the sainted professors Dr. Kou Seying, former Associate Dean for Urban and Cross-Cultural Ministry at Concordia Seminary (CSL) and Dr. John Loum, former Director of the EIIT program at CSL, whose vision was a diverse Synod, united in Christ.

Benediction, Milwaukee, WI; Covenant, Milwaukee, WI

Ov. 11-15

To Foster Multiculturalism in Exercise of Great Commission

WHEREAS, Our Lord commissions us to make disciples of *all nations*; and

WHEREAS, Past and present racial injustices cause great suffering to many Americans and harm to our entire nation; and

WHEREAS, Racial injustice remains an impediment to carrying out the Great Commission of making disciples of all tribes, languages, and nations; and

WHEREAS, Prior Synod convention resolutions on the issue of race have asserted the clear biblical teaching that all humans,

whatever the color of their skin, have been created in the image of God and redeemed through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus; yet we continue to lag in mission outreach that crosses racial and multicultural lines; and

WHEREAS, Our actions and attitudes have often created an inhospitable environment that stands in contrast to the teaching of the Great Commission; and

WHEREAS, We give thanks to God for courageous leaders among us who over the years have overcome racial and multicultural barriers; and

WHEREAS, We lament the widespread silence of Christians in the face of racial and multicultural injustices; we still have much to learn about how to be racially and culturally inclusive; and

WHEREAS, There is a perception that Christians have failed to recognize past and present injustices which may have served as a deterrent from joining our churches; therefore be it

Resolved, That we encourage one another in the hearing of God's Word and the reception of His gifts, Baptism and the Lord's Supper, truly the means of grace, which deliver to sinners such as us the heart of contrition and repentance and the power of the forgiveness of sins through Jesus Christ on the cross; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod will designate a specific Sunday as a joyous, Spirit-filled day to help encourage us to reach and welcome people across all racial and ethnic lines; and be it finally

Resolved, That the Synod call a Multicultural Task Force under the Board for National Mission in its next triennium to assess current efforts, highlight best practices, and develop materials equipping congregations to engage in multicultural outreach at the congregational level.

Florida-Georgia District

Ov. 11-16

To Provide Christian Resources in Addressing Racism

WHEREAS, Racism remains an issue that is apparent in our society; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Martin Luther taught, and we confess, that the Fifth Commandment, "You shall not murder," means that we should fear and love God so that we do not hurt or harm our neighbors, but help and defend them in every physical need, which we have failed to do; and

WHEREAS, Racism is a sin, as well as an obstacle to the work of the Church, it is incumbent upon us to examine our own human failings in view of the Word of God; and

WHEREAS, We lament the silence of many Christians in the face of racism; and

WHEREAS, Racism is manifested in discrimination in jobs, housing, education—past and present—and causes great suffering and harm to many people; and

WHEREAS, Many Synod convention resolutions on the issue of race have asserted the clear teaching from the Holy Scriptures that all human beings have been created in the image of God and redeemed through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, yet the challenges in mission outreach across cultures and dealing with racism remain pronounced; and

WHEREAS, There have been those within The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) who hold beliefs and positions contrary to the clear teaching of Scripture regarding racism, slavery, and racial injustices, thus following the path of our surrounding culture and conforming to the world rather than being transformed in Christ (Rom. 12:2); and

WHEREAS, We give thanks to God for courageous leaders among us who have lived love by sharing the Gospel of Jesus across cultural divides; and

WHEREAS, To reach deeply into the life of our congregations, a church-wide campaign that is truly filled with the love and joy of the Holy Spirit cries out for our response; therefore be it

Resolved, That we give thanks for the work that the LCMS has done addressing racism; and be it further

Resolved, That we, the Atlantic District in convention, likewise acknowledge our failures for not seeing racism and addressing it for what racism is in our church body and beyond, and repent of those failures; and be it further

Resolved, That we memorialize the LCMS in convention our repentance and acknowledgment of our silence to racism that have hurt God's children; and be it further

Resolved, That curricula be developed by Concordia Publishing House to teach people about the ills of racism and how we are called to combat it; and be it further

Resolved, That these curricula developed are designed so that people of all ages and in all educational settings (homeschool, preschool, elementary school, middle school, high school, college, graduate school, seminary, Sunday school, vacation Bible school, parish educational programs, etc.) will benefit directly and intentionally from them; and be it further

Resolved, That, in addition to the development of new curricula, educational and catechetical material dealing with the Fifth, Seventh, and Eighth Commandments in our church body's educational resources shall address the issue of racism directly and clearly so that "racism" is not regarded simply as a side topic but as a part of the broader and necessary body of knowledge for Christians to learn; and be it further

Resolved, That sermon-writing resources be developed so that pastors will be able to identify how racism is addressed in the Holy Scriptures and be assisted in making homiletical applications for the preaching of Law and Gospel; and be it further

Resolved, That in the development of these new resources the LCMS consult directly with people from diverse cultures, sociological backgrounds, and ministry experiences in the LCMS to ensure the resources are appropriate; and be it further

Resolved, That we do everything possible so that as we in the LCMS are "making disciples for life," this church body will be known as a church body that welcomes people regardless of their ethnicity or culture in the name of and by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ; and be it finally

Resolved, That a copy of this resolution be forwarded to the LCMS for action at the 2023 Synod convention.

Atlantic District

Ov. 11-17

To Reject All Forms of Racism and Affirm Our Witness to All People

WHEREAS, God has created all people, and they are blood-related going back to our mutual fathers, Adam and Noah, and all are subject to the stain of original sin, but now also have been equally redeemed by the blood of Christ in order to be reconciled to God and to each other; and

WHEREAS, God's Word says, "If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself,' you are doing well. But if you show partiality, you are committing sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors" (James 2:8-9); and

WHEREAS, Critical Race Theory (CRT) has become a popular, multifaceted, and controversial theory for discussing contemporary race relations with many tenets running contrary to Scripture; and

WHEREAS, When CRT enters the language of theology and church life, it confuses: (1) "original sin" and "actual sin", (2) civil righteousness and righteousness before God, and (3) legal justice and perceived injustice. It does not find its solution in scriptural terminologies and mutual repentance and forgiveness but rather, in terms of one-way repentance and ongoing penance for being born with a particular color of skin, thereby granting no sense of absolution; and

WHEREAS, Racism (the sinful notion that some races are inherently superior to others), misunderstanding, and strife are present in the world and in the Church; and

WHEREAS, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod abhors racism and, in convention, has passed resolutions repudiating all racism (see 1992 Resolution 3-03 and 2019 Res. 11-04A); therefore be it

Resolved, That the Nebraska District in convention reaffirm the Synod's repudiation of all forms of racism; and be it further

Resolved, That the 1994 Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR) document *Racism and the Church* be utilized as a lens by all pastors, congregations, and church organizations as they encounter any espousal or rejection of any critical theory of race; and be it further

Resolved, That the district in convention reject any doctrine that teaches the superiority of one race, ancestry, or nationality over another or that teaches that an individual is inherently racist or oppressive because of his or her race, ancestry, or nationality; and be it further

Resolved, That the district in convention implore her congregations and ministries to work collaboratively, developing resources to combat racism and engage their communities fully to proclaim Christ's love; and be it further

Resolved, That the district in convention call upon her pastors to be ready to extend diligent and sensitive pastoral care to those who have suffered racism, as well as fitting pastoral care and admonishment to those who have perpetrated racism; and be it further

Resolved, That the district in convention reject the world view of CRT because it is contrary to Scripture and counterproductive to true racial conversation and reconciliation, and also reject all organizations, movements, petitions, and theological language that

support the non-scriptural aspects of said world view in a positive manner; and be it finally

Resolved, That the district in convention petition the Synod in its 2023 convention to direct the CTCR to address specifically the topic of CRT as it relates to social, political, and religious institutions.

Nebraska District

Ov. 11-18

To Affirm Biblical Anthropology and Denounce Racism as an Anti-Gospel Belief

WHEREAS, Biblical anthropology reveals that all people are created in the same image of God, one human race no matter what our outward distinctions might be (Gen. 1:26–27; 9:6; cf. Acts 17:25–26), giving every human inherent value (Psalm 139:13–14); and

WHEREAS, In Jesus, God became man and so identifies fully with every human (Matt. 1:1–17; Luke 3:23–38) and His mission of redemption is for all of humankind (Heb. 2:17) and verifies the value of every person in the eyes of God (John 3:16–17); and

WHEREAS, The apostle Peter said, “Truly I understand that 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, James says, “If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself,’ you are doing well. But if you show partiality, you are committing sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors” (James 2:8–9); and

WHEREAS, Contrary to biblical anthropology, there are ideologies that determine a person’s worth or value by genetics, biological characteristics, or cultural heritage; and

WHEREAS, Critical theory, a philosophical view derived from the Enlightenment and Marxism, frames humanity’s existence and outlook in terms of oppression and victimization, liberation and unfettered libertinism as most lately manifest in Critical Race Theory (CRT); and

WHEREAS, Racism has existed and still exists in many forms in this sinful, broken world; and

WHEREAS, Christ’s Church is “from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages” who celebrate around the throne of the Lamb (Rev. 7:9); and

WHEREAS, The Church exists to call the world to repent of sin, including racial and ethnic division and discrimination, and to proclaim that Christ Himself is our peace and all are reconciled to God and one another through the cross (Eph. 2:14–16); and

WHEREAS, The Synod in convention has addressed racism in many of its forms in the following resolutions:

- 1971 Resolution 9-32, “To Encourage Christian Action to Combat Racism” (1971 *Proceedings*, 198);
- 1973 Res. 9-22, “To Continue Efforts to Combat Racism” (1973 *Proceedings*, 206);
- 1977 Res 10-18A, “To Make Every Effort to Eliminate Racism” (1977 *Proceedings*, 204);
- 1979 Res 4-11, “To Reaffirm Efforts to Combat Racism” (1979 *Proceedings*, 129);
- 1981 Res 8-07, “To Oppose Racism and Violence” (1981 *Proceedings*, 204–5);

- 1983 Res 3-09, “To Clarify Position on Anti-Semitism” (1983 *Proceedings*, 157);
- 1992 Res. 3-03, “To Combat All Racism” (1992 *Proceedings*, 113–14); and
- 1995 Res 2-05A, “To Commend for Study the CTCR Document Racism and the Church” (1995 *Proceedings*, 112);

and

WHEREAS, The 1992 Res. 3-03 states that racism is contrary to God’s Word and a sin against Him (1992 *Proceedings*, 113–14) and Bylaw 2.3.1 (a) states: “It shall be the policy of the Synod to decline membership to congregations whose constitutions deny membership or other congregational privileges to any Christian because of race or ethnic origin” (Bylaw 2.3.1 [a]); therefore be it

Resolved, That the Missouri District affirm the biblical anthropology of the God-given value and dignity of every person; and be it further

Resolved, That the district encourage and assist the members of our district congregations, pastors, teachers, professors, congregations, and Synod to faithfully learn, witness, and teach the Christian faith, especially the doctrine of biblical anthropology for the sake of the Gospel; and be it further

Resolved, That we commend the schools, universities, and seminaries of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) for their faithful witness to God’s design and intent for human life, and Concordia Publishing House (CPH) and the Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR) for providing teaching materials; and be it further

Resolved, That the district continue to denounce every form of racism, racial division, or separation as antithetical to the Gospel of Jesus Christ; and be it further

Resolved, That the congregations of the district be watchful and sober-minded regarding the idol of racism as a scheme of the devil intended to bring further suffering and division to the world and to hinder the Gospel; and be it further

Resolved, That we call on the CTCR and the two seminaries to study critical theory, including CRT, and create content that highlights the differences between biblical anthropology and critical theory to help our people to be vigilant in the face of pervasive cultural error; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod in convention encourage the schools, universities, and seminaries of the Synod to be on guard against the encroachment of any theories in their classrooms, curricula, and co-curricular activities that are contrary to biblical anthropology as taught in the Scriptures and in the Lutheran Confessions; and be it further

Resolved, That we earnestly pray, both for those who advocate racist ideologies and those who are thereby deceived, that they may see their error through the light of the Gospel, repent of this sin, and come to know the peace and love of Christ through redeemed fellowship in the one kingdom of God, established out of every nation, from all tribes and peoples, and languages; and be it finally

Resolved, That we pray for the many victims of racism, both within our Church and those in our world, and that the Church work to bring the healing power of the Gospel into their lives, and so join together in proclaiming Christ as the Savior for all.

Missouri District

Ov. 11-19

To Condemn Racism, White Supremacy, and White Nationalism and Reaffirm Biblical and Confessional Common Humanity of All Peoples

WHEREAS, The Holy Scriptures teach that all humanity shares a common origin in Adam and Eve, whom God created in His own image (Genesis 1–2; Acts 17:26); and

WHEREAS, All humans, except our blessed Lord Jesus, are sinners from birth, have inherited original sin from Adam and Eve (Rom. 5:12; Augsburg Confession [AC] II 1–2; Smalcald Articles [SA] III I 1; Formula of Concord [FC] I 1), and do in fact sin personally (Rom. 3:23; AC II 2); and

WHEREAS, In His Law, God condemns all sinners without exception (Rom. 1:18; 5:18; SA II III 4–5; FC I 6; IV 3); and

WHEREAS, The Holy Scriptures teach that God desires that all people be saved (2 Cor. 5:19; 2 Peter 3:9) and that, to this end, Christ died for all people (John 3:16; 1 John 2:2), and the Lutheran Confessions unambiguously testify to this will and saving work of God in Christ as proclaimed by the Holy Scriptures (AC IV; Small Catechism [SC] II 3–4; FC V 5; XI 18); and

WHEREAS, Our Lord Jesus Christ has commanded His followers to “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” (Matt. 28:19); and

WHEREAS, The Holy Spirit, through the proclamation of the Gospel and the administration of the Sacraments, gathers the Church from all nations (Matt. 24:14; 28:19; Acts 1:8; John 20:23; AC XIII; SA II 4); and

WHEREAS, “God shows no partiality, but accepts in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him” (Acts 10:34–35); and

WHEREAS, Racism is defined as: (1) A belief that race is the primary determinant of human traits and capacities and that racial differences produce an inherent superiority of a particular race (Racism, www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/racism); and (2) Prejudice, discrimination, or antagonism directed against someone of a different race based on the belief that one’s own race is superior (www.lexico.com/en/definition/racism, no longer accessible); and

WHEREAS, White supremacy is defined as a belief that the “white race is inherently superior to other races and that white people should have control over people of other races” (White Supremacy, www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/white%20supremacy); and

WHEREAS, White nationalism is defined as “a type of racial nationalism or pan-nationalism which espouses the belief that white people are a race and seeks to develop and maintain a white racial and national identity” (White nationalism, www.wikipedia.org/wiki/white_nationalism); and

WHEREAS, Racism, white supremacy, and white nationalism are found in the cultural life of the United States at this time; and

WHEREAS, Some white supremacists and white nationalists in America have self-identified with The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS); and

WHEREAS, Racism—including white supremacy and white nationalism—has its roots in the sins of pride and arrogance, which have plagued humankind in every time and every place including in the Christian church; and

WHEREAS, Racism—including white supremacy and white nationalism—harms its victims in body, mind, and spirit, and people in our communities and ministries have experienced such harm; and

WHEREAS, Racism—including white supremacy and white nationalism—implies denial of the biblical and confessional doctrines that all humanity was created in God’s image; that all humans are equally fallen in sin; that God’s Law judges all humans impartially; that Christ’s death has atoned for all people of all ethnicities, languages, and nations; and that the Holy Spirit gathers the one Holy Christian and Apostolic Church from all nations; and

WHEREAS, Racism—including white supremacy and white nationalism—is, rather, consistent with atheistic evolutionary and pagan ideologies and movements that claim the supremacy of one people group over another; and

WHEREAS, The Church and its ministers are called to identify and condemn sin and false teaching in every time and age; and

WHEREAS, The Commission on Theology and Church Relations’ (CTCR) February 1994 document, *Racism and the Church* 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”; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Synod in convention underscore and reaffirm its historically consistent and categorical rejection of racism and its current manifestations (e.g., white supremacy, white nationalism, Nazism—both in its historic and current forms—and attempted defenses of slavery or antisemitism), not on the basis of any contemporary social theory, but because racism is antithetical to the teachings of Holy Scripture as exhibited by the Lutheran Confessions; and be it further

Resolved, That the LCMS redouble its efforts to affirm—in all of its proclamation and public teaching, its more local and global mission, its parish life, and its individual and corporate works of mercy—the reconciliation Christ has won for us with God and with all other forgiven sinners from every tribe, race, and nation; and be it further

Resolved, That the CTCR provide new or updated resources for ordained and commissioned ministers to study further and address these issues in their parish and in their circuit and district forums; and be it further

Resolved, That all members of the Synod be encouraged to commit themselves afresh to better understanding and loving their neighbors of every ethnicity, tribe, and language, as God in Christ has loved us all; and be it further

Resolved, That all members of the Synod be admonished to refrain from espousing or associating with racism in any form, even in jest, and that they be admonished to build all brothers and sisters up in love, which adorns the Gospel with uprightness of life; and be it further

Resolved, That all members of the Synod be exhorted to proclaim without shame or fear that Gospel that Christ, the Lamb of God, has saved us and made us His own people with His own blood; and be it finally

Resolved, That the assembly here please voice its anticipation of the time to come when we and peoples from all ethnicities, tribes,

nations, and languages shall all stand before the heavenly throne, giving praise to God and unto Christ the Lamb forevermore by rising and joining together in singing the common doxology.

Circuit 2 (St. Paul Metro)
Minnesota South District

Ov. 11-20

To Reject Racism, Rectify Past Wrongs of Commission and Omission, and Recognize Pacific Southwest District Successes, Failures, and Opportunities in Ministry within Communities

WHEREAS, God has created all people and they are blood related going back to our mutual fathers, Adam and Noah, and all are subject to the stain of original sin, but now also have been equally redeemed by the blood of Christ in order to be reconciled to God and to each other; and

WHEREAS, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) abhors racism, and in convention has passed resolutions repudiating all racism; and

WHEREAS, The 2019 Synod convention (Resolution 11-04A, “To Affirm the Common Humanity of All People and Ethnicities”) resolved, “That the members of the congregations of the Synod be encouraged to work toward racial reconciliation and equality within the Church and within society-at-large ...”; and

WHEREAS, We appreciate and recognize the work of the Commission on Theology and Church Relations in their 1994 study, *Racism and the Church: Overcoming the Idolatry*, further research and study is necessary; and

WHEREAS, The legacy of racism enacted through prejudice and discrimination has negatively impacted the needs, well-being, income, and property of people based solely on the color of their skin; and

WHEREAS, The people of God are striving to live faithfully, but still participate in sinful thoughts, words, and deeds in what they do and leave undone (1 John 1:8–10), which can and has included the sin of racism; and

WHEREAS, Jesus tells us that the greatest commandments are to love God and love your neighbor (Mark 12:30–31); and

WHEREAS, Jesus illustrates for his disciples that they are to treat all persons as neighbor (Luke 10:29–37); and

WHEREAS, Paul exhorts us to show the love of Christ as we “bear one another’s burdens” (Gal. 6:2); and

WHEREAS, Martin Luther extolls us to show that love as we care for our neighbors as we support them in their needs, well-being, income, and property in his explanations of the Fifth and Seventh Commandments; and

WHEREAS, In order for the Pacific Southwest District to better engage acts of reconciliation and equality it should be informed of its history within communities to understand its successes and its failures; therefore be it

Resolved, That the district reject any teaching that one’s:

- race, ancestry, or nationality are inherently superior to the race, ancestry, or nationality of another; and
- any individual is inherently racist, or oppressive, whether consciously or unconsciously, because of his or her race, ancestry, or nationality;

and be it further

Resolved, That the congregations of the district be encouraged to conduct conversations on race and diversity, to strengthen unity within the congregation; and be it further

Resolved, That the congregations of the district be encouraged to engage members of their communities in these conversations, in light of Christ’s Gospel; and be it further

Resolved, That the Board of Directors of the Pacific Southwest District commission a task force to study the district’s history of mission, ministry, and education within communities, to be completed within eighteen months, so that we better recognize and give thanks to God for our successes and make confession of our failures; and be it further

Resolved, That the results of this task force’s study would also provide us with tangible ways to move forward in our present and future outreach efforts in communities, which could be new ministries or support for existing ministries; and be it further

Resolved, That the study will be distributed by mail to all congregations in the district, made available on the district’s website, and discussed at the 2025 Pacific Southwest District convention; and be it finally

Resolved, That the Pacific Southwest District in convention memorialize the 2023 Synod convention to call on the faculty of our two seminaries to do an in-depth study of our national mission ministry and education efforts within communities to be completed within twenty-four months after district proceedings and made available on the Synod’s website and emailed to member congregations of the LCMS.

Pacific Southwest District

Ov. 11-21

To Recognize Atlantic District Successes, Failures, and Opportunities in Ministry with Communities of Color

WHEREAS, The Synod in convention (2019 Resolution 11-04A, “To Affirm the Common Humanity of All People and Ethnicities”) resolved, “That the members of the congregations of the Synod be encouraged to work toward racial reconciliation and equality within the Church and within society-at-large...”; and

WHEREAS, The legacy of racism enacted through prejudice and discrimination has negatively impacted the needs, well-being, income, and property of people based solely on the color of their skin; and

WHEREAS, The people of God are striving to live faithfully, but still may participate in sinful thoughts, words, and deeds in what they do and leave undone (1 John 1:8–10), which can include and has included the sin of racism; and

WHEREAS, Jesus tells us that the greatest commandments are to love God and love your neighbor (Mark 12:30–31); and

WHEREAS, Jesus illustrates for his disciples that they are to treat all persons as neighbor (Luke 10:29–37); and

WHEREAS, Paul exhorts us to show the love of Christ as we “bear one another’s burdens” (Gal. 6:2); and

WHEREAS, Martin Luther extolls us to show that love as we care for our neighbors as we support them in their needs, well-being, income, and property in his explanations of the Fifth and Seventh Commandments; and

WHEREAS, In order for the Atlantic District to better engage acts of reconciliation and equality it should be informed of its history within communities of color to understand its successes and its failures; therefore be it

Resolved, That the district president commission a task force to study the district's history of mission, ministry, and education within communities of color, seeking regional input to be completed prior to the next regular district convention, so that we might better recognize and give thanks to God for our successes and make confession of any failures; and be it further

Resolved, That the results of this task force's study would also provide us with tangible ways to move forward in our present and future outreach efforts within communities of color; and be it further

Resolved, That the study be shared through various means including in person forums as feasible; and be it finally

Resolved, That the district in convention memorialize the Synod in convention to call on the faculty of our seminaries, universities, and Concordia Historical Institute to do a similar study of our national mission, ministry, and education efforts to be completed within 24 months after district proceedings and made available on the Synod website.

Atlantic District

Ov. 11-22

To Recognize the Synod's Successes, Failures, and Opportunities in Ministry with Communities of Color

WHEREAS, The 2019 Synod in convention (Resolution 11-04A, "To Affirm the Common Humanity of All People and Ethnicities") resolved, "That the members of the congregations of the Synod be encouraged to work toward racial reconciliation and equality within the Church and within society-at-large..."; and

WHEREAS, The legacy of racism enacted through prejudice and discrimination has negatively impacted the needs, well-being, income, and property of people based solely on the color of their skin; and

WHEREAS, The people of God are striving to live faithfully, but still participate in sinful thoughts, words, and deeds in what they do and leave undone (1 John 1:8–10), which can and has included the sin of racism; and

WHEREAS, Jesus tells us that the greatest commandments are to love God and love your neighbor (Mark 12:30–31); and

WHEREAS, Jesus illustrates for his disciples that they are to treat all persons as neighbor (Luke 10:29–37); and

WHEREAS, Paul exhorts us to show the love of Christ as we "bear one another's burdens" (Gal. 6:2); and

WHEREAS, Martin Luther extolls us to show that love as we care for our neighbors as we support them in their needs, well-being, income, and property in his explanations of the Fifth and Seventh Commandments; and

WHEREAS, In order for the Synod to better engage acts of reconciliation and equality it should be informed of its history within communities of color to understand its successes and its failures; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Synod President commission a task force to study the Synod's history of mission, ministry, and education within

communities of color, to be completed before the end of this triennium, so that we better recognize and give thanks to God for our successes and make confession of our failures; and be it further

Resolved, That the results of this task force's study would also provide us with tangible ways to move forward in our present and future outreach efforts in communities of color; and be it finally

Resolved, That the study will be distributed to all congregations and church workers in the LCMS and made available on the Synod website.

Bethel, Gurnee, IL; First, Culver City-Palms Los Angeles, CA;
Martin Luther Chapel, East Lansing, MI

Ov. 11-23

To Recognize the Synod's Successes, Failures, and Opportunities in Ministry with Communities of Color

WHEREAS, The 2019 Synod convention (Resolution 11-04A, "To Affirm the Common Humanity of All People and Ethnicities") resolved, "That the members of the congregations of the Synod be encouraged to work toward racial reconciliation and equality within the Church and within society-at large ..."; and

WHEREAS, The legacy of racism enacted through prejudice and discrimination has negatively impacted the needs, well-being, income, and property of people, based solely on the color of their skin; and

WHEREAS, The people of God are striving to live faithfully, but still participate in sinful thoughts, words, and deeds in what they do and leave undone (1 John 1:8–10), which can and has included the sin of racism; and

WHEREAS, Jesus tells us that the greatest commandments are to love God and love your neighbor (Mark 12:30–31); and

WHEREAS, Jesus illustrates for His disciples that they are to treat all persons as neighbor (Luke 10:29–37); and

WHEREAS, Paul exhorts us to show the love of Christ as we "bear one another's burdens" (Gal. 6:2); and

WHEREAS, Martin Luther extolls us to show that love as we care for our neighbors as we support them in their needs, well-being, income, and property, in his explanations of the Fifth and Seventh Commandments; and

WHEREAS, In order for The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) to better engage acts of reconciliation and equality it should be informed of its history within communities of color to understand its successes and its failures; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Synod President commission a task force to study the LCMS's history of mission, ministry, and education, within communities of color, to be completed before the end of this triennium, so that we better recognize and give thanks to God for our successes and make confession of our failures; and be it further

Resolved, That the results of this task force's study would also provide us with tangible ways to move forward in our present and future outreach efforts in communities of color; and be it finally

Resolved, That the study will be distributed to all congregations and church workers in the LCMS and made available on the Synod website.

Prince of Peace
Springfield, VA

Ov. 11-24**To Affirm the Church's Freedom to Celebrate the Divine Service**

WHEREAS, To obtain saving faith, God has given the Word and Sacraments and instituted the Office of the Ministry to administer these gifts (Matt. 28:18–20; John 20:21–23; Augsburg Confession [AC] V 1–3; AC XIV); and

WHEREAS, The church is the assembly of all believers among whom the Gospel is purely preached, and the Holy Sacraments are administered according to the Gospel (AC VII 1), and God has commanded His people to gather to hear His Word and receive His Sacraments (Acts 2:42; 1 Tim. 4:13; Heb. 10:25; 1 Cor. 11:24–25), just as the Lutheran Confessions say that the Sacrament of the Altar is celebrated every Lord's day (Apology of the Augsburg Confession XXIV 1); and

WHEREAS, God has designed His creation with three estates—the family, the church, and the government; and

WHEREAS, These three estates remain (and continue their defining functions) until the end of time, even during pandemic, famine, war, etc.; and

WHEREAS, The authority of the government in relation to the Fourth Commandment is derived from the estate of the family, “For all other authority is derived and developed out of the authority of parents” (Large Catechism I 141); and

WHEREAS, The government is given by God to reward good and punish evil and maintain order as defined by God's holy will (Romans 13; AC XVI 1–2), and deals with bodies and goods, not spiritual matters (AC XXVIII 11); and

WHEREAS, The church rightfully operates in God's right hand rule through the Gospel as she seeks to bring forgiveness and salvation through Christ's means of grace; and

WHEREAS, The government rightfully operates in God's left hand rule, as it works through the Law to maintain order and restrain sin; and

WHEREAS, The church is not entirely independent of the government's left hand rule as she deals with non-spiritual matters of operation (zoning laws, building permits, occupancy permits, etc.); and

WHEREAS, The First Amendment to the United States Constitution recognizes the rights of free exercise of religion and assembly; and

WHEREAS, The government has no God-given authority over the spiritual matters of the church's administration of the Means of Grace as they take place in the Divine Service; therefore be it

Resolved, That we affirm the church's and family's status as having their God-given role in caring for both body and soul; and be it further

Resolved, That we confess that the government has no God-given authority to place restrictions on the church's ability to celebrate the Divine Service; and be it further

Resolved, That we hold the government to have exceeded its God-given authority in placing restrictions on the church that did not apply elsewhere; and be it further

Resolved, That we affirm that in time of pandemic or public crisis the church in Christian freedom should seek to implement measures that serve the public good while continuing to carry out her essential

role of offering the Word and the Sacraments in the Divine Service; and be it further

Resolved, That we exhort and encourage one another to confess boldly the essential nature and function of the church, especially in the event of future government-mandated shutdowns or restrictions to the celebration of the Divine Service; and be it further

Resolved, That we confess to the world that only the Gospel of the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ can provide final victory over sin, sickness, and death; and be it further

Resolved, That the congregations of the Central Illinois District will be encouraged to take notice of all government actions regarding public health, and while “seeking to live at peace with all men,” the church will implement those actions that, in her own judgment, do not interfere with her God-given functions, while respectfully choosing not to observe any government decree, mandate, executive action, law, or court order which does so interfere, according to her own God-given authority to do so and regardless of the civil government's permission or restrictions; and be it finally

Resolved, That the district in convention memorialize the 2023 Synod convention to affirm the church's freedom to celebrate the Divine Service.

Central Illinois District

Ov. 11-25**To Affirm Need for Open Churches during Times of Plague, Pestilence, and Pandemic**

WHEREAS, God has commanded us to set aside a day to gather together (Ex. 20:8–11; Deut. 5:12–15; Psalm 149:1; Col. 3:16; Heb. 10:19–25) to “hear and use [His] Word, and then to praise [Him], to sing and to pray” (Large Catechism [LC] I 84); and

WHEREAS, Our Lord Jesus Christ instituted His Supper for the forgiveness of sins, refreshment, comfort, and strength (Matt. 26:26–29; Mark 14:22–25; Luke 22:15–20; 1 Cor. 11:23–26; LC V 72); and

WHEREAS, The Divine Service (Mass) was retained at the time of the Reformation, for the purpose of hearing God's Word, receiving the Lord's Supper, and returning to Him our sacrifices of prayer, praise, and thanksgiving (Augsburg Confession [AC] XXIV 1); and

WHEREAS, As our Lord was physically present with His disciples at His institution of His Supper and personally administered the elements to them, He calls His undershepherds, namely the men whom He has called to the Office of the Holy/Public Ministry, to administer His Supper in person to His people (John 20:22–23; AC V; AC VII 1; AC XXIV 30); and

WHEREAS, Jesus, through whom all was created and being one with the Father (John 1:3, 10:30; Nicene Creed, 2nd Article), at the time He instituted His Supper, understood the complexities of microbiology and anticipated forthcoming plagues, yet did not call for the suspension of in-person gatherings around His Word and Sacraments during such times; and

WHEREAS, We must therefore, “never think of the Sacrament as something harmful from which we had better flee, but as a pure, wholesome, comforting remedy that grants salvation and comfort” (LC V 68); and

WHEREAS, The evil one, having been cast from heaven, is continually at war with God's people, and in times of plague, uses fear to pull them apart from each other and from the receipt of His gifts (Luke 10:18; Rev. 12:10, 17; LC V 26); and

WHEREAS, When we gather together in person to receive God's gifts, we are able to withstand the attacks of the evil one (Eph. 6:10–18; LC V 80–82); and

WHEREAS, Historically the Church has thus recognized herself as essential during times of plague, notable examples including the 1527 plague at Wittenberg and the 1597–98 plague at Unna:

Mark A. Preus, "Teach Us to Bear Your Blessed Cross: An Essay on Philipp Nicolai's Joy in the Face of Death," Ross Edward Johnson and John T. Pless, eds. *The Mercy of God in the Cross of Christ: Essays on Mercy in honor of Glenn Merritt* (St. Louis: The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 2016), 299–307.

Martin Luther, "Whether One May Flee from A Deadly Plague," *Luther's Works, Vol. 43: Devotional Writings II*, ed. Jaroslav Jan Pelikan, Hilton C. Oswald, and Helmut T. Lehmann (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1999), 119–38.

and

WHEREAS, Historically, even in times of plague, pastors have brought Absolution, God's Word and Sacrament to the sick and shut-ins when they were unable to be present at church and were near death; and

WHEREAS, The current global outbreak of the highly contagious SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19), with the attendant risks of morbidity and mortality, has generated tremendous fear, moving governments around the world to lockdowns and shuttering of nonessential businesses; and

WHEREAS, Many state governors and provincial premiers have declared the Church to be nonessential, shuttering congregations, even for outdoor gatherings, while declaring some businesses, such as abortion facilities and casinos, to be essential and keeping them open, is a violation of the Free Exercise Clause of the First Amendment (See Roman Catholic Diocese of Brooklyn, New York v. Andrew M. Cuomo, Governor of New York, 592 U.S. (Nov. 25, 2020) (supremecourt.gov/opinions/20pdf/20a87_4g15.pdf); and

WHEREAS, Due to concerns of disease spread and lack of personal protective equipment, pastors and churches have been threatened, fined, attacked, and forbidden to visit those who are hospitalized and in long-term residential care facilities; and

WHEREAS, Where congregations have been allowed to remain open, pastors have tried to dictate practices regarding the administration of the Lord's Supper that are at variance with Christ's institution; and

WHEREAS, We are to be subject to the governing authorities (Rom. 13:1), yet where the authorities contradict God's Word, we are to obey Him rather than men (Acts 5:29); therefore be it

Resolved, That the English District call on the Synod to affirm that weekly in-person gathering is essential for the health and well-being of God's people; be more legally active in protecting churches and pastors; and be it further

Resolved, That the district call on the Synod to affirm that where a man ordained to the Office of the Holy Ministry is present and available, congregations should continue the in-person administration of the Lord's Supper, even during times of plague; and be it further

Resolved, That the district call on the Synod to affirm that congregations, using God's gifts of science and reason, may take steps to lessen fear and risk, while not interfering with the administration of the Lord's Supper as He instituted it; and be it further

Resolved, That the district call on the Synod to affirm that the bringing of Absolution, Word and Sacrament to the sick and shut-in is essential to his or her well-being, and protective equipment should be available for the pastor as it is for the health care worker; and be it further

Resolved, That the district call on the Synod to affirm that in Christian freedom (Gal. 5:1) and based on local realities, some congregations may need to temporarily and briefly suspend public gatherings, but that the deliverance of Absolution, Word and Sacrament must continue; and be it finally

Resolved, That the district call on the Synod to affirm that, while respecting God's vocational calls to local political leaders and public health authorities, they strongly condemn the forced closings of congregations in times of plague, as well as the banning of contact with those hospitalized or in long-term care facilities, as a contradiction of His Word and thus outside the divinely-ordained bounds of their offices in His kingdom of the left.

English District

Ov. 11-26

To Affirm and Protect Freedom to Exercise Religion

WHEREAS, The government shall make no law prohibiting the free exercise of religion (First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution); and

WHEREAS, The natural right of all people to worship God according to their conscience is fundamental to human flourishing; and

WHEREAS, The free exercise of religion is not limited to the ability to think religious thoughts, but also entails the ability to participate freely in religious rituals; and

WHEREAS, Public gathering is essential to Christian religious practice (Heb. 10:25) and that of many other religions; and

WHEREAS, During the COVID-19 crisis of 2020 many government actions in New York state and elsewhere limited the free exercise of religion; and

WHEREAS, These actions have resulted in real harm to members of congregations in the Atlantic District of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and others residing in our communities; and

WHEREAS, The Synod, and therefore the Atlantic District, shall "provide protection for congregations, pastors, teachers, and other church workers in the performance of their duties and the maintenance of their rights" (Synod Constitution Article III 9); therefore be it

Resolved, That the congregations of the Atlantic District continue to perform the responsibilities of boldly proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ to seek and save the lost and continue to perform the spiritual care required for her members and community with all necessary caution in light of whatever circumstances may arise; and be it further

Resolved, That the 2022 Atlantic District in convention directs the Atlantic District Board of Directors to petition the governor and

legislature of New York state to codify in state law that houses of worship be deemed “essential businesses/entities/services” and clergy and church workers be deemed essential workers so that the freedom of conscience and free exercise of religion may be protected; and be it finally

Resolved, That the Atlantic District memorialize the Synod in convention to pass a similar resolution at the next regular Synod convention.

Atlantic District

Ov. 11-27

To Protect Christian Consciences

WHEREAS, Christians are called to “render to God what is God’s” (Luke 20:25) and to “obey God rather than man” (Acts 5:29); and

WHEREAS, Christians are called to “obey their magistrates save when they are commanded to sin” (Apology of the Augsburg Confession XVI 6–7); and

WHEREAS, The Holy Scriptures teach that man is not free to bind the conscience of another to a merely human commandment (Gal. 5:1–6; Rom. 14); and

WHEREAS, There are increased attacks on Christian conscience; such attacks including, but not limited to attacking Biblical authority regarding the sanctity of human life, human sexuality, Christian marriage, necessity of in-person Christian worship, enforced masking, vaccine mandates, and other issues of Christian conscience; and

WHEREAS, This is clearly evidenced not only anecdotally, but also concretely, for instance, by the recent Equality Act in the United States Congress (H.R.5), negating application of The Religious Freedom Restoration Act of 1993 (see Sec. 1107), and redefining sex beyond the Biblical teaching (see Sec. 1101); and

WHEREAS, This violation of conscience is a violation of one’s Christian freedom and Christian wisdom and may result in sin; and

WHEREAS, There is historic success in claiming religious exemption from violations of conscience on the basis of Religious Freedom in America (e.g. *Philadelphia v. Catholic Social Services* [2021], *The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod v. FCC* [1998], or *Meyer v. Nebraska* [1923]); therefore be it

Resolved, That the South Wisconsin District, congregations and their members abstain from every teaching of men that violates their Christian consciences bound to God’s Word alone in every sphere of life; and be it further

Resolved, That the district, congregations, and their members be encouraged to speak and act in a Christian manner against such breaches of conscience in their daily vocations; and be it further

Resolved, That the district give its full assistance of every kind to any congregation of the district or member of a district congregation in securing religious exemption from teachings and practices contrary to God’s Word; and be it finally

Resolved, That the district in convention refer this matter to the 2023 Synod convention for consideration and adoption.

South Wisconsin District

Ov. 11-28

To Offer Special Thanks to Our Supreme Court Justices

WHEREAS, The Supreme Court of the United States rendered the *Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization* decision on June 24, 2022, holding that the Constitution of the United States does not confer a right to abortion and thereby overturned the infamous *Roe v. Wade* decision of 1973 which had made abortion legal throughout the United States; and

WHEREAS, The Justices faced tremendous pressure from many different areas in making this decision and yet stood firm in support of the constitutional prolife position and in line with biblical moral principles; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod offer our thanks and commendation to Associate Justices Samuel Alito, Clarence Thomas, Neil Gorsuch, Brett Kavanaugh, and Amy Coney Barrett, for standing firm in the face of tremendous pressure to render the *Dobbs* decision, overturning *Roe* and *Planned Parenthood v. Casey* (1992), and giving states the power to regulate abortion within their borders.

Circuit 3 (Rice Lake)
North Wisconsin District

Ov. 11-29

To Defend the Christian Conscience and the Church’s Daughters

Preamble

On Thursday, Sept. 23, 2021 the United States House of Representatives passed the 2021 National Defense Authorization Act, which included language that would require women at the age of 18 to register for the military draft.

WHEREAS, God has created both male and female in His image, yet made them individually to be complementary but not identical to one another; and

WHEREAS, God specifically commands husbands to love their wives as Christ loved the Church and laid down His life for her (Ephesians 5); and

WHEREAS, All of Scripture and the vast majority of human history testifies that men, not women, are to be required at times to enter combat and risk their lives in defense of their family and country; and

WHEREAS, The House Armed Services Committee in September 2021 voted to recommend that women be required to register for the draft—although this wording did not appear in the final bill; and

WHEREAS, Such entrance into the draft may mean that our wives, mothers, daughters, and sisters are forced to fight in defense of their husbands, fathers, sons, and brothers; and

WHEREAS, Christian consciences are right to be burdened by the thought of men requiring their daughters and wives to risk their lives in carrying out duties of war given to men to reflect Christ’s love for His Church; therefore be it

Resolved, That we as the Southern Illinois District object to the mandatory registration of women into the draft of the United States (U.S.) military; and be it further

Resolved, That we as the Southern Illinois District call on our district president to communicate to Illinois’ U.S. senators and

congresspeople our intent to object on religious grounds to the involuntary service of women in the military; and be it finally

Resolved, That we memorialize the Synod, in its 2023 convention, to publicly confess our conscientious objection, prepare appropriate letters of communication to our nation's leaders, and prepare template statements of conscientious/religious objection for all pastors and congregations to utilize in the event of a national military draft which would include women.

Southern Illinois District

Ov. 11-30

To Confess and Defend the Church's Daughters and the Christian Conscience of All People

Preamble

On July 18, 2022, Senators Jack Reed (D-RI) and James Inhofe (R-OK) filed Senate Bill 4543, "James M. Inhofe National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2023," which includes language that would require women at the age of 18 to register for the military draft.

WHEREAS, God has created both male and female in His image, yet made them individually to be complementary but not identical to one another (Gen. 2); and

WHEREAS, The Word of God teaches that headship belongs to man (1 Cor. 11:1–16); and

WHEREAS, God specifically commands husbands to love their wives as Christ loved the Church and laid down His life for her (Eph. 5); and

WHEREAS, Men, not women, (1 Peter 3:7; 1 Tim. 5:14; Titus 2:4–5) are to be required at times to enter combat and risk their lives in defense of their wives, daughters, family, and country; and

WHEREAS, In December of 2015 the Secretary of Defense lifted the ban on women serving in frontline combat; and

WHEREAS, Senate Bill 4543 includes language that would require women at the age of 18 to register for the military draft (James M. Inhofe National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2023, Section 521 (d): Modernization of the Selective Service System, Expanded Registration to All Americans, S.B. 4543, 117th Congress [2022]); and

WHEREAS, Such entrance into the draft may mean that our wives, mothers, daughters, and sisters would be forced to fight in frontline combat; and

WHEREAS, Because duties of war are given to men (as noted in the Bible passages referenced above, specifically 1 Peter 3:7; 1 Tim. 5:14; Titus 2:4–5), Christian consciences of both men and women are rightly burdened by the state requiring daughters and wives to risk their lives; therefore be it

Resolved, That we object to the mandatory registration of women into the draft of the United States military; and be it further

Resolved, That we call on our district president to communicate to Wyoming and Nebraska U.S. Senators and Wyoming and Nebraska U.S. Representatives our intent to object on religious grounds to the involuntary service of women in the military; and be it finally

Resolved, That we memorialize The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, in its 2023 convention, to confess and defend the

right of conscientious objection in the event of a national military draft which would include women.

Pastors' Conference
Wyoming District

Ov. 11-31

To Address Violence

WHEREAS, The Lord has created human beings fearfully and wonderfully (Gen. 1–2; Psalm 139); and

WHEREAS, The Fifth Commandment says, "You shall not murder," (Ex. 20:13; Deut. 5:17; Small Catechism, Fifth Commandment) since all life belongs to God; and

WHEREAS, Jesus Christ died on the cross and rose from the dead so that we may have life in His name by grace through faith, delivered through the Means of the Spirit (John 3:16; John 6; Eph. 2:8–10; 1 Peter 3:21; 1 Cor. 11); and

WHEREAS, Sinful people continue to reject Christ's extravagant grace as violence continues in our land, especially when people use guns to murder and harm people; and

WHEREAS, Many people have been injured and murdered recently in schools, parking lots, churches, and stores; and

WHEREAS, Violence is not limited to mass shootings but also happens daily in our land through domestic violence, suicide, accidental shootings in the home, stabbings, etc.; and

WHEREAS, Much public debate and discussion have ensued with various perspectives on issues related to violence and specifically gun violence; therefore be it

Resolved, That first responders such as law enforcement, peace officers, mental health workers, and educators be prayerfully supported and encouraged in every appropriate way in our neighborhoods and communities; and be it further

Resolved, That the Atlantic District in convention in 2022 decry gun violence and any violence that harms the lives of our neighbors as part of our proclamation of the sanctity of human life; and be it further

Resolved, That the district in convention pray for all who have been affected by gun violence and any violence that harms the lives of our neighbors; and be it further

Resolved, That the district in convention strongly urge its members to steward their citizenship so that responsible action be taken that limits gun violence and any other violence in our time and in our land; and be it further

Resolved, That the district in convention direct The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) to provide resources to educate people and inform the public discourse concerning violence and especially gun violence; and be it further

Resolved, That the LCMS work intentionally with civic authorities and others to prevent further violence in our land; and be it finally

Resolved, That a copy of this resolution be forwarded to the LCMS for consideration at the 2023 Synod convention.

Atlantic District

12. Schools, Family, Young Adults, and Youth

REPORTS

R1, R1.2.1, R16

OVERTURES

Ov. 12-01

To Produce Biblically Faithful Textbooks/Curricula for Our Day Schools, High Schools, and Home Schools

WHEREAS, Education in all subject areas is first and foremost about what is taught, namely that which is good, true, and beautiful; and

WHEREAS, Secular education in all subject areas is increasingly subject to forces from anti-God, anti-Christ, anti-family, pro-death, amoral, anti-truth, and even anti-beauty perspectives; and

WHEREAS, The Holy Scriptures provide the norm and framework for knowledge in all subject areas, all being interwoven in significant ways with right theology, ethics, history, and human nature as revealed by God therein; and

WHEREAS, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod has the second largest system of parochial schools in America, but too often they are using secular textbooks/curricula or publications from non-Lutheran traditions; and

WHEREAS, Many Lutheran parents who homeschool their children find good, biblically faithful textbook/curricula options to be sorely lacking; and

WHEREAS, Christian schools and home schools in general would benefit greatly from having more biblically faithful Christian textbook/curricula options; and

WHEREAS, The natural sciences, especially biology and earth sciences, are prone to the grievous errors of Darwinism and Deep Time, which directly undermine the integrity of the Scriptures and the Gospel itself by putting death before the fall; and

WHEREAS, The Discovery Works science textbooks available from Concordia Publishing House (CPH), the only day school curriculum available from CPH besides religion curriculum and some lesson plans, are outdated (© 1999) and rather limited (Grades 1–6); and

WHEREAS, It was resolved in 2019 Resolution 5-09A: “That pastors and other church workers be encouraged to confess, witness to, and 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*, Article 5 (adopted 1932)”:

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.”

which certainly should include writings as presented to students by their teachers via textbooks/curricula; and

WHEREAS, The need is urgent, as common experience among shows many young adults rejecting their baptismal vows, their doubts arising in middle school and high school when Darwinism and its many related false “-isms” are preached by the secular textbooks, while either no counterarguments for biblical truth are available or those presented are inadequate; and

WHEREAS, The Synod has a university system and two seminaries housing expertise across all subject areas, including early childhood education, for producing excellent textbooks/curricula for grades K–12 as well as providing theologically sound editorial oversight to ensure content is biblically faithful in its Christian apologetic (defending Gen. 1–11 as it defines marriage as between one man and one woman and human nature as fallen, infected with original sin from Adam, but tells of the seed of the woman, the second Adam, who would crush Satan’s head, and as it describes earth’s early history with creation *ex nihilo* in six natural days and the global flood in Noah’s day); and

WHEREAS, The Synod has its own publishing house; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Wyoming District memorialize the Synod in convention to direct and coordinate the systematic preparation and production of biblically faithful textbooks/curricula across all subject areas, prioritizing biological and earth sciences, for grades K–12; and be it further

Resolved, That this curriculum be ready for market by 2026.

Wyoming District

Ov. 12-02

To Produce Biblically Faithful Textbooks/Curricula

WHEREAS, Education in all subject areas is first and foremost about what is taught, namely that which is good, true, and beautiful; and

WHEREAS, Secular education in all subject areas is increasingly subject to forces from anti-God, anti-Christ, anti-family, pro-death, amoral, anti-truth, and even anti-beauty perspectives; and

WHEREAS, The Holy Scriptures provide the norm and framework for knowledge in all subject areas, all being interwoven in significant ways with right theology, ethics, history, and human nature as revealed by God therein; and

WHEREAS, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) has the second largest system of parochial schools in America, but too often they are using secular textbooks/curricula, or publications from non-Lutheran traditions; and

WHEREAS, Many Lutheran parents who homeschool their children find good, biblically faithful textbook/curricula options to be sorely lacking; and

WHEREAS, Christian schools and home schools in general would benefit greatly from having more biblically faithful Christian textbook/curricula options; and

WHEREAS, The natural sciences, especially biology and earth sciences, are prone to the grievous errors of Darwinism and Deep Time which directly undermine the integrity of the Scriptures, and the Gospel itself by putting death before the fall; and

WHEREAS, The *Discovery Works* science textbooks available from Concordia Publishing House (CPH) (the only day school curricula available from CPH besides religion curriculum and some lesson plans) are outdated (c. 1999) and rather limited (Grades 1–6); and

WHEREAS, It was resolved (Resolution 5-09A) in the 2019 Synod convention “that pastors and other church workers be encouraged to confess, witness to, and 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*, Article 5 (adopted 1932):

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.”

which certainly should include the written word as presented to students by their teachers via textbooks/curricula; and

WHEREAS, The need is urgent, for surveys show that 60% of young adults raised as Christian are rejecting the faith (Ham, K., Beemer B., Hillard, T. [2009]. *Already Gone: Why your kids will quit church and what you can do to stop it*. Master Books), their doubts arising in middle school and high school when Darwinism and its many related false “-isms” are preached by the secular textbooks but either no counter arguments for biblical truth are available or those presented are inadequate; and

WHEREAS, The LCMS has a university system and two seminaries housing expertise across all subject areas, including early childhood education, for producing excellent textbooks/curricula for grades K–12 as well as providing theologically sound editorial oversight to ensure content is biblically faithful in its Christian apologetic (defending Genesis 1–11 as it defines marriage between one man and one woman, and human nature as fallen, infected with original sin from Adam, but tells of the seed of the woman, the second Adam, Who would crush Satan’s head, and as it describes earth’s early history with creation *ex nihilo* in six natural days less than 10,000 years ago and the global flood in Noah’s day); and

WHEREAS, The LCMS has its own publishing house; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Denver Southeast Circuit of the Rocky Mountain District of the LCMS memorialize the Synod in convention to direct and coordinate the systematic preparation and

production of biblically faithful textbooks/curricula across all sciences, prioritizing biological and earth sciences, for grades K–12; and be it further

Resolved, That work on this curriculum begin by 2024.

Circuit 14 (Denver Southeast)

Rocky Mountain District

Ov. 12-03

To Develop Biblically Faithful Textbooks/Curricula for Our Day Schools, High Schools, and Home Schools

WHEREAS, Education in all subject areas is first and foremost about what is taught, namely that which is good, true, and beautiful; and

WHEREAS, Secular education in all subject areas is increasingly subject to forces from anti-God, anti-Christ, anti-family, pro-death, amoral, anti-truth, and even anti-beauty perspectives; and

WHEREAS, The Holy Scriptures provide the norm and framework for knowledge in all subject areas, all being interwoven in significant ways with right theology, ethics, history, and human nature as revealed by God therein; and

WHEREAS, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) has the second largest system of parochial schools in America, but too often they are using secular textbooks/curricula, or publications from non-Lutheran traditions; and

WHEREAS, Many Lutheran parents who home school their children find good, biblically faithful textbooks/curricula options to be sorely lacking; and

WHEREAS, Christian schools and home schools in general would benefit greatly from having more biblically faithful Christian textbook/curricula options; and

WHEREAS, The natural sciences, especially biology and earth sciences, are prone to the grievous errors of Darwinism and other widely accepted secular theories which directly undermine the integrity of the Scriptures, and the Gospel itself, by putting Death before the Fall; and

WHEREAS, The *Discovery Works* science textbooks available from Concordia Publishing House (CPH) (the only day school curricula available from CPH besides Religion Curriculum and some lesson plans) are outdated (c. 1999) and rather limited (Grades 1–6); and

WHEREAS, The need is urgent, since surveys show that sixty percent of young adults raised as Christians are rejecting the faith (Ham, K., Beemer B., Hillard, T. *Already Gone: Why your kids will quit church and what you can do to stop it*. [Master Books, 2009]), their doubts arising in middle school and high school when Darwinism and its many related false “-isms” are taught by the secular textbooks but either no counter arguments for biblical truth are available or those presented are inadequate; and

WHEREAS, The LCMS has a university system and two seminaries comprising expertise across all subject areas, including early childhood education, for producing excellent textbooks/curricula for grades K–12 as well as providing theologically sound editorial oversight to ensure content is biblically faithful in its Christian apologetic; and

WHEREAS, The LCMS has its own publishing house; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Montana District memorialize the 2023 Synod convention to direct and coordinate the preparation and production of biblically faithful textbooks/curricula across all subject areas, for grades K–12; and be it further

Resolved, That this curriculum be among the highest priorities for CPH; and be it further

Resolved, That the first drafts for textbook/curricula material be made available by 2025 with the rest of the textbooks/curricula to follow in a timely manner; and be it finally

Resolved, That CPH engage the expertise of LCMS university and seminary faculties, as well as LCMS day school, high school, and homeschool teachers for the development of these textbooks/curricula.

Montana District

Ov. 12-04

To Produce Biblically Faithful Textbooks/Curricula for Our Day Schools, High Schools, and Home Schools

WHEREAS, Education in all subject areas is first and foremost about what is taught, namely that which is good, true, and beautiful; and

WHEREAS, Secular education in all subject areas is increasingly subject to forces from anti-God, anti-Christ, anti-family, pro-death, amoral, anti-truth, and even anti-beauty perspectives; and

WHEREAS, The Holy Scriptures provide the norm and framework for knowledge in all subject areas, all being interwoven in significant ways with right theology, ethics, history, and human nature as revealed by God therein; and

WHEREAS, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) has the second largest system of parochial schools in America, but too often they are using secular textbooks/curricula, or publications from non-Lutheran traditions; and

WHEREAS, Many Lutheran parents who homeschool their children find good, biblically faithful textbook/curricula options to be sorely lacking; and

WHEREAS, Christian schools and home schools in general would benefit greatly from having more biblically faithful Christian textbook/curricula options; and

WHEREAS, The natural sciences, especially biology and earth sciences, are prone to the grievous errors of Darwinism and deep time which directly undermine the integrity of the Scriptures, and the Gospel itself by putting death before the fall; and

WHEREAS, The Discovery Works science textbooks available from Concordia Publishing House (CPH) (the only day school curricula available from CPH besides religion curriculum and some lesson plans) are outdated (© 1999) and rather limited (grades 1–6); and

WHEREAS, It was resolved in the 2019 Synod convention that pastors and other church workers be encouraged to confess, witness to, and uphold in their teaching the Synod's publicly stated positions as set forth in *Brief Statement of the Doctrinal Position of the Missouri Synod* (adopted 1932):

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'

which certainly should include the written word as presented to students by their teachers via textbooks/curricula; and

WHEREAS, The need is urgent, for surveys show that 60 percent of young adults raised as Christian are rejecting the faith (Ken Ham, C. Britt Beemer, and Todd A. Hillard, *Already Gone: Why Your Kids Will Quit Church and What You Can Do to Stop It* [Master Books, 2009]), their doubts arising in middle school and high school when Darwinism and its many related false "-isms" are preached by the secular textbooks but either no counter-arguments for biblical truth are available or those presented are inadequate; and

WHEREAS, The LCMS has a university system and two seminaries housing expertise across all subject areas, including early childhood education, for producing excellent textbooks/curricula for grades K–12 as well as providing theologically sound editorial oversight to ensure content is biblically faithful in its Christian apologetic (defending Gen. 1–11 as it defines marriage between one man and one woman, and human nature as fallen, infected with original sin from Adam, but tells of the seed of the woman, the second Adam, Who would crush Satan's head, and as it describes Earth's early history with creation ex nihilo in six natural days less than 10,000 years ago and the global flood in Noah's day); and

WHEREAS, The LCMS has its own publishing house; therefore, be it

Resolved, That Circuit Three of the North Wisconsin District memorialize the Synod in convention to direct and coordinate the systematic preparation and production of biblically faithful textbooks/curricula across all subject areas, prioritizing biological and earth sciences, for grades K–12; and be it further

Resolved, That this curriculum be ready for market by 2024.

Circuit 3 (Rice Lake)
North Wisconsin District

Ov. 12-05

To Produce Religious Education Materials

WHEREAS, The teaching of the faith is part of the primary work of the Church; and

WHEREAS, The use of doctrinally sound resources is part of the covenant in which members of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) walk together, according to Articles III and VI of the Constitution of the Synod; and

WHEREAS, The faith is communicated with words and images; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Atlantic District in convention petition the LCMS to publish religious education materials including, but not limited to, images and languages that better reflect and serve global diversity (cf. Rev. 7); and be it further

Resolved, That images from Bible stories, liturgical art, and images of our Lord Jesus Christ do not only include images of people of European descent, but better reflect global artistic traditions; and be it further

Resolved, That the publication arms of the LCMS consult directly with people from diverse cultures, sociological backgrounds, and ministry experiences in the LCMS to ensure the resources are appropriate; and be it finally

Resolved, That progress on this front be reported to the Synod for the 2026 Synod convention.

Atlantic District

Ov. 12-06

To Establish National Lutheran Teacher Student Debt Assistance Program for Commissioned Minister—Teachers

WHEREAS, Our Lutheran schools struggle to find rostered teachers to serve in the classrooms of our high schools, elementary schools, and child development centers, as in the 2019 Resolution 12-02A, “To Exhort the Congregations of the LCMS to Actively Encourage Future Lutheran School Teachers”:

WHEREAS, The number of new commissioned teachers has steadily declined since 2005 (Concordia University System [CUS] Board for University Education [BUE] statistics); and

WHEREAS, The fulfillment rate of requests for first-year Synod-trained candidates to LCMS calling entities has declined from 63 percent in 2010 to 30 percent in 2018 because of the lack of available Synod-trained candidates (CUS BUE statistics);

WHEREAS, The CUS only graduated 23 early childhood educators, 39 elementary educators, and 32 secondary educators in 2018 (CUS BUE statistics) (2019 *Proceedings*, 222);

and

WHEREAS, Research has shown that a primary reason for this is the lower salary offered for teachers within the Lutheran school systems, as in Theme 8 of the “LCMS Church Worker Wellness Insights” presentation by Rev. Robert Zagore, Executive Director, Office of National Mission, to *Gospel* 2019:

- Financial wellbeing is unique among worker needs in that the major problems are beyond the worker’s ability to change – most often the problem is that the workers are in a mathematically impossible situation
- Workers are under-paid for their skill level and workload
- Costs for health care are being pushed to the workers
- Young workers are burdened with significant student debt
- Many calling bodies are unable to pay their workers what is necessary
- “*The toughest work is being done in the places that can pay the least*” (i.e. dying congregations, inner-city churches, immigrant ministries, etc.)

and in 2019 Report R63, “Final Report of the Blue Ribbon Committee on Lutheran Schools” (*Workbook*, 344–45):

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 im-pending 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.

and

WHEREAS, Concordia Plans reported in 2021 that 27 percent of Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod workers have student debt that averages \$46,000 per student; and

WHEREAS, The reality of student loan debt is an important part of the decision to seek employment outside the Lutheran school; and

WHEREAS, It is a value that we fill our schools with rostered workers, as in the 2019 Resolution 12-02A, “To Exhort the Congregations of the LCMS to Actively Encourage Future Lutheran School Teachers” (*Proceedings*, 221):

WHEREAS, the 2016 Synod convention Res. 8-01A, “To Encourage and Strengthen the Lutheran Ethos of Our LCMS Early childhood Centers, Elementary Schools, and High Schools” specifically identified that a characteristic of a Lutheran school with a strong Lutheran ethos has “LCMS-trained Lutheran teachers...who know and are committed to the truths of the Scriptures as confessed in our Lutheran Confessions.”

Therefore be it

Resolved, That the English District memorialize the Synod in convention to develop a National Lutheran Teacher Student Debt Assistance Program that recognizes the service of Lutheran teachers through Student Loan Debt Reduction; and be it further

Resolved, That all Synod congregations be encouraged to contribute towards a special, designated offering to establish this program to be taken during the National Lutheran Schools Weeks of 2024, 2025, and 2026.

English District

Ov. 12-07

To Address Lutheran Teacher Shortage and Low Teacher Salaries by Initiating Student Debt Assistance Program for Commissioned Minister—Teachers

WHEREAS, Our Lutheran schools struggle to find rostered teachers to serve in the classrooms of our high schools, elementary schools, and child development centers:

The number of new commissioned teachers has steadily declined since 2005 (Concordia University System [CUS] Board for University Education [BUE] statistics); and the fulfillment rate of requests for first-year Synod-trained candidates to Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) calling entities has declined

from 63 percent in 2010 to 30 percent in 2018 because of the lack of available Synod-trained candidates (CUS BUE statistics); the CUS only graduated 23 early childhood educators, 39 elementary educators, and 32 secondary educators in 2018 (CUS BUE statistics) (2019 Resolution 12:02A, *Proceedings*, 222).

and

WHEREAS, In Spring 2022, according to the placement director of the CUS, the number of teacher candidates graduating from the CUS totaled 88 and the number of requests from calling entities was over 400; and

WHEREAS, Research has shown that a primary reason for this is the lower salary offered for teachers within the Lutheran school systems, as in Theme 8 of the “LCMS Church Worker Wellness Insights” presentation by Rev. Robert Zagore, Executive Director, Office of National Mission, to *Gospel 2019*:

- Financial wellbeing is unique among worker needs in that the major problems are beyond the worker’s ability to change – most often the problem is that the workers are in a mathematically impossible situation
- Workers are under-paid for their skill level and workload
- Costs for health care are being pushed to the workers
- Young workers are burdened with significant student debt
- Many calling bodies are unable to pay their workers what is necessary
- “*The toughest work is being done in the places that can pay the least*” (i.e. dying congregations, inner-city churches, immigrant ministries, etc.)

and in 2019 Report R63, “Final Report of the Blue Ribbon Committee on Lutheran Schools” (*Workbook*, 344–45):

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 im-pending 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.

and

WHEREAS, Concordia Plan Services (CPS) reported in 2021 that 27 percent of LCMS workers have student debt that averages \$46,000 per student; and

WHEREAS, The reality of student loan debt is an important part of the decision to seek employment outside the Lutheran school; and

WHEREAS, It is of value that we fill our schools with rostered workers, as recognized in 2016 Res. 8-01A, “To Encourage and

Strengthen the Lutheran Ethos of Our LCMS Early Childhood Centers, Elementary Schools, and High Schools,” which specifically identified that a characteristic of a Lutheran school with a strong Lutheran ethos has LCMS-trained Lutheran teachers who know and are committed to the truths of the Scriptures as confessed in our Lutheran Confessions (2019 Res. 12-02A, *Proceedings*, 221); therefore be it

Resolved, That Iowa West District memorialize the 2023 Synod convention to direct the LCMS Board of Directors to develop, in consultation with stakeholders including the education department of CUS, LCMS School Ministry, CPS, the LCMS Foundation, and the Council of Presidents, a loan forgiveness process for presentation to and consideration by the 2026 Synod convention.

Iowa West District

Ov. 12-08

To Address Lutheran Teacher Shortage and Low Teacher Salaries by Initiating Student Debt Assistance Program for Commissioned Minister—Teachers

WHEREAS, Our Lutheran schools struggle to find rostered teachers to serve in the classrooms of our high schools, elementary schools, and child development centers:

The number of new commissioned teachers has steadily declined since 2005 (Concordia University System [CUS] Board for University Education [BUE] statistics); and the fulfillment rate of requests for first-year Synod-trained candidates to Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) calling entities has declined from 63 percent in 2010 to 30 percent in 2018 because of the lack of available Synod-trained candidates (CUS BUE statistics); the CUS only graduated 23 early childhood educators, 39 elementary educators, and 32 secondary educators in 2018 (CUS BUE statistics) (2019 Resolution 12-02A, *Proceedings*, 222).

and

WHEREAS, Research has shown that a primary reason for this is the lower salary offered for teachers within the Lutheran school systems, as in Theme 8 of the “LCMS Church Worker Wellness Insights” presentation by Rev. Robert Zagore, Executive Director, Office of National Mission, to *Gospel 2019*:

- Financial wellbeing is unique among worker needs in that the major problems are beyond the worker’s ability to change – most often the problem is that the workers are in a mathematically impossible situation
- Workers are under-paid for their skill level and workload
- Costs for health care are being pushed to the workers
- Young workers are burdened with significant student debt
- Many calling bodies are unable to pay their workers what is necessary
- “*The toughest work is being done in the places that can pay the least*” (i.e. dying congregations, inner-city churches, immigrant ministries, etc.)

and in 2019 Report R63, “Final Report of the Blue Ribbon Committee on Lutheran Schools” (*Workbook*, 344–45):

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

im-pending 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.

and

WHEREAS, Concordia Plan Services (CPS) reported in 2021 that 27 percent of LCMS workers have student debt that averages \$46,000 per student; and

WHEREAS, The reality of student loan debt is an important part of the decision to seek employment outside the Lutheran school; and

WHEREAS, It is desired that we fill our schools with rostered workers for the health and well-being of our Synod and its schools: 2016 Res. 8-01A, “To Encourage and Strengthen the Lutheran Ethos of Our LCMS Early Childhood Centers, Elementary Schools, and High Schools” specifically identified that a characteristic of a Lutheran school with a strong Lutheran ethos has “LCMS-trained Lutheran teachers ... who know and are committed to the truths of the Scriptures as confessed in our Lutheran Confessions” (2019 Res. 12-02A, *Proceedings*, 221).

therefore be it

Resolved, That the SELC District memorialize the Synod in Convention to recognize the importance and service of Lutheran teachers by convening a committee comprised of members of the education department of the CUS, LCMS School Ministry, CPS, LCMS Foundation, and the Council of Presidents, to develop a National Lutheran Teacher Student Debt Assistance Program; and be it further

Resolved, That a special, designated offering to establish this program be taken during the National Lutheran Schools Weeks of 2024, 2025, and 2026; and be it finally

Resolved, That reports of this work be provided through regular communications of the Synod.

SELC District

Ov. 12-09

To Address Lutheran Teacher Shortage and Low Teacher Salaries by Initiating Student Debt Assistance Program for Commissioned Minister—Teachers

WHEREAS, Our Lutheran schools struggle to find rostered teachers to serve in the classrooms of our high schools, elementary schools, preschools, and child development centers;

The number of new commissioned teachers has steadily declined since 2005 (Concordia University System [CUS] Board for

University Education [BUE] statistics); and the fulfillment rate of requests for first-year Synod-trained candidates to Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) calling entities has declined from 63 percent in 2010 to 30 percent in 2018 because of the lack of available Synod-trained candidates (CUS BUE statistics); the CUS only graduated 23 early childhood educators, 39 elementary educators, and 32 secondary educators in 2018 (CUS BUE statistics) (2019 Resolution 12:02A, *Proceedings*, 222).

and

WHEREAS, Research has shown that a primary reason for this is the lower salary offered for teachers within the Lutheran school systems, as in Theme 8 of the “LCMS Church Worker Wellness Insights” presentation by Rev. Robert Zagore, Executive Director, Office of National Mission, to *Gospel 2019*:

- Financial wellbeing is unique among worker needs in that the major problems are beyond the worker’s ability to change – most often the problem is that the workers are in a mathematically impossible situation
- Workers are under-paid for their skill level and workload
- Costs for health care are being pushed to the workers
- Young workers are burdened with significant student debt
- Many calling bodies are unable to pay their workers what is necessary
- “*The toughest work is being done in the places that can pay the least*” (i.e. dying congregations, inner-city churches, immigrant ministries, etc.)

and in 2019 Report R63, “Final Report of the Blue Ribbon Committee on Lutheran Schools” (*Workbook*, 344–45):

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 im-pending 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.

and

WHEREAS, Concordia Plan Services (CPS) reported in 2021 that 27 percent of LCMS workers have student debt that averages \$46,000 per student; and

WHEREAS, The reality of student loan debt is an important part of the decision to seek employment outside the Lutheran school; and

WHEREAS, The Southeastern District in Convention memorializes the Synod in Convention to adopt a National Lutheran Teacher Student Debt Assistance Program; therefore be it

Resolved, That a National Lutheran Teacher Student Debt Assistance Program be developed that recognizes the service of Lutheran teachers through student loan debt repayment assistance; and be it further

Resolved, That a committee comprised of members of the education department of the CUS, LCMS School Ministry, CPS, LCMS Foundation, and the Council of Presidents develop the loan repayment assistance process; and be it further

Resolved, That a special, designated offering to establish this program be taken during the National Lutheran Schools Weeks of 2024, 2025, and 2026; and be it finally

Resolved, That reports of this work be provided through regular communications of the Synod.

Southeastern District

Ov. 12-10

To Address Lutheran Teacher Shortage and Low Teacher Salaries by Initiating Student Debt Assistance Program for Commissioned Minister—Teachers

WHEREAS, Our Lutheran schools struggle to find rostered teachers to serve in the classrooms of our high schools, elementary schools, and child development centers; and

WHEREAS, Research has shown that a primary reason for this is the lower salary offered for teachers within the Lutheran school systems; and

WHEREAS, Concordia Plan Services (CPS) reported in 2021 that 27 percent of Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) workers have student debt, averaging \$46,000 per student; and

WHEREAS, The reality of student loan debt is an important part of the decision to seek employment outside the Lutheran school; and

WHEREAS, It is a value that we fill our schools with rostered workers; therefore be it

Resolved, That a National Lutheran Teacher Student Debt Assistance Program be developed that recognizes the service of Lutheran teachers through student loan debt forgiveness; and be it further

Resolved, That a committee comprising of members of the education department of the Concordia University System, LCMS School Ministry, CPS, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod Foundation, and the Council of Presidents develop the loan forgiveness process; and be it further

Resolved, That a special, designated offering to establish this program be taken during the National Lutheran Schools Weeks of 2024, 2025, and 2026; and be it further

Resolved, That reports of this work be provided through regular communications of the Synod; and be it finally

Resolved, That the California-Nevada-Hawaii District memorialize the Synod in convention to adopt the National Lutheran Teacher Student Debt Assistance Program.

California-Nevada-Hawaii District

Ov. 12-11

To Ensure Fidelity and High Quality in Lutheran Education

WHEREAS, From the founding of the Synod, Lutheran schools have been considered a vital part of the Church's work; and

WHEREAS, In order to ensure high quality education, state teacher certification has frequently been desired for both rostered and non-rostered teachers in Lutheran schools; and

WHEREAS, Multiple states have proposed laws that would force teachers to deny the clear teachings of Scripture as a requirement of certification; therefore be it

Resolved, That the President of Synod in consultation with the Council of Presidents and the director of LCMS School Ministry appoint a commission to consider a process for teacher certification independent of state licensure or some other method of ensuring high quality education without state involvement; and be it further

Resolved, That this committee produce a report no later than six months prior to the overture deadline for the 2026 Synod convention.

Holy Trinity
Walnut, IL

Ov. 12-12

To Confess Authority God Gave to Fathers and Mothers

Preamble

Governmental, legal, and related institutional overreach has created severe challenges to divinely instituted parental authority. The following illustrations, sometimes more narrowly and sometimes more broadly, encroach upon God's command to father and mother:

- Under the educational mandates and laws of federal and state governments and local school districts, children are often treated as wards of the state, with final authority for the education of children being seized by the government. Christian parents are being coerced into subjecting their children to a moral and religious education that denies basic teachings of the Christian faith.
- Children are being forced or induced by governments or governmental institutions to receive unwanted medical care (e.g., inoculations, COVID-19 injections, HPV vaccines, hormonal contraceptives, "gender-reassignment" treatments), even when their parents object.
- Children in government schools are being forced into adopting unwanted or evil social practices (e.g., social isolation, masking, the acceptance or affirmation of moral evils and vices such as LGBTQ+ lifestyles and critical race theory [CRT] exercises), contrary to the will and authority of parents.
- Children in government-sponsored schools are being forced to receive evil indoctrination in divinely instituted marital issues of sexual morality and sexual identity ("sex education;" LGBTQ+ desensitization, tolerance, and promotion; transgender training and promotion; etc.), contrary to their parents' beliefs and intentions for their children.

- Children are being indoctrinated in anti-Christian, unscientific, and revisionist history and science (e.g., macro-evolution theory, CRT, and gender theory, etc.), contrary to the traditional norms of rigorous scientific theory, history, and justice, and against the will of their parents.
- Children in government-sponsored schools are being subjected to the deconstruction of divinely mandated and given institutions (marriage and family; the Christian Church; government with its natural powers and limitations; natural and revealed law and justice; etc.) by the assumption of an anti-Christian worldview, by the corruption of sound and truthful language, and by the conspicuous absence of sound teaching in these matters, contrary to Scripture and the authority of parents regarding their children's education.

WHEREAS, In the Fourth Commandment, God established marriage and provides moral and legal authority to husband and wife regarding their children: "Honor your father and your mother, that it may go well with you and that you may live long on the earth"; and

WHEREAS, In the Sixth Commandment, God defends the institution of marriage and provides moral and legal protection to the lifelong integrity and wellbeing of marriage, thereby also protecting children born to marriage: "You shall not commit adultery"; and

WHEREAS, We affirm and confess these truths in Large Catechism I (Sixth Commandment) 206–208:

First, understand and mark well how gloriously God honors and praises this estate [marriage]. For by His commandment He both approves and guards it. He has approved it above in the Fourth Commandment, "Honor your father and your mother." But here He has (as we said) hedged it about and protected it. Therefore, He also wishes us to honor it and to maintain and govern it as a divine and blessed estate because, in the first place, He has instituted it before all others. He created man and woman separately [differently], as is clear. This was not for lewdness, but so that they might live together in marriage, be fruitful, bear children, and nourish and train them to honor God.

Therefore, God has also most richly blessed this estate above all others. In addition, He has bestowed on it and wrapped up in it everything in the world, so that this estate might be well and richly provided for. Married life, therefore, is no joke or presumption. It is an excellent thing and a matter of divine seriousness. For marriage has the highest importance to God so that people are raised up who may serve the world and promote the knowledge of God, godly living, and all virtues, to fight against wickedness and the devil; (*Concordia: The Lutheran Confessions, Reader's Edition*, 408)

and,

WHEREAS, God has given the direct and full authority for the education of children to their parents, with the command to fathers to bring up their own children "in the education (*paideia*) and instruction (*nouthesia*) of the Lord" (Eph. 6:4). In accordance with the truth that Christian doctrine and faith encompasses the whole person (soul and body), this scripture teaches that God has invested parents with His authority and command to educate their own children, including their spiritual, emotional, mental, and physical care and training; and

WHEREAS, Accordingly, fathers and mothers are to give and see to the education of their children in Christian doctrine and holy living. They are to be their teachers in all matters of marriage and marital intimacy. They are to provide all care and support of their children's bodies, including such matters as food, clothing, health, etiquette, exercise, grooming, and the like. They are to educate their children for service in their own marriage, family, and workplace; in their church; and in their neighborhood or civil community. They may designate some other persons to assist them and act in their stead in all these matters (*in loco parentis*) without relinquishing this divine authority (cf. LC I [Fourth Commandment] 141); and

WHEREAS, The Holy Spirit teaches Christians in 1 Timothy 5:8 that "... if anyone does not provide for (*pronoiei*) his own people and especially those of his own household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever." Here God authorizes and obligates the members of a household (family) to make provision for the care of its own members; therefore be it

Resolved, That we confess that father and mother are not mere caregivers to their children. Rather, God has appointed them to feed, clothe, house, educate, give medical care, and above all, provide the spiritual service to their children's body and soul, mind and spirit; and be it further

Resolved, That we affirm and defend the rights and duties of father and mother toward their children as divinely commanded and given, and therefore not severable except in the case of the full abdication of their office (*i.e.*, abandonment or violent abuse of the child's body and mind; or in the positive, placement for adoption by others); and be it further

Resolved, That we reject every assertion and practice of civil government—federal, state, and local—that assumes or implies right or authority over children as children, that is, as though children were wards of government. Any child-related services provided to a child by the government, such as education, health care, food, clothing, and housing, are provided only under the permission and authority of the child's father and mother. Rejected here are all assertions of governmental authority or privilege in the education of children, the medical care of children, the physical care and provision of children (*e.g.*, free lunch programs), the doctrinal and spiritual discipline and training of children, the sexual or gender identity of children, the moral education and training of children, and the like; and be it further

Resolved, That we likewise recognize that no church or religious gathering has rights or authority over children except what is granted by Christian baptism and membership in that church. It is the divine duty of the church to teach, encourage, strengthen, and assist father and mother in doing their divinely appointed duties toward their children; and be it further

Resolved, That we confess and teach that father and mother are obligated by God to bring their children to the Church for Baptism and the divine services of the church. They are to teach their children God's Word in their home, lead them in prayer, and teach and discipline them in Christian piety and virtue, in accordance with Holy Scriptures; and be it finally

Resolved, That we teach and maintain the discipline that a man and woman are to marry each other before sexual intimacy and the conceiving of children, and that they are to remain married and faithful to each other till death parts them, in accordance with God's holy will. Single, divorced, and remarried parents are, by God's grace, to live godly lives in open repentance and forgiveness,

always teaching and holding before their children the divine institution and pattern of marriage and household as God gave it.

Pastors' Conference
Wyoming District

Ov. 12-13

To Remind All That God Has Appointed Parents to Be Primary Authority in Life of Their Children

WHEREAS, In the Scriptures, we read: "Children, obey your parents, for this is right"; and, "Honor your father and your mother—which is the first commandment with promise— so that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth" (Eph. 6:1–3 NIV); and

WHEREAS, Luther in his Large Catechism explanation to the Fourth Commandment, makes it clear that "... all who are called masters stand in the place of parents and must derive from them their power and authority ..." (Large Catechism [LC] I 142; Kolb/Wengert, eds., *The Book of Concord*, [Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000], 406); and

WHEREAS, Luther further declares that "God has given fatherhood and motherhood a special position of honor, higher than that of any other walk of life"; and, that God "places them near to Himself" (LC I 105; id., 400); and

WHEREAS, It has become increasingly common in modern society and in matters of education, in particular, to treat the office of parent as subsidiary and inferior to that of the State and its agents; and

WHEREAS, Parents are increasingly seen by progressive educational authorities as bigoted and ignorant and thus *obstacles* to the proper instruction of children; and

WHEREAS, It is increasingly clear that educational authorities behaved in ways which lead children to question the authority and competence of their parents and to reject other authority figures including grandparents and religious leaders in their life; and

WHEREAS, Educational authorities are even regularly found to have formal or informal policies which forbid teachers and staff from informing parents about issues of sexuality and transgenderism that surface in the school setting; and

WHEREAS, School systems are increasingly unwilling to be fully transparent with parents regarding the content of materials used to educate their children; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Minnesota South District, in convention, clearly and unequivocally reassert the Scriptural truth that God has given to parents both the primary responsibility and the primary authority in the lives of their children; and that all other authorities in the lives of children derive their authority from parents; and be it further

Resolved, That pastors and teachers of the Church be encouraged to regularly focus attention on the application of the Fourth Commandment in our modern American context and, in so doing, to lift up and expound on the godly and high office of parent; and be it further

Resolved, That the Church reject the claim of many schools that parents may be prevented from having full access to their children's records and reasonable control over their child's educational experience; and be it further

Resolved, That the Church support parental empowerment mechanisms such as Education Savings Accounts, which remove inappropriate State bias in parental decision-making in matters of education, by allowing State- collected education dollars to follow the child to any school of the parents' choosing, including religious schools; and be it finally

Resolved, That the Minnesota South District, in convention, memorialize the Synod to use its resources and influence to elevate the place of parents in our Church and our society.

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 2023 *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: _____

